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Two Minds with but a Single Tax

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Poachers Welcomed No Keeper on Estate Of Ideal Landlord

PATRICK EDWARD DOVE defined his terms in *Elements of Social Science*, in 1854, showing many parallels of thought between himself and Henry George. This book is less easily obtainable by students of pre-George reformers than the Kellogg condensation of *The Theory of Human Progression* and is therefore quoted liberally in this article.

The style of the old Scotch Presbyterian, who believed that in its own turn and time, religion too, would, by the natural process of knowledge, enter into the field of the known, is perhaps strange to our ears. Here we see the same picture shown in our familiar charts representing Ricardo's Law of Rent. Henry George stated it as *The rent of land determined by the excess of its produce over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use.* (*Progress and Poverty*).

The passages giving Scottish historical background are charming, if quaint, and should not be missed. Dove held that God provided the Scotch with protein in the form of grouse and salmon to compensate for the lesser nutritive value of oats as compared with wheat. The people could not hunt the grouse or catch the salmon without being apprehended as criminals, for landlords in Scotland had become water-lords and air-lords as well. (The condition was not very remote from that delightfully ridiculed in *Revolt in Arcadia* by Gosta Larsson, wherein the people wore air-meters so that they could be taxed for the air that they breathed.) This is contained in the abridgment. One is reminded of Adam Smith's disquisition on the inferiority of oats, in which he affirms the Scotch oat-diet to be the cause of the smaller stature of the Scots as compared with that of the English. Considering the energy of the Scotch and of the Irish throughout history, one suspects oats and potatoes of some vital virtues despite science and opinion.

Foresaw "Hidden Taxes"

Dove shows the whole fraudulent origin of our present system of "paying twice," by recalling that "human society in its present form, grew gradually out of the feudal constitution of society in which the aristocrat was the state-soldier, the lands which were the *benefices* of the state-soldier were transformed into the property of the individual, independent, and non-responsible landlord—a few thousands of whom now enjoy what was formerly the taxation of the kingdom, while the laborers have to pay *another taxation* equal to the rents of the soil." Thus "Private Rent is historically appropriated Public Taxation . . . And thus the present rents of the land holders are really and truly *transformed taxation* . . . thus the labouring classes, who formerly paid only taxation, now pay both

rent and taxation, and consequently are *robbed*, for robbery it is, of the *profits* of their labours."

Follows an especially pertinent statement reminiscent of what Henry George wrote of "The Robber that takes all that is left," when he said, "it will not help a man to drive off one robber, (protection) if another, still stronger and more rapacious, be left to plunder him . . . And the robber that takes all that is left, is private property in land."

Dove: "With a purely agricultural population there can be no *rent*—there may be *taxation*, that is, *payment out of the profits of labour for the service of the state*, or there may be robbery, that is, *payment extracted by force out of the profits of labour to support a non-labouring aristocracy.*"

Dove thoroughly understood that population creates land value, and consequently rent. He
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chose an area of London for his example, which, although of smaller scope than that of George's savannah, is no less sharply drawn. He wrote:

"The rent of any one portion of soil does *not* depend on the labour of capital that has been expended on that portion. For instance, if in the heart of London, a space of 20 acres had been enclosed by a high wall at the time of the Norman Conquest, and if no man had ever touched that portion of soil, (or even seen it from that time to this,) it would, if let by auction, produce an enormously high rent . . . It is a well-known and commonly observed fact, that the establishment of manufactures greatly increases the rent of the surrounding soil—in fact, that this increase of rent has been *created* by the manufacturers.

Clear Reasoning Unassailable

Dove's "Logic of the Single Tax" is as clear and uncompromising as that of every one else who has completely grasped the idea. On this subject, students should be urged to read the sections in the Kellogg condensation *at the same time* that they read "The Remedy" in the course in Fundamental Economics. A brief excerpt points up the whole matter.

"If, then, successive generations of men cannot have their fractional share of the actual soil (including mines, etc.), how can the division of the advantages of the natural earth be effected?

"By the division of its annual value or rent; that is, by making the rent of the soil the common property of the nation. . . . by taking the whole of the taxes out of the rents of the soil and thereby abolishing all other kinds of taxation whatever. And thus all industry would be

absolutely emancipated from every burden, and every man would reap such natural reward as his skill, industry, or enterprise rendered legitimately his, according to the natural law of free competition."

A few pages will bring conviction that scientific truth is exceedingly probable when originating in two minds that quite independently of each other say the same thing. I believe that at this point every student should be introduced to certain passages from Spence Ogilvie and the Physiocrats.

The Just Course

Here is Dove's final solution: "To whom, then, *ought* the rents of the soil to be equitably allocated? . . . I do not hesitate to say to the Nation. For the service of the Nation, taxes must be derived from some quarter or other, and if the taxes had always been derived from the rents of the soil, there never would have been any tax on industry, any Custom House, any Excise, or any of these restrictive measures that repress industry, while they eminently contribute to separate nation from nation, and to prevent the commercial intercourse that would ultimately have abolished war. National Property there must be *somewhere*, and assuredly it is more just to take that property from the natural value of the soil than from the individual fruits of labour."

