

## High School Students, Boys and Girls:

You are invited to compete for cash prizes in ten-minute talks favoring the Single Tax, at the Chicago Single Tax Club. All contestants will receive one year's subscription to The Public.

Five competitors take part in each contest. The entire audience act as judges. The meetings are open to the public and all present vote for the winners.

To qualify you should read one or more of the works of Henry George. "The Land Question" is particularly recommended. "Progress and Poverty" is George's best work, but to grasp it requires the same close study you give your school books. Help in mastering this subject will be cheerfully given at the Club's office, 508 Schiller building, where you can also get Single Tax literature.

This booklet may be had postpaid  
single copy 5 cents; twelve copies  
40 cents; one hundred copies \$1.50

# The Single Tax

## ITS PROGRESS AND PURPOSE

By  
ERNEST BATTEN

Member of the Illinois Bar  
Secretary of the Chicago Single Tax Club

The greatest power known  
to peaceful society, either  
for good or ill, is taxation.

*John Z. White.*

Published by

**Chicago Single Tax Club**

64 West Randolph Street

**CHICAGO**

Second Edition  
1915

# The Single Tax

## What It Is

We propose to abolish all taxes save one single tax levied on the value of land, irrespective of the value of the improvements in or on it.

What we propose is not a tax on real estate, for real estate includes improvements. Nor is it a tax on land, for we would not tax all land, but only land having a value irrespective of its improvements, and would tax that in proportion to that value.

Our plan involves the imposition of no new tax, since we already tax land values in taxing real estate. To carry it out we have only to abolish all taxes save the tax on real estate, and to abolish all of that which now falls on buildings and improvements, leaving only that part of it which now falls on the value of the bare land, increasing that so as to take as nearly as may be the whole of economic rent.

HENRY GEORGE.

# What Has Been Done

When Henry George first delivered to the world his message its slogan was "anti-poverty." Societies were organized thruout the English-speaking world calling themselves "Anti-Poverty Leagues" and names of similar import. The term "Single Tax" was first used in 1886 when Henry George ran against Abram S. Hewitt and Theodore Roosevelt for mayor of New York. Hewitt was elected, but George ran ahead of Roosevelt.

"Progress and Poverty" was originally published by Henry George at San Francisco in 1879. Its publication is regarded by those who have studied it as the commencement of a new epoch in the world's history. Nothing in a thousand years has been written which begins to equal its effect on the future happiness of the human race. In cultured, literary and scientific circles it is already beginning to be felt that a person unfamiliar with its contents is not properly educated. Its influence is world-wide. Its author, tho dead, speaks in the tax laws of all progressive nations, as will be seen by the following chronological statement:—

- 1890 The Parliament of Queensland, Australia, requires its municipalities to exempt all real estate improvements and personal property from taxation.
- 1891 British Columbia adopts local option in taxation, under which all its principal municipalities now exclude from the tax list all property except land values.
- 1891 New Zealand enacts graduated state land tax, with a maximum exemption of £500.

- 1892 British Columbia compels its municipalities to exempt from taxation half the value of all real estate improvements.
- 1896 New Zealand adopts home rule in taxation, under which 132 taxing districts out of 290 now raise all municipal revenues from land-value taxes. Where the new plan is in operation wealth and population have increased three times more rapidly than where the old system is retained.
- 1898 Germany levies a 6% land-value tax and a 33 1/3% increment tax in its Chinese province of Kiao-Chau.
- 1904 Edmonton, capital of Alberta, Canada, adopts Municipal Single Tax.\*
- 1904-10 Beginning with Frankfort and Cologne, 457 German cities and towns impose an increment tax—that is, a tax on the increase in the value of land from and after a specified date.
- 1905 Illinois enacts law requiring that the value of land and improvements be assessed and listed separately.
- 1906 New South Wales adopts local option in taxation, under which a majority of its municipalities have quit taxing labor products.
- 1907 The Communal Council of Rome taxes vacant sites at 1% to 3%.
- 1909 Great Britain adopts the Lloyd George budget, the "entering wedge" of Single Tax. It levies five different kinds of

\* Municipal Single Tax is a tax on land values limited to the requirements of local expenditures.

