

Henry George's Speech at Chickering Hall, October 22, 1886

Chapter V of Post & Leubuscher's book *Henry George's 1886 Campaign*.

MR. GEORGE'S "ANARCHY" DISSECTED.

According to his promise in his final letter to Mr. Hewitt, Mr. George appeared at Chickering Hall on the evening of October 22d, before a densely packed and most intelligent audience. The Rev. Dr. Kramer presided.

Mr. George spoke as follows:¹

MR. CHAIRMAN AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: I have no personal desire to be your next Mayor. I had no personal desire to accept this nomination. I took it because it seemed to me the call of duty; because thirty thousand of my fellow-citizens requested me to go to the front.

My great reason, however, for accepting this nomination was that it would bring into public discussion principles which it seemed to me were most necessary to be discussed. Mr. Hewitt's reason for accepting the nomination of the two Democratic factions was, as given by himself, that he recognized in me the exponent of certain principles which seemed to him to be destructive to society — undemocratic and anti-American — principles, in short, so dangerous that should I be elected he could see nothing in the future but anarchy and chaos.

I asked Mr. Hewitt to meet me before our fellow-citizens, that we might discuss those principles and ask them for their verdict. He has seen fit to refuse. I now propose to stand here tonight and speak for a brief time upon the principles to which he takes the greatest exception, and then to answer any question that may be asked by any of the audience.

The principles to which Mr. Hewitt makes objection, and which he considers so destructive, are those announced in our platform in these words:

¹Audio of this speech, including the question and answer period which followed, is available at http://www.associationforgoodgov.com.au/media/henry_george_mayoral_campaign_speech_1886/Henry%20George%20-%20major%20speeches%201886.mp3

“Holding that the corruptions of government and the impoverishment of labor result from the neglect of the self-evident truths proclaimed by the founders of this republic, that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights, we aim at the abolition of the system which compels men to pay their fellow-creatures for the use of God’s gifts to all, and permits monopolizers to deprive labor of natural opportunities for employment, thus filling the land with tramps and paupers, and bringing about an unnatural competition which tends to reduce wages to starvation rates and to make the wealth-producer the industrial slave of those who grow rich by his toil. We declare furthermore that the enormous value which the presence of a million and a half of people gives to the land of this city belongs properly to the whole community.”

Is there really anything very dangerous in these propositions — anything undemocratic or anti-American?

There are two ways of considering a subject of this kind. One way is the practical way, or, as philosophers would call it, the inductive method. The other is to look at it as a moral question. Of the two methods I prefer the second, for I believe, and believe not lightly, but as the result of long study of political economy, that that which is just is always that which is wise, and that if we would do the best thing for society, the shortest way to get at it is to ask what is the right thing. I believe, in short, that the social laws which govern the relations of men, one with another, are as much the laws of God as are physical laws.

But in deference to the common way of looking at these matters, let me first take up this question as a practical one. We propose — and this reduced to its concrete expression is the “dangerous principle” for which I stand — we propose to exempt buildings and improvements from taxation, and to put the tax thus rendered necessary upon the value of land. I propose to exempt everything from taxation save land values. I propose to take economic rent for the purposes of the community.

Now, as to taxation. In the first place we are all members of a community here in the city of New York. It is true that there should be as much wealth here as possible. The more wealth there is, the

easier it ought to be for any one of us to get his share of it. All laws which repress the production of wealth — which tend to drive away wealth — are bad. Taxation does that. When in a country town there are too many dogs, there is a cry for a dog-tax, and if you put a tax on dogs you have less dogs. (A voice: “Put a tax on politicians!”) There is a better way of getting at that; that is, for the people themselves to turn politicians. So if there are too many saloons, we put a heavy tax on saloons. But are houses a bad thing? Can we have too many houses? Have we, as a matter of fact, in this community, too many houses? (A voice: “Not enough.”) Why, then, should we tax houses? Is there too much capital here? I should say not. Why, then, should we tax capital? A city or a community grows in wealth as houses increase, as carriages, and horses, and dry goods, and groceries, and everything of that kind increase. Why, then, should we tax those things?

