

Objections and Answers to Single Tax Party Action

OBJECTION—Any vote that Single Taxers might cast would be so small as to be contemptible, or at least negligible, thus carrying with it no influence upon public thought.

ANSWER—If we are small in numbers our influence upon public thought will be negligible inside or outside the great political parties. That influence would be negligible in any form of organization, regardless of course of its possible intellectual potency. But parties must be begun in a small way—they do not spring full-armed, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. They grow by accretion; if the central principle for which they stand is a sound one they will grow surely and steadily, if but slowly.

OBJECTION—Our aim should be education, not political action until the time is ripe, or until Single Tax parties spring spontaneously—which will be proof of the ripeness of time.

ANSWER—True, our aim should be educational. But how can men and women best be educated? Every principle that is a political principle, in this country at least, must be fought out at the polls and carried by the vote of the people. Men and women are best educated by having a political principle presented as a political issue. In this way, and in this way chiefly if not solely, certainly most directly, are converts made and retained. They are made more quickly in this way because they are then able to act upon such conviction in the way most familiar to them, and they are retained more surely, since the question then becomes a continuous political issue. Party organization gives the advocates of a great reform a nucleus for association and a rallying point.

Again, parties do not spring spontaneously—they only seem to. They are begun—like any other kind of organization. The "ripeness of time" may be deferred by many considerations—and some of these will not bear a very close scrutiny. Single Taxers may have other ambitions that defer the "ripeness of time," and naturally—for we are asking them to risk much and abandon, for a long time at least, the dreams of political preferment. It may not be entirely fair to criticize them for failing to take the step fatal to their aspirations. It is therefore a question for the rank and file to decide. It is not a question to be put up to the leaders—to Single Taxers in office. In fairness to them we cannot ask them to make the sacrifice. In fairness to ourselves we cannot solicit their counsel.

OBJECTION—By standing as an independent party we alienate the men and women of other political parties. We can best accomplish our purpose by activities within existing parties.

ANSWER—It may be sufficient to reply that thirty years experience has disclosed the ineffectiveness of this method. Being traditionally Democrats, Single Taxers have for the most part acted with that party, with the result that we have made no impression on the Democrats and have succeeded in large degree in antagonizing the Republicans.

We have made not a single convert of any distinguished Democrat—not one. The fatal weakness of preaching the Single Tax inside the political parties is that being numerically inferior, and the party itself being organized for victory and not for reform purposes—and certainly not for a reform which would deprive them in large measure of the means by which they live—Single Taxers are regarded as minority members to whom no concessions need be offered as a condition of allegiance, even when demanded, and it may be said that they have rarely been very strongly demanded. We have given notice to the Democratic Party that we are with it, willy-nilly—so our vagaries are pleasantly tolerated by the party bosses and party candidates.

But there are further fatal objections. We may join the Democratic or Republican Parties with a sincere purpose of gaining an influence for the propagation of our doctrines. But when the freshness of the idea has waned, together with perhaps the enthusiasm of youth, the preaching of our doctrine and the insistence upon its necessity give place to the allurements of party questions with which the political firmament resounds at election time. This policy of throwing our strength with the Democratic Party, or acting within that party, has made many effective Democrats, but few long-lived evangelists for the Single Tax principle. On the other hand, it has lost to us a long line of former effective propagandists. Even as the Democratic Party has become the dominant party, and some of our formerly accredited leaders have become prominent, they have manifested no disposition to sound the clarion call for the true emancipation. The reason is clear and must always affect the situation disastrously. And except for the few men who are born leaders and prophets of a great cause, we who would rest our hopes on political leaders rely on broken reeds.

OBJECTION—Where the Initiative and Referendum are the law there is no need of a Single Tax Party. For in these States special measures or constitutional amendments may be voted on after overcoming the preliminary difficulties of obtaining signatures to petitions.

ANSWER—We are not so sure that organization corresponding to party organization, may not prove even in these States, to be the most desirable and effective. But here it becomes more purely a matter of expediency. *The chief thing to be desired is that Single Taxers vote for the Single Tax and not for something else.* In California and Missouri where direct legislation is the law they are doing this, and it holds together the real friends of the movement and very effectually separates the sheep from the goats. They who want the Single Tax will not hesitate to vote for it and they will not seek flimsy excuses for separating themselves from the main body of our believers.