- land taxes and provides that land and the improvements thereon be valued separately.
- 1910 The Commonwealth of Australia adopts the New Zealand system of imposing a graduated and absentee land tax in addition to the ordinary tax.
- 1911 Pennsylvania Legislature exempts machinery from taxation, and in 1913 another step is taken in the same direction. (See page 8.)
- 1912 Alberta requires that the local revenues of towns, villages and rural municipalities (townships) be raised by taxes on land values.
- 1913 Pueblo, Colorado, adopts Municipal Single Tax. (See page 8.)
- 1913 Saskatchewan, Canada, provides for local option in taxation in cities, towns and villages, and exempts from taxation in rural municipalities all real estate improvements and personal property and also imposes a supertax of \$40 on each 640 acres of land which has less than half its area under cultivation.
- 1914 Alberta, Canada, imposes a supertax of \$10 on each 160 acres of uncultivated land.
- 1914 State of Victoria, Australia, adopts home rule in taxation.
1914. Province of Cordoba, Argentina, substitutes a rural land-value tax in place of taxes on improvements and production. Most of the Argentine cities have home rule in taxation.

# Municipal Single Tax

## How It Works

Did you ever think of the smallness of the value of the improvements in the business district of Chicago compared with that of the land? On the other hand, do you realize that the value of the land in the outlying residence districts is only a trifle compared with the improvements?

The poorest kind of a cottage in an outlying district is more valuable than the Masonic Temple in comparison with the value of the land on which each stands.

The value of down-town real estate, figured on the last quadrennial assessment, without counting railroad property, amounted to \$534,283,736, of which the improvements were only \$106,579,431—less than one-fifth of the whole amount.\*

Even the big skyscrapers are usually of less value than the site, as will be seen from the following illustrations, based on assessed values:

	Land value.	Imp. value.
Railway Exchange Bldg..	\$2,107,914	\$1,250,000
Monadnock Building.....	2,342,363	1,300,000
Masonic Temple.....	1,343,490	1,931,661
New York Life Building..	1,130,643	750,000
Auditorium Building.....	2,816,664	750,000

The conspicuous exception at the last quadrennial assessment was the Peoples Gas Building, which was then the most artistic and expensive office building in the city. Its assessed value is \$4,061,724 and the land \$1,862,727. Yet

\* These values are contained in the district bounded by the river on the west and north, the lake and 12th street on the east and south; but railroad, city, county, state and United States property is not included nor property used for religious, educational or philanthropic purposes. The area slightly exceeds half a section.

this palatial building is less valuable than the average workman's cottage in comparison with their respective sites; since in outlying residence districts the improvements constitute four-fifths of the total value. (See Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4, page 6.) On the other hand, the land on which the Palmer House stands has twelve times the value of the improvements.

Vancouver, Victoria, Medicine Hat, Edmonton, and most of the other municipalities of Western Canada, have adopted Municipal Single Tax, under which buildings and personal property are exempt from taxation.

This system, applied to Chicago, would greatly benefit the owners of outlying improved residence property, because not more than about one-fifth of this kind of real estate consists of land values, so that only \$100,000 out of every \$500,000 of such property would be taxable. Under the old system a rate of 1½% would yield \$7,500. Under the new system the rate might have to be doubled, but even then the taxes on the same residence property being levied on only \$100,000 instead of \$500,000, would be but \$3,000 instead of \$7,500, but out of \$500,000 of central business property, \$400,000 would be taxable, which, at 3%, would yield \$12,000 instead of \$7,500 as before. (See Figs. 5, 6 and 7, page 6.)

In other words, taxes would be reduced approximately 60% on residence and correspondingly increased on business property, while taxes on vacant property would be doubled.