The true rule is that we ought not to tax anything the bringing of which into the country, or the production of which in the country, is a good thing for that country. To tax capital tends to drive it away. To tax houses is to place a fine on their building, and to have fewer houses. To tax ships or machinery or anything of that kind results in less of them. But you can tax land all you please, and you won't have an inch less of that. You can tax land values all you please, and your land will not be a whit the less useful. Therefore, it is better for the purpose of increasing the general wealth — of making the sum there is to divide as large as possible — to tax nothing save the value of land.

Another thing. The most important thing we can have in any community is not wealth. It is character. It is conscience. Our present system of taxation is a tax upon conscience. The man coming to this country, as he nears that Statue of Liberty which is to be dedicated next week, will be approached by the Custom House man who will stick an oath at him. Has he anything dutiable in his trunks? And then perhaps he will open the trunks if he does not get a greenback. Our tax system is calculated to encourage dishonesty, and places a premium on fraud. Did you ever look over the personal property returns of our very rich men? How much tax do the Vanderbilts pay? On a hundred thousand or so, I understand. We all know that the personal property of New York is steadily increasing; and yet, on the assessors' books, it is steadily diminishing. What does that mean? It means lying. It means false swearing. It means bribery of officials. The real wonder is, to any man investigating the subject, that there is so much honesty among the American people as there is.

You go to a Vanderbilt, or to any of your rich merchants, and attempt to tax his personal property, and you can't get at it. Attempt to tax his capital, and you can't find it. Many of these rich men make a practice of moving away about the time the tax collector comes around. Shifting deposits from one bank to another is a common practice. "Tax-dodgers" they call them; and they do succeed in dodging. But land lies out of doors; you can't hide land. There it is.

And the value of land can be estimated more certainly than any other value. You tell me of a house and lot on 113th Street or down in Broadway that I haven't seen; you give me the dimensions of the house and the lot; I go to an expert and ask him, "What is that house and lot worth?" He will tell me, without leaving his office, "A lot in such a place is worth so much." But as to the house, he will have to go and examine it. The value of land is the most easily discovered of all values. Therefore it is that, in the interest of honesty, in the interest of fair play, in the interest of character, it is the best thing to tax.

While it is, in the first place, important to us as individuals that there should be as much wealth as possible, the next and hardly less important thing is that wealth should be as fairly distributed as possible. All taxation (I am telling you a very important principle, constantly to be kept in mind in this discussion, and that a great many people do not understand), all taxation that falls on any article produced by human labor, and which must be constantly produced in order to maintain the supply, will increase the price of that article, and fall, ultimately, on the consumer. For instance, when the Federal Government put the war tax on whiskey, whiskey rose in price. The same with tobacco. All such taxes fall on the consumer — must be paid by the user. The man who has a wife and children must, therefore, pay more of such taxes than the bachelor who shirks his natural obligations. Taxes of that kind are, in the first place, taxes on having wives and children; and, in the next place, they fall more heavily on the man who lives well than they do upon the man of the same means who lives niggardly. At the time when I was worth no more at once than the few dollars I carried in my pocket, I knew a man who was worth at least \$10,000,000, and I paid more of these taxes than he did.

But a tax upon any article which is not produced by human labor — any article which exists in fixed supply — does not add to the price. To give you an illustration: Take chromos, such as my friend Prang makes, and impose a tax on them and they will advance in

price, and the man who buys them will ultimately have to pay that tax, for the reason that unless buyers will pay his price, plus the tax, the manufacturer will stop making them. But a tax upon a picture by one of the old masters — a Raphael, for instance — would not add to its price. There is only one such picture in the world, and no others can be made. Therefore it commands a monopoly price. It is not an article that can be manufactured, and a tax upon a picture of that kind would fall on the owner. He could not add it to the price when he sold it.

