

# Extracts from Our Contemporaries Showing the Growth of Public Sentiment

## INCREMENT

The sale of the National Democratic Club property on Fifth Avenue is the sort of transaction that fills the hearts of honest Single Taxers with glee—and also with regret.

The club purchased the site thirty years ago for \$175,000. Whatever the improvements may have cost it is not probable that the present purchaser considers them of value. The present sale price of more than a million dollars is the site value at the moment. The difference is what the Single Taxer describes as "unearned increment," for which the owners were in no wise responsible.

It is difficult for the reasonable and socially minded individual to escape the conviction that such a profit is somehow essentially unfair and that a large part of such profits from land-holding should, under such circumstances, revert to the city.—N. Y. *Evening World*.

## LAND TRIBAL PROPERTY AMONG THE INDIANS

The Indian originally lived under a different property system than the one we are accustomed to and in whose terms we habitually think, for among all Indians the land was tribal property. No such thing as individual ownership was conceived. Further, all individuals regardless of age or sex shared equally. There is then no such thing as inheritance, for when an Indian dies he ceases to have a share. Personal property was recognized, but consisted in the results of labor and ingenuity, as food, clothing, dogs, horses, etc. This could be passed on to one's children, but land and its resources were tribal property, in which all shared equally. So when oil was discovered upon Indian lands the United States Government, as the self-appointed guardian of the Indian, saw to it that a fair return was pledged and that the tribe got its due; but when the cash is to be distributed they count heads and every one from the babe in arms to the dying is apportioned an equal share. Thus it was that a family of five persons, for example, would receive more than \$50,000 every few months.—CLARKE WISSLER, Curator, Dept. of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History.

## ONE WAY TO GET RICH

One of the oldest and most valuable real estate holdings on Manhattan Island will continue intact. The will of Miss Mary Eliza Astor Wendel leaves to her three sisters her share of the old Wendel estate.

The old Wendel house is on the northwest corner of Fifth avenue and Thirty-ninth street. The land occupied by the house and the grounds around it are worth millions of dollars. It is only one of the valuable pieces of property which the original Wendels accumulated. They made a rule never to sell and rarely to improve. The values of their property

increased not by reason of the improvements they built or their business activities but because of the growth of New York and the costly buildings that other people erected next to the Wendel lots.

Of the families that lived in New York a hundred years ago almost any one would be very wealthy now if they had done what the Wendels did—buy land and buildings, take the rents to pay taxes and buy more land and buildings, live inexpensively and never sell. Probably it is not as easy to "sit tight" like that as it seems. And it would not help the world very much if it became a general practice.—N. Y. *Evening Mail*.

## WE MUST BUY IF WE WOULD SELL

Many of our people still fail to realize that the word 'trade' means an exchange of goods or services. Most of us still cling to the idea that international trade, as the term applies to America, means that we can sell freely to all the markets of the world, and in turn need buy from them little or nothing. This theory, which seems to be the basis of much of our tariff legislation, will, if pursued, surely wreck a big part of our foreign trade. If there is any one motto which American producers and legislators should learn by heart it is that oft-repeated one of the British merchant who over a century ago declared that 'He who will not buy, neither shall he sell. —THOMAS W. LAMONT.

## ORGANIZED LABOR AND THE SINGLE TAX

The term "Single Tax" has come to have a technical meaning, but its full significance is not appreciated. It is known in a general way that it refers to a land tax.

Advocates of the Single Tax make extensive claims for their proposition, and a large measure of their claims have been clearly demonstrated by the records and practices of experience. The Single Tax process is so simple and involves so little change in the laws, and accomplishes its work in such a subtle way that it seems incredible, and therefore does not receive the consideration its virtues merit.

The main principle involved in the theory is that land is limited in quantity and is a necessity of the race, and is therefore capable of monopolization; that its value is not the result of the labor of any one person, but arises from either natural advantage or from social growth and that this value should be taken by the government by means of a land value tax, which cannot be shifted to the user, or consumer.

This tax should not be levied on improvements, but just on the value that comes to the land from its location or its natural advantage. It represents billions of value in the United States, and is the creation of all society, and is now absorbed by the land-owning class.

The Single Taxers advocate taking the tax off of all other forms of property and placing it on the value of the bare land. The effect claimed for this system is that production of wealth would be stimulated, as repressive taxes would be lifted, and idle land would be either improved or abandoned, as no one would hold land out of use when all speculative advantage would be wiped out.