The tendency of this new system is to encourage building, reduce building rents, abolish slums and give constant remunerative employment to all who are engaged in the building and allied trades.

## Land and Building Values Compared by Length of Black Lines

Fig. 1

**LAND**  
VALUE (\$427,704,305) in Chicago's business section. (See page 4.)

Fig. 2

**BUILDING VALUE** (\$106,579,431) in the same area of Chicago's business section.

Note that above Building Value is only one-fourth of Land Value.

Fig. 3

**Average value of a LOT** in the outlying residence districts of Chicago.

Fig. 4

**The average relative value of a COTTAGE** situated on above LOT.

Note.—The Cottage is four times the value of the Lot.

## Taxes Compared by Black Lines

Fig. 5

**PRESENT TAXES.**

Fig. 6

**Taxes on outlying IMPROVED RESIDENCE Property** under Municipal Single Tax.

Fig. 7

**Taxes on CENTRAL BUSINESS PROPERTY** under Municipal Single Tax.

Municipal Single Tax will reduce taxes on outlying IMPROVED RESIDENCE property as much as Fig. 6 is smaller than Fig. 5, and will increase taxes on CENTRAL BUSINESS property as much as Fig. 7 is larger than Fig. 5.

Fig. 6 is 40% of Fig. 5 and Fig. 7 is 160% of Fig. 5, which shows that the taxes on outlying residence property will be reduced 60% and taxes on central business property increased 60%.

## Special Assessments

The special assessment is the best known example of Municipal Single Tax. It may be a clumsy method, but in Illinois it is the only way that the Single Tax principle can be constitutionally applied. The theory is that public improvements add enough value to neighboring land to pay the assessment. By this method during 1914 Chicago raised about \$8,000,000.

Street pavements and sidewalks are usually financed by special assessments, but why not apply the system to schools, parks, fire and police protection? These public benefits, relative to cost, confer as much value on land as do street improvements.

Picture Chicago deprived of all government. Who would then live here? What would its land be worth? No valid reason can be given why the special assessment principle should not be applied wherever a municipal improvement or governmental activity adds value to land.

The increase of land values (in excess of ordinary growth) due to the construction of the New York subway, was \$30,500,000. If New York city had appropriated this increased land value, there would have remained a surplus, beyond the cost of construction, of \$37,500,000. If history repeats itself, the proposed Chicago down-town subway will add a sum far exceeding its cost to the value of land in the loop district. Should such a subway be constructed out of the general taxes or out of passenger fares, home owners would be burdened with taxes to make a free gift in land values to those already wealthy.

**NATIONAL SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS.**—The "pork barrel" scandal will never die until it becomes the first policy of the government to levy special assessments against the land benefited for all appropriations which specially benefit certain localities. The proposed Alaskan railway, the Lincoln highway, the draining of swamps, the building of large irrigation works and the improvement of rivers and harbors will add value to the region served equal at least to the cost.

# How To Get It

**ILLUSTRATIONS.**—The first three pages of this booklet illustrate the variety of Single Tax methods in actual practice and their adaptability to differing conditions and nationalities. Other examples follow:

At Houston, Texas, J. J. Pastoriza, a Single Tax man, has been twice elected tax commissioner. Backed by public opinion, he has entirely exempted from taxes all personal property of individuals, except stocks of merchandise which, together with real estate improvements, are taxed on a valuation of 25%. Land, on the other hand, is assessed at 70% of full value. Many in Houston heretofore opposed to the Single Tax now acknowledge that Pastoriza's method promotes prosperity.

Where state constitutions permit, progress may be made by enacting laws pertaining only to certain cities, as in Pennsylvania, where in 1913 the Legislature enacted a law to reduce triennially the assessed value of buildings in Pittsburgh and Scranton until in 1925 half the taxes on improvements will be removed.