All taxes on articles that must be produced fall upon the consumer. A tax upon land values must fall upon the owner, and cannot be shifted from him to the consumer.

Remember, I do not say a tax upon land, but a tax upon land values.

If you were to tax all land, irrespective of its value, at so much an acre or so much a foot, it would ultimately become a tax upon the user of the land, because it would fall upon the poorest land equally with the richest, and no man could use any land without paying that tax. Therefore it would be a tax upon labor. But the other is a very different thing. Land has no value until two men want to use it. That value increases just as the desire to use that particular piece of land increases. Therefore, a tax upon land values is a tax upon a tax. Hence it is that a tax upon land values is the fairest — is the one which produces the most equitable distribution of wealth.

Consider. When I was a young man working at my trade as a printer in the city of Sacramento, I lived in a comfortable little house for which I paid \$8 a month. It had four rooms; it had a yard around it — grass — two or three fruit trees. I was most pleasantly situated. I went down here the other day into what is called the “Big Flat.” If you have never been into it go there some day. I think there are something like twelve hundred people living there. It reminds you of nothing but a prison. Here, for three miserable rooms, the lowest price is \$9 a month. Three miserable rooms in a barrack! What is the reason for the difference? Why is it that in Sacramento I could get a whole house for that price? It is not that the building material here costs any more. It is simply that the land is more valuable. The man who lives in “the big flat,” in paying his rent, is paying not merely for the house accommodations; he is paying also for the value of the land. He is paying a toll — a tribute for the purpose of living in the City of New York. From time to

time, as population increases here, rents go up. For instance, I know of a house in Lafayette Place rented by a publisher three years ago for \$2,500 a year. His three years' lease expires next month, and the landlord tells him he must pay \$5,000 a year or quit. But must he pay that increase for the house? The house is no more valuable — it is not as valuable — as it was three years ago. Houses are worth less the more they are used. He must pay the increased rent for the increased value of the land.

In paying our rents here, we people of New York are paying not merely for the building accommodations. The great price we pay is for the use of the land — or the use of the air!

A tax upon buildings adds, upon the principle I have explained, to the rental of buildings. It tends to make fewer buildings. But a tax upon land values cannot add to rents. It is merely taxing for common purposes what the tenant must pay anyhow. We people of New York might pay all our taxes as we pay our rents and not pay any more rents than we do now. Isn't that an advantage?

Consider how much the ordinary people of New York pay for the privilege of living in New York. I doubt if it is less, on an average, than one-quarter of the gross earnings of mechanics, laborers, clerks, book-keepers, and the smaller professional men. Wouldn't it be better for us to have that turned into taxes? Wouldn't it be better for the city? It would not only not add to the value of rents, it would tend to reduce rent. It would tend to increase the number of buildings and wealth of all sorts.

We people are packed together in this city of New York, closer than anywhere else in the world — packed together so closely that the rate of mortality is greater than in any other civilized country; yet there is plenty of land here. Ride up on any of the elevated roads, and you will see plenty of vacant ground. One-half the area of New York is not yet built upon. Why do not people, when they are crowded together so, build more houses? There are any quantity of workmen who want to build houses, and many capitalists eager to furnish the money. Why don't they build? Simply because they cannot get the land to build the houses on; they would have to pay an exorbitant price. That is a blackmail levied on the city's growth. Here is a man who buys from the heirs of some dead Dutchman, or the heirs of an English settler, a piece of land. He sets himself down on it and says: "I have no particular use for this land; but nobody else shall use it until he pays me my price." And he adds to that price as the city grows, and the demand

for the land becomes greater and greater.

