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## **The Single Tax as a Land and Labor Question**

From J. H. SPRINGER.

Editor Single Tax Review:

There are two ways in which the Single Tax may be presented, one, as a tax, and the other as a land and labor question. In Ohio and Massachusetts, it has been presented as a tax question, and has made great progress in both places. In England it has been presented solely as a tax question. In New Zealand and Australia, if it has been presented as a labor and land question, it was accepted only as a tax measure, the labor elements refusing to accept it as a measure that would tend toward the solution of the labor problem. The proof of this is in the number of socialistic measures adopted in the relief of labor by the same bodies that voted for the Single tax.

The Single Tax has never been accepted as a solution of the labor problem, by any who has not studied *Progress and Poverty*. The reason for this is, in my opinion, that there is a message between the lines in that great book, which we who have read it have received, but as it was not written, we have failed to convey the same impression to those we talk to. This message is, that the value which attaches to land, does so at the expense of labor, or, as I prefer to put it, of industry.

A man comes to Los Angeles, five years ago, buys two lots for \$1,000 each; and this winter he sells one lot for \$12,000. He builds a home on the other lot at the cost of \$11,000. Where did the home come from? He did not earn it. He contributed no services in return for it. He has not stolen it. He has paid for all the material and labor in it—out of the value that attached to the lot he sold. Is this value then a myth? Is it simply a mode of measurement? Call it anything you please, it has commanded a house. When one gets a house for nothing, someone or other must have given a house for nothing. Homes are not extracted from the air, they are products of labor.

I do not believe that if the Single Tax were adopted to-day, there would be less value in the country than there was yesterday. I do not believe that by a simple "Be it

enacted," that forty billions of value would be destroyed. Ever since my first reading of *Progress and Poverty*, I have somehow had the impression that this enormous value that now attaches to land would attach to labor. I never compared value with rent.

When I speak of land value, I refer to the selling value of land. Under the Single Tax, rent will continue and "will increase with progress." Men will pay for the use of land as now, but under that system, the \$11,000 house must be earned. In *The Condition of Labor*, page 72, Mr. Henry George said: "In our time, invention and discovery have enormously increased the productive power of labor." Have these improvements in any way raised the wages of the laborer? Have not their benefits gone mainly to the owners of land—enormously increased land values?"

While Mr. George presents the Single Tax as a land question, his writings are filled with references to the Value of land. I have in a recent writing said: "The value of land is an enormous mortgage on labor." As I write, *Progress and Poverty* lies before me. In turning the leaves I read:

"The capitalized rental value of the land of England now amounts to forty-five thousand million pounds, that is to say, a few thousand of the people of England have a lien upon the labor of the rest."

As far as Mr. Fillebrown's letter in the last Review reveals his method in presenting the Single Tax, he is right. We will never make any progress in presenting it as a land question. It is the value we want, and whenever we have talked of making land common property, it was the value that we had in mind all of the time.

Los Angeles, Cal. J. H. Springer.