It is true that many of our former leaders who have been especially active for the I and R have not been of the kind to inspire confidence among militant Single Taxers. But these leaders are no longer with us, with timid and hesitating counsel. The rising tide of impatience with old and obsolete methods of propaganda, the new spirit that must

determine the course of our agitation in the next few years, are either converting these old leaders to new methods, or relegating to obscurity those who do not wish to be converted. This is aside from the main theme, though it is pertinent now in the consideration of the question, "Why a Single Tax Party?"

OBJECTION—Party action by Single Taxers has been tried and has failed. It failed in Chicago, in Philadelphia, in New York. Mr. George himself abandoned it because of its demonstrated futility.

ANSWER—It has not failed. On the contrary, it has always succeeded. That its first humble appeals after being deprived of its great leader were abandoned with small results, does not prove that it was a failure. Other parties have had quite as humble beginnings, and many unsuccessful attempts have marked the history of every political party. The campaigns of 1886, 1887 and 1897 gave us our most distinguished converts. The party method and the direct appeal to the voters, abandoned in 1887, was called into being again in 1897 with new and splendid results in the making of converts. These periods of party activity should be compared with the small results of the twenty or thirty years succeeding. In 1887 the Socialists departed from their purely propaganda stage and became a political party. How that party has succeeded needs no special comment. Its real victories are its astonishing influence upon public opinion. Had Single Taxers been as wise in the adoption of political methods, might not the philosophy of individualism been as far advanced? To argue that would not imply a doubt of the soundness of our philosophy.

\$5,000 Reward.

FOR evidence that will convince us of the truth of any of the following statements.

- That vacant lots reduce rents.
- That vacant lots furnish homes for families.
- That vacant lots give employment to the building trades.
- That vacant lots buy merchandise from business men.
- That vacant lots help in any way to win the war.
- That idle farms lessen the prices of food.
- That idle farms supply homes for the farmers and their children.
- That idle farms engage farmers in profitable employment.
- That idle farms purchase agricultural machinery.
- That idle farms produce the food that will win the war.
- That unused mines cheapen the price of coal.
- That unused mines increase the wages of miners.
- That unused mines employ capital productively.
- That unused mines buy mining machinery.
- That unused mines supply the coal necessary to win the war.

You can have that \$5,000 if you present the evidence as directed above.

To allow these vacant lots, idle farms and unused mines to exist in time of peace is criminal; in time of war it is monstrous.

You are a party to this crime. Innocent maybe, but still a party.

Are you going to continue to deprive the country of its vital needs?

Why not turn these vacant lots into homes, stores or factories?

Wouldn't that reduce rents, create demand for labor and merchandise?

Are you opposed? Or do you agree?

Why not convert these idle farms into grain, vegetables, meat and eggs?

Won't that lessen the high prices of food? Are you insane? If not it must be quite clear to you.

Why not transmute those unused coal lands into coal?

Won't that make heat cheaper this winter? What's the matter with you?

Can't you think? We know you can, so read the remedy. These desirable things can be easily done—one way.

Won't you get busy and help?

Make it unprofitable to keep lots vacant.

Make it too costly to hold farms out of use.

Make it too expensive to withhold coal lands from development.

One single stroke will accomplish this. A Single Tax on the value of land. It will also release industry from the crushing burden it now staggers under. It will tax the owners of idle lands till they let go.

What are you going to do about it?

Going to "throw your vote away" as you have been doing?

You have been voting as the "wise" ones told you a long time. Now look back a few years; are you any better off? Is it any easier to live? The "wise" ones vote for themselves and get you to vote for them. Why not begin to vote for your own moral and material interest? Is it wrong to benefit by your own moral efforts? Wrong to receive the results of your own labor?

Henry George Day at Arden

A MEETING at which Henry George's birthday was celebrated was held at Arden, Delaware, September 1st, the principal feature of which was the liberal sum contributed to the Great Adventure campaign in California. After several addresses had been made, supplemented by an exquisite musical programme, Joseph Hagerty, of the "Old Guard" of the Kensington district in Philadelphia, was introduced as the last speaker. Mr. Hagerty, who is one of the field agents of the Great Adventure Contributors League, surprised the audience by offering to give one hundred dollars to California if somebody would match the amount. He was taken up by Mr. John Goldsmith, one of the speakers, and before he finished his earnest solicitations over five hundred dollars was pledged. Nearly two hundred dollars of this amount was paid in before the crowd of about seventy-five people disbanded. In spite of the interest in the war the movement is taking on a new impulse because of the possibility of success in California.