Under our present system of taxation we not only tax the building, but we tax the piece of land which the buildings covers more than we would tax an equally well situated vacant lot. Thus we put a premium upon monopoly. If we made the owner pay for the vacant lot as much as if it had a building on it, he could not afford to hold that lot vacant. Is it not right? Is it not just? If I go to the Fifth Avenue Hotel and enter my name in the register and say, "Give me a room," and then go off and don't come back till next day, do you not suppose that I will have to pay just as much as though I had slept in the room? Why shouldn't I? If I tell them I didn't use the room, "Aye," they would say, "but you kept somebody else from using it?"

Under our present system a man goes to work and improves his land by putting up more houses. Before he can put up the houses he must pay an enormous price for a place on which to put them, and after he builds them the assessor will tax him more for the land than if it were vacant. There is land in this city that is taxed at agricultural rates, while land adjoining it is taxed at improved property rates. The tax-gatherer actually makes a man pay so much every year for having put up a building.

I say we want all the buildings we can get. I think every American citizen ought to have a separate house, and that it is a piece of stupidity, as well as an injustice, to prevent by our system of taxation the erection of buildings, and to place a premium upon holding land vacant.

I go further. We have in this country at all times — we have in this very city at all times, even the best of times — thousands and thousands of men who cannot find employment. What is the reason for this? Heavens, isn't there enough to do in such a country as this? How is it that any man should be in want of work? How did the first man do? Did Adam have to look around to find an employer? No! There was the earth, and he employed himself. What is the reason that men to-day cannot employ themselves? There is vacant land enough all over the country. There are mines enough — water-power enough. We haven't begun to scratch the surface of this great country. And yet here we have a land filled with tramps, and every once in a while will come up the cry of over-production. So much dry-goods that the working-man's wife has to stint herself and not buy a dress! So much food that people have to go hungry! What is the reason? It could not exist where

labor was free — it could not exist where men were free to employ themselves upon the material that their Creator has placed here for the use of their labor.

If you want to know the reason why people crowd into the city and work cannot be found for them, go out into the country; see, even in our far West, men tramping for miles — hundreds of miles — in a vain quest for a place where they can make a home without paying blackmail to some dog in the manger.

Here is the primary injustice — the root of all that is evil in what is commonly called the conflict between labor and capital.

The closer you look at it the clearer you will see that the exemption of all forms of wealth — of all forms of industry — of all proper uses of capital — from taxation, and the putting of taxes upon the value of land, instead of being a menace, will, more than anything else, promote general prosperity, raise wages, and bring about a condition of general comfort.

Take the high moral ground. Isn't it perfectly clear that we are all here in this world, the creatures of the Creator? Isn't it a self evident truth, as our Declaration of Independence has it, that men are created equal — that they are here with equal rights to life and liberty? Doesn't the equal right to life involve equal right to all that the Creator has provided to sustain life — the equal right to light, air, water, and to land? Certainly it does. No one dares deny it. Every child that is born into the world comes here with a right to a foothold in this world. The little infant born tonight in the poorest room of the most squalid tenement in this city comes into life with a warrant equal to that of the child of the Astors or the babe of the Stuyvesants — with an equal right to the use of the material which its Creator has provided for the maintenance of life. That child is robbed when that right is denied.

That is the reason — that is the only reason why, out of the little children that are born in certain districts of this city every year, sixty-five per cent die before they attain the age of five years. They are denied all rights in the world to which their Creator has called them. Denied by whom? By the landlords? No. Denied by society! Denied by us! We disinherit them. We take away their birthright. And the curse for such injustice must fall upon us.

That is the reason why young girls are crowded together running sewing-machines, two hundred and sixty on one floor; that is the

reason why we have here a great population so degraded that they must constantly accept charity. Large numbers so degraded that they will sell their vote for a two-dollar bill on election day.

I hold that these people have unalienable rights. Did you ever think what that means in the Declaration of Independence? Unalienable rights that cannot be sold; rights that no act of the State Legislature or Parliament, or Constitutional Convention, or enactment of the whole people, can deprive them of — rights which came to them by the hand of their Creator.

I say that the right to land is one of these unalienable rights. Mr. Hewitt says that that is undemocratic. Mr. Hewitt never got his democracy from Thomas Jefferson.