Private ownership of land as we know it today is an age-old institution and was the first means of exploiting the workers. It is today the basis of monopoly and a potent means of obstructing production and despoiling the producer.

A land value tax would squeeze the speculative value out of land by forcing unused land on the market, and would remove obstacles from and abolish penalties on improvements. Mineral, timber, farm and city land would be used or freed for those who could and would carry on production, and would in a large degree open up opportunities for labor.

Its simplicity, practicability and desirability should command organized labor's support.

*Union Advocate*, St. Paul, Minn.

#### DECREASING OPPORTUNITIES

The resources of the country and its land have passed into the hands of a limited few, while for the majority the opportunity to rise is out of the question. The great change that has come upon the country in the past twenty-five years is this, that whereas formerly working for wages was but a transitional stage in the life of the average worker it is today his permanent lot. This is a fundamental point to consider in dealing with the modern labor problem.

—*Buffalo Labor Journal*.

#### LLOYD GEORGE A GOOD ENOUGH SINGLE TAXER IN 1910

That earnest publication, *THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW*, suggests in the October number that Lloyd George is a Single Taxer. He is not that, not a man of one remedy, one idea, or of any settled "ism." But he did say in 1903, at Newcastle:

"It is all very well to produce bills for the housing of the working classes. They will never be effective until we tackle the taxation of land values."

He also said in Glasgow, early in 1914:

"There is one deep, underlying principle of all sound, just beneficent land laws in every land—that land in all countries was created by providence for the benefit of all those who dwell therein, and that any privileges, rights or interests attaching for the time being, whatever their origin may be, to the ownership of land that are inconsistent with this great purpose, ought, in the interests of the community, to be ruthlessly overridden."

Lloyd George doesn't believe in Single Tax as preached by its specialists. He knows that human selfishness and its passion for individual land ownership must be used in developing the earth. But he does believe that this earth

was intended for the fifteen hundred million people that live on it, not for a few with cunning that enables them to monopolize the earth and its wealth. There is a REAL radical loose in England—a good thing for the world.

ARTHUR BRISBANE, in *New York American*

#### LAW AND BUILDING

If you do not believe that law affects business and building, consider this. Building permits issued in Greater New York City in March totalled \$104,598,548 in estimated valuation. Permits in the same city in April totaled \$39,776,475 in estimated valuation.—a diminution in return so great that it outweighed comfortable advances made in April throughout the United States.

More than to anything else, this fluctuation can be laid to the fact that New York's tax exemption law was due to expire at the end of March and it was doubtful if the Lockwood Committee could get an extension. Consequently anyone who thought he might want to build within quite a wide range of time, hastened to obtain his permit. This explains why March was so fat a month and why April was so lean a month in New York City, and it is conclusive proof that the certain tax exemption law in question was mighty influential.—*Realty News*, Buffalo, N.Y.

#### DO MEN PREFER THE PRESENT SYSTEM?

Apparently, as average citizens, we would sooner live under the domination of landlords and worry our heads off to pay rent than apply a sensible plan like Single Tax and restrict the possession of land to actual use, and thus make it possible for all to own homes.—*Cleveland Citizen*

#### SLAVES OF TRADITION

In nothing are we more the creatures of habit, the slaves of tradition, than in the choosing of our revenue-raising methods. No matter how unscientific and ill-adapted to present-day needs they may be, if they have been sanctified by long usage it is almost impossible to displace them.

We still persist in assessing land and the buildings thereon as a single unit of wealth, although in so doing we penalize the public-spirited owner who improves his property and stimulates business, while we reward the selfish owner or speculator who holds his land unimproved and waits to profit by the increased value that the growth of the community gives to it. Most communities are so wedded to the old ways and so averse to the very names of different systems, such as Single Tax, that they refuse to take even the half-way step of making dual assessments on land and improvements. One of the few evidences of political enlightenment New York City has given is the adoption of this rational and equitable plan.

Philadelphia *North American*

#### HENRY GEORGE AS ONE MAN KNEW HIM

In my formative period I had the privilege of meeting Henry George and being converted by him to his gospel.