In those cities of Colorado which have adopted a commission form of government the voters have the right to determine by referendum on what class of property they will assess taxes. Pueblo, a commissioned governed city, in November, 1913, voted to exempt from taxation practically all property except land values, 50% being stricken from the assessed value of buildings the first year and 99% the second year. During 1915 other Colorado cities will vote to determine upon what class of property they will levy taxes.

**HOME RULE IN TAXATION.**—This right of municipalities to determine the sources of their public revenue is called Home Rule or Local Option in Taxation. Clothed with this power, the cities and towns of Western Canada have practically abolished all local taxation except a tax on land values, with the result that business improved, the demand for labor increased, and the consequent influx of people created a greater need for lots, which, in spite of the tax, caused land to advance faster than before.

That this method of taxation works to the full satisfaction of the people is best demonstrated by the fact that out of the numerous taxing districts which have adopted it in Western Canada, not one has returned to the old system.

Most American cities, fettered by state constitutions, stripped of political freedom and despoiled of the rights and powers granted to the cities of Western Canada, are shorn of any opportunity to improve their tax system except by the difficult processes of constitutional amendments.

Home rule in taxation has this surpassing excellency:—Each city and county has the power to make for itself its own taxing system and every locality thereby becomes a taxation experiment station, in which facts instead of theory will teach both Single Taxers and non-Single Taxers the defects as well as the excellencies of different tax systems. The superior will be retained; the inferior discarded.

**ILLINOIS TAX SYSTEM DISCREDITED.**—The leading newspapers of the state are continuously denouncing the general property tax. The Chicago Daily Tribune on December 15, 1914, reprinted from the Saturday Evening Post the following:

"Illinois has one of the silliest revenue systems in the Union—which is saying a great deal. It is not enforced. It cannot be enforced. There is not even a serious pretense of enforcing it. Everybody knows that. The owner of bonds or of stock of a foreign corporation who pays the taxes the law prescribes simply submits his income from such a source to confiscation."

Our tax troubles arise from a reverent submission to the will of the dead. The state constitution, established forty-five years ago, prohibits majority rule on taxation and other questions of the most vital interest. Like the Chinese, the people of Illinois must suffer from arrested development unless they find some means of freeing themselves from the dead hand of the past.

That the present tax system is discredited has been repeatedly demonstrated by popular vote. On November 8, 1904, under the Public Policy Act, 476,780 voted for home rule in taxation, while 140,986 voted against it. Altho so great a majority of voters thus declared themselves in favor of granting to each taxing district the power to discard any system of taxation which does not meet local demands, the people after ten years still find themselves powerless—thwarted by the constitution.

**ROOSEVELT AND SINGLE TAX.**—Municipal Single Tax is favored by many who are opposed to its full and unlimited operation. Theodore Roosevelt is one of this class. He has outspokenly declared himself in favor of home rule in taxation as well as of a measure of Municipal Single Tax. In the *Century Magazine* of October, 1913, he stated his views as follows:—

"We believe that municipalities should have complete self-government as regards all affairs that are exclusively their own, including the important matter of taxation, and that the bur-

den of municipal taxation should be so shifted as to put the weight of taxation upon the unearned rise in value of the land itself, rather than upon the improvements, the buildings, the effort being to prevent the undue rise of rent."

**NATIONAL SINGLE TAX** leaves no room for a tariff. Free trade, however, will only come by degrees, but the progress already made is greater than is generally realized. By value, more than 60% of all goods imported is now on the free list, and in 1916 sugar also will be admitted duty free.

A tax on a man's necessities is the most oppressive of all taxes. Such is the tariff on food and clothing. The chief food products are already on the free list and for the same reasons cotton and woollen goods should also be free of duty.

Such taxes bear most heavily on the very poorest. Unlike direct taxes, they fall on the man with a large family with manifold greater weight than on the bachelor. In short, they are proportioned to the size of the man's family—proportioned to the amount of clothing he buys.

