

# The Single Tax Review

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## Current Comment

**D**R. FRANK CRANE has to prepare an article every day on some subject. Now some subjects can be treated that way—and that fast. But not all subjects. Therefore allowance must be made for conditions imposed that compel him to write faster than most people can think.

He does it very well, but of course not equally well at all times. Only recently he has been telling us, under the title, "The Tragedy of England;" after conversing with English bankers and financiers, that the condition of England is more threatening than that of any country in Europe, and he says: "There are some 40,000,000 people in Great Britain and Ireland. This population cannot support itself upon the land. They are absolutely dependent upon selling their manufactures abroad and importing their means of subsistence from abroad."

**G**RANTED that England is a maritime and manufacturing nation. Granted, too, that if there were more agriculture there would be less manufacturing. Granted, also, that as matters stand anything that interferes with exports of manufactured products and imports of food products must work hardships to her people.

But Dr. Crane's inference is that this cannot in the nature of things be changed—in other words, that England cannot be self-maintaining. But the stubborn fact is that she has been, and in recent times, too, with a population not greatly less. There was a time when she imported very little of her needed agricultural products.

**A**ND when she was so nearly self-sustaining, as for generations she was, great tracts of land were held unproductive as deer forests and game preserves. England not self-sustaining! What she almost was, with all these landlord handicaps, she could again become, with resources for feeding her own population infinitely multiplied.

Whether this is desirable or not is another question. Absolute free trade between nations will decide for every land to what degree it may continue or become self-sufficient. And the question of how far every land may become so, is not important, whatever the uninformed may think. If it gets what it wants by trade, very well; if it produces ninety per cent. of all it needs to eat, drink and wear—very well, too, but not any better. The essential thing is that it gets it. And vast tracts of land held out of productive use, whether the country be self-sufficient or not, whether it produces all for itself, or obtains most of what it need by trade, prevent the people from getting the goods that satisfy the desires of the people. "The tragedy of England" is not what Dr. Crane thinks it is, but is the tragedy of every country, whatever its degree of self-sufficiency.

That tragedy is the use or non-use of its natural resources by the few who monopolize them.

**T**HE *Detroit Free Press*, in its issue of Dec. 25, says: "America needs desperately at this time laws that will afford a reasonable protection to capital, and less mischievous meddling with capital, so that there may be a restoration of confidence." Will the *Free Press* indicate to us the kind of taxes which will reasonably protect capital and involve less mischievous meddling with business? If it has such a tax to suggest, may we not ask that it announce it to a waiting world?

**T**HE *New York Times* recently printed an article showing the low prices which "property" (land) brought in Times Square not so many years ago. In 1855 the west side of Sixth avenue, between Forty-second and Forty-third streets, sold at auction for \$29,125. The Forty-second street corner brought the highest price, \$6,050. In 1875 St. Luke's Lutheran church bought the 80 foot front plot on the north side of Forty-second street between Broadway and Eighth avenue for \$45,000. Last year the same property sold for \$500,000. The *Times* gives other figures for "property" (land) in this vicinity at various periods. Does it draw any lesson from these remarkable increases? Years ago the *Times* said, "Undoubtedly, the Single Tax is the ideal form of taxation." Will it kindly repeat it?

**T**HE *Cleveland Press* says that in another century the development of automatic machinery will free men from labor with the exception of a few hours a day, and exultingly cries, "Real civilization will follow." Will it, indeed? No less an authority than John Stuart Mill said that it was "very doubtful if the development of machinery had lightened the labor of a single human being."

Machinery has enormously increased the production of wealth. But what has happened? Land values have risen. The gain has been swallowed up by the owners of natural resources. Neither Labor nor Capital (Capital per se) has been enriched. One class have appropriated the major benefits of improved machinery, and all other improved methods of production. Carried further, even as far as the *Press* has forecasted, it can result only in the same way. Such progress makes chiefly, if not solely, for the owners of economic rent.

**H**ERE is a subject for a cartoon which would contain more truth than the usual run. Let the picture represent a man busily engaged in breaking down and defacing his fences, making great daubs of paint on the walls of his house and barn, and scattering refuse, such as tin cans,

broken chairs and old lumber, in his front yard. Under it should appear the caption, "Reducing His Taxes," or "Welcoming the Assessor"—anything you please that will give a reason for his apparently irrational conduct. It could be pointed out that the man is not crazy—at least, not nearly as crazy as the system of which his activities as pictured are the *reductio ad absurdum*.

