

"NO SIMPLE SOLUTIONS"

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For more than a decade I have had numerous and frequent discussions on social problems with a certain friend, unique in his absolute and stubborn refusal to acknowledge any merit whatever to Henry George's basic reform. Although of the "law and order" school, he has a remarkably deep understanding of urban problems and of the limitations of purely legal solutions to them. Then one day recently this person, a patent attorney with a major corporation, calmly says to me that he now understands and accepts the idea of the Single Tax!

What incident brought forth this sincere and very serious change in my friend's outlook, you might well inquire. I know not, nor shall I ask. (No doubt it was the simultaneous confluence of a number of ideas previously perceived as being unrelated.) For years I have pointed out how each social problem can be traced to a social wrong or injustice, which in turn can be traced eventually to the land question. And not too long ago he was beginning to carry out this sort of exercise for himself. I think it was just this, that time and time again, year after year, without apology or modification or exception or limitation, the very same, basic and fundamental underlying cause was always uncovered in our discussions and the same remedy always apparent. It was persistence, persistence made possible by the validity and universality of Henry George's philosophy.

He told me somewhat later that he had come to realize as a young man that there are no simple solutions to our social problems, and what I was advocating just seemed too simple. (As a scientist, of course, I find its simplicity one of its most attractive features.) But we must always remember that Henry George himself regarded the Single Tax as the basic reform, in the absence of which the solution to social problems was not even possible. In medicine the analogy would be to sanitation, especially but not only in the operating room. Lacking a culture in which to grow, multiply and infest, specific diseases and individual ailments can be coped with and, one by one, overcome. And some day, hopefully soon, economic and social problems will be dealt with in like fashion.