## Two Paramount Benefits of Single Tax

1. *The Prevention of Undeserved Poverty.*
2. *The Prevention of War.*

**THAT UNDESERVED POVERTY MAY BE PREVENTED AND PROSPERITY ASSURED** by use of the taxing power is not a strange doctrine to believers in a protective tariff. Any tax system that can force into use idle land—either farm land or city lots—and thereby help the disemployed, is of such importance that a

few dollars more or less in taxes is of no consequence. A mechanic out of work for half a year loses a larger sum than the taxes on his home would amount to in ten years.

Even a school boy can see the foolishness of punishing a man for building a house, by fining or taxing him. He can also see that taxes on anything that is produced by labor render less profitable the employment of labor and intensify the suffering of the poor by raising prices; since the tax must be added to the price of every product of labor.

The United States census for 1900 is authority for the statement that 6,468,961 persons were unemployed a portion of the year. Eugene T. Lies, Superintendent of the United Charities, stated that there were in December, 1914, ten million persons in this country on the verge of starvation or dependency.

The pitiful poverty under which these millions are submerged arises from a denial of the equal right to live. Land is as needful to life as air; its total denial is death; and its use granted on terms imposed by another is a form of slavery.

In other words, our present land system permits one group of people to own the planet and the masses are compelled to pay for being on earth all that they produce except a bare subsistence. Martin Luther said that even if the land produced as many coins as ears of corn the profit would go to the landlord only.

The complete remedy is to release our planet from the grasp of the land-owning group. Just as the discovery of America brought to the white race a NEW WORLD, so the universal application of the Single Tax will force into its best use as much land as will equal AN-

OTHER NEW WORLD—the heritage of the human family—from which undeserved poverty will as certainly disappear as snow when warmed by the breath of spring.

## World-Wide Single Tax Will Abolish War

To prove that the universal application of Single Tax principles will remove the causes of war requires more space than this booklet affords. We can only touch upon the subject and refer the reader to the works of Henry George, whose matchless, soul-inspiring logic, not only convinces the intellect, but warms the heart to action.

As every crime has its motive, so every war has its motive. Remove the motives for both war and crime and they will both disappear.

### THE CHIEF MOTIVES FOR WAR ARE—

1. *A righteous indignation against injustice.*
2. *A desire for more territory, in which to colonize, or to increase trade, or to control foreign ports so as to collect the tariff taxes and be rid of trade restrictions.*
3. *Racial hatred and religious bigotry.*

INJUSTICE tends to rouse its victims to rebellion—civil war. The one great fundamental injustice is the denial of the equal right to land. This breeds poverty, which, until the Single Tax remedy is applied, will become more acute. The bitter feeling of injustice among the underpaid workers will be intensified. Troops to quell them will be called out with more frequency, and discontent will grow into fierce and unreasoning opposition to all government.



**TERRITORIAL EXPANSION.**—The Single Tax will also dispel the keen national desire for territorial expansion, by forcing on the markets of every country adopting it, so much DOMESTIC land that the need to colonize FOREIGN land will vanish.

Trade rights will be equal for all nationalities under the Single Tax. This will destroy the motive to acquire territory for trade reasons or to collect import duties. The old imperialistic idea of extending trade is to extend the national boundaries. This means war. The Single Tax method is to abolish trade restrictions between nations as fully as between the different states of the Union.

**RACE HATRED AND RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY.**—Free trade will gradually destroy the twin antagonisms, Race Hatred and Religious Bigotry, by bringing peoples of all races and creeds into such close business relations that hatred and bigotry will be transformed into goodwill.

International trade will grow to such immense proportions and the interests of the whole world will become so inter-related as to bind the nations together with bonds stronger than the most solemn treaty obligations and weld all mankind into an inseparable brotherhood.