**S**AYS the *Evening World* in a recent issue: "A soldier's bonus, if it comes at all, is coming out of American pockets." Oh, ye of little wisdom! We have shown how the bonus can be paid without taking a penny from the taxpayer.

**T**HERE were 142 contributors to the Single Tax Party campaign fund in the recent mayoralty contest in this city. Only 32 of these contributors are members of the party. This is the best possible testimony to the value of this method of popularizing the Single Tax, in that its value is recognized by those who are not prepared, for one reason or another, to openly proclaim themselves in favor of the party.

**H**ENRY MORGENTHAU in January *System* says "there has not yet been discovered a scientific method by which the results of industry may be satisfactorily divided between labor and capital." Mr. Morgenthau is a great admirer of ex-President Wilson. It is reported that Mr. Wilson had a well thumbed copy of "Progress and Poverty" on his desk. Will Mr. Morgenthau ask Mr. Wilson if he has arrived at any conclusion respecting the suggestion Mr. George makes in that work as to how the results of labor may be satisfactorily divided between labor and capital?

The trouble is, Mr. Morgenthau, that the results of labor are not divided solely between labor and capital. There is another and silent factor of which you make no mention. That is *land*. There is another and silent partner—that is the *landlord*. Maybe if this sum of the division of labor be considered with reference to this omitted factor the problem will be found not so puzzling.

**A**N advertisement in the *Cleveland Press* says: "Footsteps are worth money because footsteps make property worth money. The enormous increase along Euclid avenue has in ten years increased the value of business property (land) from the Square to Mayfield Road an average of 319 per cent." And every pious landlord along Euclid avenue says, "God bless those footsteps."

**A**LITTLE bulletin issued by the North Church Lincoln Club, of Cleveland, Ohio, asks, perhaps in a perfectly friendly spirit: "To all Single Taxers—if the truth of the Single Tax is as obvious as you believe it is, how do you explain its failure to gain ground during the past years?" Well, if it has not gained ground (though it has) the answer is that the Single Tax is not obvious. Truth is not usually obvious. "Truth lies at the bottom of the well." You have got to look for it—and look hard.

## EDITORIALS

### Resolves So-Called Wealth Into Its Elements

**T**HE simplicity of the Single Tax, that to the wise and far-seeing is its chief recommendation, suggests to others of a different order of minds an inadequacy to meet the complexity of existing conditions. The latter are found pointing out that the Single Tax fails to touch the power of a Rockefeller, or, at all events, wholly to resolve into harmless elements the tremendous power of monopoly which is involved in the control of a billion dollars.

It is true that under present conditions the ownership of vast wealth exercises a preponderating influence over other millions industrially employed. But the Single Tax is not a surface reform. It goes deep. Under it much of Mr. Rockefeller's wealth would cease to be wealth at all. For much of this so-called wealth is paper representing control of natural resources; all of this would be valueless. Much of the real capital that is under Mr. Rockefeller's control would begin to exercise an independence of its own, freed as it would then be from the dominating influence of any small group in control of the natural resources that form so large a part of the so-called Rockefeller wealth.

One has but to conceive of the Single Tax as the key which swings open the door to all the natural wealth of the world, mines, forests, and farm lands, the door that has hitherto been shut to labor and capital save on the payment of excessive tribute, to realize how far-reaching is this great reform. To make the earth free for its sons—why talk of anything else till that is done?

### Stewart Browne Imitates Marie Antoinette

**W**HETHER Marie Antoinette really asked "Why don't they eat cake?" when she was told that the people were dying for lack of bread, or whether the French Queen has been made a victim of mistranslation, may be left for the historians to settle. The remark remains typical of the reactionary or Bourbon mind.

Here comes Mr. Stewart Browne, of New York, the president of the United Real Estate Owners' Association, arguing before a legislative committee for the repeal of the emergency rent laws that stand between the tenants and eviction, admitting that there is some overcrowding in the cheaper apartments, but contending that "there are plenty of \$50 a room apartments" for rent. No, dear reader from beyond the Harlem, this does not mean \$50 a year; the New York reckoning is by months. To the man with three or four children, whose salary has been put on a "pre-war basis" of thirty or thirty-five dollars a week, this information that if he is thrown out of his present living quarters he can get a "parlor, bedroom and bath" for \$150 a month will be—re-assuring. Let the rent