

The Single Tax in Brazil

THE following statement, made recently by Dr. Luis Silveira, of Sao Paulo, Brazil, appears in the September issue, 1922, of the *Revista del Impuesta Unico*, and will interest American Single Taxers whose attention has been drawn of late years to the remarkable growth of Single Tax opinion in South America.

Dr. Silveira has acted as financial and fiscal adviser to successive State governments in Sao Paulo and has in that capacity investigated every phase of the land tax as source of revenue and stimulates to production. His present statement brings out the fact that the roots of the present land reform agitation in Brazil go back at least eighty years in her history:

"Some generous journalistic friends of mine, says Dr. Silveira, have referred to me as the first to discuss the land tax amongst us. I attribute this courtesy to my gray hairs. As a matter of fact, according to Tavareo Bastos, the land tax was decreed in 1843. In the years 1849, 1867, 1874 and 1879, the subject was brought before Parliament but its serious study evaded.

"In 1877 the Baron of Rosario pointed out that house rent was constantly rising and that, notwithstanding, many proprietors, owners of large tracts of land in the best urban sections, did not use them for building nor sell them at reasonable prices for others to build. He advised the creation of a tax that would make it unprofitable to keep those sites vacant.

"In his report for the year 1891, Ruy Barbosa, adopting the opinion of the Baron of Rosario, proposed the creation of such a tax, as a penalty for the proprietors who gather around cities and along roads and navigable rivers, great extensions of landed property which, without being given over to building or cultivation, represent dead capital for themselves and for the State.

"In his monumental declaration of policy at Santa Maria, in 1908, Assis Brazil analyzed the multiple taxes in force and contrasted them with the land tax, emphasizing the difference. In the case of the latter, he pointed out as the land pays on its intrinsic value and not on what it produces annually, there is a very simple way of paying less, namely, make the land produce more. 'Thus,' continued the eminent citizen, 'the land tax offers a stimulus and reward to the production of wealth, instead of acting as an obstruction.'

"We see therefore that, both under the monarchial and the republican regimes, the land problem has preoccupied the best statesmen of Brazil. In the last years of the monarchy which were agitated by the republican campaign, the government could not carry out such a transcendental reform. It now devolves upon the republic to carry it out, for the greater glory of her public men, and also because, as stated by our great president Borges de Medeiros: 'there is no longer any room for discussion as to the superiority of the single land tax, which has in its favor the unanimous opinion of economists and real statesmen.'