

The Single Tax, March, 1897

Land Nationalisation or Single Tax.

We have been asked by a correspondent, who admits the justice and excellence of the Single Tax as a solution of the Land Question, if we do not think the people can be more readily won by some scheme of land purchase?

We answer no; that is not our experience. Outside of the propaganda of our ever active friends—the Land Nationalises—the question, as they advocate it, is seldom or never alluded to. The Single Tax, or the Taxation of Land Values, which is the Single Taxers' first step, is winning all along the line. Scarcely a paper of any importance with the people but mentions it as a first question. Advanced politicians everywhere are becoming alive to its importance, and making favourable pronouncements. Mr. Thomas Cameron presents the case in another place in this paper for those willing to examine the relative merits of the two proposals. Mr. Cameron speaks for our side. That the people will rise quicker to a scheme for land purchase as against Taxation of Land Values And no compensation, is, we venture to say, an unwarranted assumption.

Economic tendencies are constantly at work modifying and creating new conditions. Shall we turn them to the service of society by removing the obstruction of land monopoly, by the simple expedient of Taxing Land Values, or shall we galvanise them by State enactments into a promise to pay for permission to occupy the citadel of the monopolist? The power of land monopoly is not the power to dictate the terms of a subsistence wage. It is the power to render the people helpless, so that they come begging for employment at subsistence point. If the Taxation of Land Values will open the natural reservoir to employment, it is surely the first thing required. The State would do this we are told. Very good. But that is all it could do. That the State could manage the land better than the landlords may be admitted, but not better than the people.

All that the people want is access to land, and that is what the Single Tax would destroy ownership and recognise only possession in land, while the rent or values, apart from improvements, would be used to defray the cost of all government. Under such economic conditions, industry would be relieved from all present rates and taxes, and trade would no longer hold a commerce with restriction, State or otherwise.

This is what the Single Tax means and if a verdict in its favour cannot be had from the people soon, it will come all the sooner by working for it; and certainly the scheme of land nationalisation cannot, by even a wide stretch of the imagination, be called a question of immediate practical politics The Taxation of Land Values is; and, having first place it should-as it can-be pushed to the front by all genuine Radicals and Land Reformers, as the point of least resistance.