Besides the abolition of customs and excises, which "would . . . set free for useful industry a great army of unproductive workers, Dove lists six other advantages of the single tax that go deeply into the philosophy of justice and in-

places are reminiscent of the "Canons of Taxation."

- 2.) "It would make one simple tax, which could be collected without expense.
- 3.) "It would unite the agricultural and manufacturing classes into one common interest. The greater the revenue, the better it would be for the nation; whereas now, the greater the revenue, the worse for the nation.
- 4.) "It would secure the utmost possible production that the soil was capable of affording.
- 5.) "It would eminently tend to secure the education of the people, because—as the State would be directly interested in the labours of every man, and an educated population would always be more productive than an ignorant population—the State might consequently be trusted to suppress all that was detrimental to their welfare; to encourage skill, industry, and talent by providing the fullest possible instruction for the whole nation."

In the 6th of his "canons" Dove recognized "The Problem" George so eloquently posed in his introduction to *Progress and Poverty*. More civilization has always meant more want for many. The nearer conditions approached those of pioneer days, the more was comfortable, even if frugal, security obtained. Dove viewed the less developed civilization of America by comparing it with the British scene:

"It (the single tax) would secure to every labourer his share of the previous labours of the community. It is quite evident that a greater amount of outlay has been made on the island of Great Britain than on any other part of the world of similar extent. Yet the labourer who inherits all these facilities is not so well off as in Arkansas or Wisconsin, where no capital has been previously expended. This is in itself a sufficient profit that there is something wrong in the very construction of Society; for undoubtedly a man born in a country where thousands of millions have been expended in rendering that country more suitable for man's requirements ought to find his labour better remunerated than in a country that remains in a state of nature.

7.) "The allocation of the rents of the

soil is the only possible means by which a *just* distribution of the created wealth can be effected."

Landlordism Castigated

The old-time Presbyterian did not hesitate to state which interests were in harmony, which were opposed. Although he admitted that a systematic cooperation in the whole field of labour was also useful"—(a statement that would please the labor-relations agencies and offend no one; witness the feats in this field accomplished by the Lincoln Electric Company of Cleveland). Nowhere is Dove duped into thinking that the capitalist is the villain, for he says, "Landlords are the natural enemies of God and Man." In Alexander Harvey's introduction to the abridgment, we learn that Dove himself was the grand exception, "the most popular landlord in Scotland," for "this landlord did not believe in landlords . . . He had no keeper on his great estate, (The Craig) and no poacher was ever interfered with." A landlord in fact, he did not live like one, for he practiced his beliefs.

To uphold his view of the natural antithesis, Dove states:

"It is the law of God, as declared in the constitution of the terrestrial world, and the law of Christianity, as declared in the Scriptures, that the industrious man should be rich; and that the man who labours should not be poor. The whole economy of Britain is a direct infringement of this great law of property—of this great and fundamental principle which God established for the economical government of the world, when He made the earth to yield its riches in return for human labour. The richest men in England are those who do not labour, and who never did labour. Their wealth is secured in such a manner that it descends from generation to generation, and goes on constantly increasing without any exertion on their part. Were they to sleep for 100 years, they would wake more wealthy than ever; and if they did wake, they would wake only to encumber the industry of the country, to retard its progress, to prevent the amendment of its institutions, and to maintain a party warfare against its real prosperity. As a class, they are antagonistic to industry, enemies to freedom and to progress, barriers

to the civilization of the world, living on the fruits of other men's labours, yet hating and despising the toil which alone endows them with wealth."

Under "Glimpse of the Promised Land," Dove asserts:

"This is the true, and the only true, theory of a Nation—that the soil belongs to it in perpetuity, and can never be alienated from it; and that he who will give the greatest rent for the soil becomes its cultivator, and pays the rent to the nation for the benefit of the whole community. Then, but not till then, will labour reap its natural reward—the reward appointed by Providence in the divine constitution of the terrestrial economy. Then will the welfare of one be the welfare of all; then will men be banded together by a true citizenship; and then will the first great step be taken towards that mighty Brotherhood which springs from our common parentage, and which is at once the promise and the prophecy of the Christian faith—

*'And man to man the world ower
'Shall brothers be for a' that.'*"

He Spoke for Our Time

Dove's most compelling contribution in the philosophical-political field seems to be his searching passages on the different fields of action in which justice and benevolence respectively function. Moreover, *nothing* could be more appropriate in our time. True, these are the thoughts of all the great libertarian tradition. John Stuart Mill sharply defined the province of government in the essay on Liberty. Spencer and George followed suit. George Rusby, in the little sheet on the functions of government, did the task in a manner Newark students will not easily forget. The American Institute for Economic Research at Great Barrington in the booklet on Counterrevolution perhaps speaks most plainly in our day.

There are only two kinds of government: one founded on justice and freedom, the other, on paternalism and benevolence. In the second, justice can never exist. Moreover, if we have a little of each, we always tend to travel toward more paternalism, which becomes more dictatorship with considerably less benevolence and no justice at all. Nowhere, I feel, can Dove be equalled in this field.