I also knew Louis F. Post and Tom L. Johnson. Henry George was one of the most charming and attractive men I ever met. He had a mild voice and a mild manner. He was modest to a degree. He had no conception that he was a great man. He did not think that Single Tax was his discovery. He felt that he had merely stated an obvious fact in writing his book, 'Progress and Poverty.' Do you know that no man is more responsible for the progress of the labor movement in England than Henry George? There he is looked up to as one of the world's great reformers.—BISHOP WILLIAMS, in an interview in Portland (Oregon) *Journal*.

#### WHO OWNS THE COAL?

*The coal supply is a natural resource and public necessity. It is privately owned and operated, but it belongs to the public. It not only belongs to the public of today, but to future generations.—Cleveland News.*

#### TAX NOTHING YOU WANT TO KEEP

As good a pair of rules as can be formulated for the guidance of legislators is found in the simple precepts: Tax nothing that you want to keep; tax nothing that can move. The best way to get rid of undesirable things is to tax them; on the other hand, the best way to stimulate the production and maintenance of desirable things is to exempt them from taxation. Again, if movable things are taxed they will move, just as capital is moving out of Switzerland at the prospect of a tax. Personal property can move, all forms of wealth can move. The one thing that cannot move is land. The production of wealth is desirable, the possession of wealth is desirable; the more wealth produced and the more of it we all have, the better off we are. The one thing that is distinctly undesirable is the private monopoly of publicly-created land-values. Well, then, since land cannot move and the monopoly of land-values is undesirable, the logical thing would be, as we see it, to tax nothing but land-values and to tax those at the rate of one hundred cents in the dollar. As a fiscal policy, we can see nothing against this procedure, and everything in its favor.—*The Freeman*.

#### THE IMMIGRATION FALLACY

In regard to the question of immigration many economists of the present day would seem to be lingering in a primitive state of the science similar to that which prevailed in medicine a hundred years ago. Most human ailments were then ascribed either to "too much blood" in the body, or at least to a congestion of this vital fluid in a particular member. In either case the lancet or the leech was the first and often the sole remedy employed.

"Blood-letting," the draining of workers away from a country assumed to be "over-crowded," is said, in an otherwise excellent article on Immigration which we reproduce on page 49 from *Commerce Monthly*, to be "theoretically" a relief for the congestion.

The real cure is, of course, establishment of a free and healthy condition in the country by just and wise government, giving the people access to land now monopolized by Dukes and Junkers, and also by readjustment of international politics on a basis, as sensible and as mutually profitable as it is humane, by which industry would be encouraged in every land through reciprocal trade arrangements.

If these reforms were made, no immigration legislation would be necessary.

The acceptance of economic fallacies, such as "Malthusianism" (supposed to be a postulate of Darwin's theory of the "survival of the fittest," but shown by Dr. Woods Hutchinson, in his "Gospel According to Darwin," to be antagonistic to the theory) and the Wages Fund Theory (abandoned in wiser years by its originator, John Stuart Mill), explains the puzzlement of such industrial writers as the author of the *Commerce Monthly* article why a remedy "theoretically" sound leads in practise to effects directly opposite to those expected.

The Three Per Cent Limitation Law keeps out of the United States the laborers we want, who would add to our wealth and build up our industry, thereby in the end increasing demand for more labor than they themselves supply; and at the same time the law raises the percentage of dependent immigrants!

*India Rubber Review*

#### THE RIGHT TO LAND

We should never let our prejudices interfere with our judgment, nor with our appreciation of the truth wherever we find it.

A good many of us see red whenever the doctrine of Single Tax is mentioned.

But we should remember that the basic principle upon which Single Tax is based is not a novel one. It is not some crazy theory that was first put forth by Henry George. It is as old as English law.

That principle is that the land ultimately belongs to the community, and not to the individual. We find in Blackstone the statement that a fundamental of the common law is that holding of title to land (including minerals, forests and waters) and the appropriation of the increase in value due to the community is not a right inherent in the individual, but a privilege granted by the State or nation.

Title deeds are really nothing more than perpetual leases from the State subject to an annual charge (tax). This is apparent when we reflect that the State unquestionably has power to raise the tax on any piece of land sufficient to make it impossible for the owner to hold it.

Whether Single Tax is advisable or not, we do not here discuss. We simply call attention to the fact that the foundations upon which Single Taxers build their arguments have been in the ground as long as the foundations of Westminster Abbey.—*N. Y. American*.