

Concerning That Name

"SINGLE-TAX"

6589

By Henry George

(During his visit to Great Britain in 1889 Mr. George spoke at the City Hall, Glasgow, Scotland, on the evening of May 9th, the meeting being sponsored by the Scottish Land Restoration League. After the speech questions were asked and answered and three of the questions with answers follow.)

Question — Seeing it is only a matter of shifting the burden of taxation from off the laborers, would it not be well to take a name signifying that alone, as "Land Restoration" seems to frighten a number of people?

George's answer — "Land Restoration" in its original meaning is full and good. I do not advise anybody to abandon it. But our experience in the United States is this, that the adoption of the name "Single Tax" has been extremely useful, because it shows clearly our method. We were constantly met there by people who pretend to, or do, misunderstand our purpose, and who were

continually asking us, "How do you propose to divide the land up equally and then keep it divided?" (Laughter.) Now the Single Tax allows of no such misinterpretation. The Single Tax does away, too, with the idea that we propose to take land formally and rent it out, and there are, to my mind, many serious objections to that course. The advantage of the term, the "Single Tax" is that it shows precisely the road on which we wish to move, and that is just now the most important thing. The feeling that private ownership of land is unjust, is now widely spread and people are aroused to the truth that all men have equal rights to the land. The difficulty with them is to know how men are to gain those equal rights. The title "Single Tax" has therefore the great advantage of pointing out very clearly the way. The newspapers cannot say, "Those Single Tax men propose to divide land up." They cannot say, "Single Tax men propose to put land up at auction." Of course "The Single Tax" is not a full name. It does not express our aim; it only expresses our method. Neither

fully does "Land Restoration." Our true title, if we wished to express what we really are, would be, "Justice Men" or "Liberty Men."

Question—Do you expect the land-owners to submit to the Single Tax without a revolution?

Answer—Yes; I do. But if they do "revolute" then emigrate them. (Laughter.)

Question—Please explain why it is that greedy landlordism, possessing supreme power, is content in Britain with 300,000,000 pounds annually, while capitalism exploits labor of 500,000,000 annually. Does the capitalist produce this enormous income?

Answer—I do not think much of your figures. But it is not worth while going into that. That capitalists do today, in many cases, exploit labor is undoubtedly true. But the power by which they do it comes from the monopolization of the land. Give the laborer the opportunity to employ himself, and then, no matter how rich the capitalist, he cannot exploit labor, for he cannot get any man to work for him for less than he can get by working for him-

self. Go to the bottom. Assure to all men the rights, the inalienable rights, with which their Creator has endowed them. Open up the land. Do that and you need not bother about capital. Capital! Why it is a mere derivative factor. Labor produces capital from land. Give labor land and you make labor independent. Never forget that labor is no weak, puny thing that has to have baby acts made for it. Labor is the producer of all wealth. All that labor wants is a free field and no favor. (Great Applause.)

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Under it (Single-Taxism) every one who wanted a piece of land for a home or for productive use could get it without purchase price and hold it even without tax, since the tax we propose would not fall on all land, nor on all land in use, but only on land better than the poorest land in use, and is in reality not a tax at all, but merely a return to the state for the use of a valuable privilege. — Condition of Labor, part 2, sec. 7.

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