

The Single Tax.

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"To raise and maintain wages is the great object that all who live by wages ought to seek, and working men are right in supporting any measure that will attain that object. Nor in this are they acting selfishly, for, while the question of wages is the most important of questions to labourers, it is also the most important of questions to society at large. Whatever improves the condition of the lowest and broadest social stratum must promote the true interests of all. Where the wages of common labour are high, and remunerative employment is easy to obtain, prosperity will be general; where wages are highest there will be the largest production and the most equitable distribution of wealth. There will invention be most active, and the brain best guide the hand; there will be the greatest comfort, the widest diffusion of knowledge, the purest morals, and the truest patriotism. If we would have a healthy, a happy, an enlightened, and a virtuous people—if we would have a pure Government, firmly based on the popular will and quickly responsive to it—we must strive to raise wages and keep them high."—Henry George, "Protection or Free Trade."

DULL TRADE—THE SINGLE TAX REMEDY.

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT, addressing the London Chamber of Commerce, June 13th, said, *inter alia*, that "the past year showed an increase of £7,000,000, as compared with last year, in the savings of the poorer classes, and that these had now in the savings banks a sum of no less than £128,000,000." This must be very interesting to the "poorer classes" out of work. Sir WILLIAM also told his audience that "there were in trade a hot fit and a cold fit, and the fit was very cold indeed just now. . . . He did not want to have their gold (wealth) in a pond so much as in a running stream." But what will it matter, after all, if when the desired thaw comes, the wealth flows down the same old-time honoured stream of inequality? Some will get a fairer share for a time, but the stagnation will again set in, and the rich will be richer and the poor will be but thrown into a keener struggle for a place to earn a living wage "Low prices," said Sir WILLIAM, "accompany dull trade. There was no lack of capital. What was wanted was rather the means of employment of capital." Well, why not follow up that statement? Where can capital find employment? Where can labour find employment? Is it not in and on the land—the only natural opportunities to employment? When any work is done it will be done on land, and will consist

in growing food and modifying the raw material of land into desirable forms to sustain life and gratify human desire. Why, then, if there is lack of neither capital nor labour, have we dull trade? Let capital and labour advance one step to secure land, and the root cause of the trouble will present itself to them in the form of landlordism. Some landowner will be there, and unless they agree to hand over a goodly share of what they produce they must stand aside. Where land is urgently wanted, or where the landowner anticipates this, a prohibitive price will be demanded. Dull Trade, which is simply No Trade, sets in to those affected. They, in turn, ceasing to be wage-earners, will have their purchasing power checked. Those who have been supplying same will in turn be thrown out of employment, and so this first shock given by private property in land to trade gets on its way, and acts and reacts throughout the whole industrial world. These effects meet like effects from every centre of industry, and the outcome everywhere is trade depression. What else is it but this land monopoly that shuts out employment? It keeps from industry desirable land, and, as a consequence, both capital and labour are forced into idleness. "Low prices," says Sir WILLIAM, "are due to the ingenuity of man." This is true. Invention brings newer and cheaper methods of wealth production; but this only makes land more valuable, and the increase is taken from both capital and labour in the form of higher rent. For example: the *Board of Trade Journal* calculates that the cost of carrying various goods from Manchester to Liverpool through the new canal has been reduced over 100 per cent, and that *correspondingly the values of all adjacent land have gone up by leaps and bounds*. Land has become valuable that before the canal was thought of could be had for an old song. We cannot combat this tendency of value attaching to land, nor is it desirable. Material progress brings more efficient tools and enables labour to produce things with less exertion. Commodities are thus cheapened, and where these can be produced best land will acquire a greater value. It is the result of society's growth, and if these land values are taken for the uses of society from those in possession as the property of the whole people, and, at the same time, all taxation removed from all forms of industry, it is surely clear that the wheels of the industrial machine would get properly oiled and started. No one could keep valuable land out of use unless by paying its value into the common exchequer, and no one would be foolish enough to do so. The land would be freed from the "dead hand," and every step forward would bring richer rewards both to labour and to the nation generally as the common landowner. This is the Single Tax Remedy for Dull Trade—to take by a Single Tax the values of land for public purposes, and to relieve industry of all present taxation, the tax to fall on the *value* of all land, vacant

land included. The vacant land at present held out of use would thus be forced out of the hands of land *owners* into the hands of land *users*. Capital and labour, freed not only from the claims of landlordism but from the heavy burden of taxation, would, like prisoners freed from bondage, rise and set to work, inspired by the knowledge of their freedom both to produce and to enjoy what they produced. Under such conditions of economic freedom dull trade would soon become a thing of the past. It may seem strange to many that we should claim so much from a mere change in the incidence of taxation; but if land monopoly be the primary cause of dull trade, and material progress under present conditions can only tend to induce a closer monopoly of land by raising its value at every step forward, and if the Single Tax will destroy the only incentive to keep desirable land idle—that is, the power of the landowners to take these values as they arise for their own behoof—it must surely be granted that the Single Tax will solve the problem. That there are many other things to do is another story. Our claim is that unless land monopoly be first of all destroyed and society put in possession of the values of land, which are created by the presence, growth, and industry of the whole people, nothing else will avail. Nay, more—the very improvements that are effected by trade combinations and Governmental control and inspection, which are so very popular among labour leaders (so-called), but go to enrich the few monopolists, and lead them to draw closer the cords that are choking both labour and capital. It is freedom trade wants and not regulation. The much-maligned law of supply and demand will ever be the best regulator.

STILL THEY COME!

A NEW Party—the "Isocrats"—has been formed. Their programme is to attack the oligarchy first, then the plutocracy, to house the masses, and give the land to the people; they will begin with the progressive taxation of Ground Rents, and "other minor points of less importance will quickly follow." The price of the book that expounds all this is 14s. "Progress and Poverty" can be had for a few pence. It advocates the taking by taxation, not merely "ground rents," but the whole economic value of land, and deals with the "other minor points" by the way. One of the collaborators of the New Party's book—Mr. W. P. BYLES, M.P., says, "Take all the restriction off land, and all restriction off labour, and then a fairy with a magic wand would set all things right in a night." That is just what "Progress and Poverty" teaches and provokes to the hilt. It is the economy and philosophy of the Single Tax; and it doesn't matter to Single Taxmen what party gives legislative effect to it, new or old, provided it comes. Events are steadily tending things our way. Even members of this New Party—men and women—sneer at the "inadequacy of the Single Tax," and yet it overshadows and influences their first practical proposals. True, they plead for Socialism, but that is merely so much rhetoric. The remedy for our sickness lies not in iron ring of universal state control. Such a state might have paddled along in the middle ages fairly well, but in these days of industrial extension and world-wide commercial enterprise the notion of extinguishing competition is positively ludicrous. The real remedy