The world-wide application of our philosophy will, from its very nature, realize in modern life the dream of the Hebrew prophet: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks." Fired with a new and higher patriotism, an international army is arising whose "country is the world" and whose religion is justice—an army ready to contend

"For the right against the wrong,  
For the weak against the strong,  
For the poor who've waited long,  
For the brighter age to be."

## There Is Work For You To Do

Every great change is effected by the few,  
not by the many; by the resolute, undaunted,  
zealous few.—

*Cardinal John Henry Newman.*

A realization that a better tax system will extirpate poverty, abolish war and "carry civilization to yet nobler heights," will produce that "resolute, undaunted, zealous few", who by struggle, strife and loving sacrifice will bring our brightest hopes to full fruition.

Will you be one of the few? There is much to be done.

### YOU CAN—

Arrange appointments for our speakers in your church, club, lodge or union.

Join a Single Tax club.

Induce others to join.

Organize reading circles to study Single Tax literature.

Contribute to the cause.

Write Single Tax letters to newspapers.

Interest high school students in our contests.  
(See outside back cover.)

Residents of Illinois are invited to join the CHICAGO SINGLE TAX CLUB. Send your application to 508 Schiller Building. The dues are merely nominal (25 cents monthly), so that anyone can belong. They are not expected to keep the Club in funds for its work. If you want to help in this, add to your dues whatever you see fit, or if not a member you can make a contribution.

SINGLE TAX MEETINGS are held at 8 p. m. every Friday (except the first Friday of each month) in Schiller Hall, 64 W. Randolph Street. EVERYBODY WELCOME. No formality. Walk right in.

## Free Lectures

Your club, church, lodge or union can secure forceful and talented speakers upon civic and economic questions. Stoughton Cooley, the author, special editorial writer for the Chicago Herald and Associate Editor of The Public, is especially recommended. Mrs. Minona S. Jones, Alice Henry, John Z. White, George A. Schilling, A. P. Canning, and Henry H. Hardinge are also exceptionally effective speakers.

Mr. White is a speaker who commands a high price in all parts of the United States and Canada. When in Chicago, his home city, he can be secured for lectures without charge.

The well-known Louis Wallis can, for a limited time, be secured to deliver his two very interesting religious lectures—"Religion and the Social Problem" and "The New Fight Against Slavery."

These lectures constitute a series and should be given consecutively, either on the same day or on successive Sundays. His first lecture is a restatement in popular form of his widely read book, "Sociological Study of the Bible"; the second lecture is a review of the Single Tax from a moral and religious viewpoint.

Mr. Wallis is a profound biblical student, whose books, published by the University of Chicago, have commanded wide attention among religious thinkers. He is in great demand as a supply for ministers.

We strongly recommend a series of lectures on different phases of the central economic and civic truths.

For assignment of speakers and dates, write to The Chicago Single Tax Club, 508 Schiller Building, 64 West Randolph Street, or phone Central 6083.

## Lecturers and Their Subjects

### ANDREW P. CANNING:

- "The Economic Opinions of Robert Burns."
- "The Single Tax."

### STOUGHTON COOLEY:

- "Natural Opportunities."
- "Heredity and Environment."

### HENRY H. HARDINGE:

- "The Cause of Hard Times."
- "Real Free Trade."
- "The Cause of the High Cost of Living."

### ALICE HENRY, Editor of Life and Labor:

- "Effective Voting," with a Mock Election.
- Returning Officer: Mrs. C. W. Thompson.

### MRS. MINONA S. JONES:

- "The Queries of the Industrial Commission Answered."

### ERNEST BATTEN:

- "The Evils of Constitutional Limitations—Some Ways of Avoiding Them."
- "The Single Tax."
- "The Right to Trade."

### GEO. A. SCHILLING, President Board of Local

#### Improvements:

- "The Relation of Land Values to Public Improvements."
- "Home Rule for Cities."

### LOUIS WALLIS:

- "Religion and the Social Problem."
- "The New Fight Against Slavery."

JOHN Z. WHITE, can be secured when in Chicago.