Thomas Jefferson knew what he was writing when he wrote those immortal words in the Declaration of Independence. They blotted out the words in which he had put the stamp of condemnation on the sin and crime of slavery, but those self-evident words were still there. Though it took a century, they were at last vindicated. So is the equal right to land there, and Thomas Jefferson meant it. If you go to his works and turn to a letter which he wrote from Paris to Madison, in 1786, I think, you will see these words: “I set out on this ground, which I suppose to be self-evident, that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living; that the dead have neither power nor rights over it.” Isn’t that a self-evident truth?

Isn’t it perfectly clear that when a man dies he is done with this world?

What right, then, has any man to make a will and say that this world, or a certain part of this world, after he is dead and gone, shall belong to such and such a person. If a dead man has no right to this world — if the world belongs in usufruct to the living — by what right has a man who has a piece of land, and that land a piece I want to build on, what right has he to prevent me from doing so because he derives title from some dead man?

Stuyvesant Square is closed at six o’clock — at sunset — every day. Why? Because old Peter Stuyvesant, dead and gone long years ago, said it should be so.

If there is any Presbyterian here who knows anything about the disruption of the Free Church of Scotland in the forties, he will know that a great deal of land belonged to the Established Church,

and they would not sell to these common Scotchmen, of whom Hugh Miller was one — wouldn't even sell a piece for a church. Miller tells of a Free Church clergyman who had to make his home in a boat, and go sailing around. The Duke of Buccleuch, who owned sixty miles there, wouldn't let them hire a bit of land — wouldn't let them even stand on his land to worship God. They had to go up on the sea-shore — on the roads — where the police drove them away. Finally they got into a gravel pit, and after some time a few aristocratic preachers came around and the duke allowed them to use the gravel-pit to worship God in. And the stupid people — what did they do? They passed resolutions of thanks to his grace the duke.

But that is not what I am going to tell you. If there are any Presbyterians here they will recall that the Free Church people sent a petition to the executors of the dead man's estate. The dead man's name was Monalty. They asked permission of the executors to build a Free Church. The answer came back that the executors would be very glad, indeed — nothing would give them more pleasure; but they knew that if they did so the late Monalty would not like it! And so, live Scotchmen couldn't worship God in their own way, on the soil of Scotland, because a dead Scotchman wouldn't like it. Stupid people, weren't they? I told them in Glasgow, in a meeting larger even than this, that they ought to take the lion off their coat-of-arms and put on a sheep.

But aren't we just as stupid? We are doing the same thing here. We are toiling, perhaps, for Mr. Astor — perhaps for another landlord. I have to work, probably every other man in this room has to work, for some landlord, because some dead man said we must. That is precisely what it amounts to.

A little while ago I read in a Brooklyn paper about some fishermen on Long Island who had been paying toll on the catch of fish every year. Why? Because, as they supposed, the man who owned the fishing ground had got it from some other grantor, who had it by virtue of a charter issued by James II. Finally the fishermen got a committee and sent them to the Court House, and they searched to see if there was any record of a grant, and they couldn't find any. And so the fishermen refused to pay any more toll. But if they had found that grant they would have gone on paying. Why? Because James II., dead two hundred years ago, a man who never set foot in this country, said so. Isn't that absurd?

We abolished chattel slavery in the South, and take credit to

ourselves for doing it. I remember the time when worse things than Mr. Hewitt says of me today were said of those who objected to chattel slavery. Have we freed those black men? No. A man is of no use, he can do nothing, unless he has land. Man is a land animal and can't live unless he has land to live on. He can't work without land. The old slave-holders don't object. They are as well satisfied as ever. Why? They have the land, and their ex-slaves are now their tenants. What difference does it make? In some respects it is better to be a land-owner than a slave-holder. He doesn't have to whip men to make them work. He can simply sit in his office and collect his rents. It is slavery, all the same, when I have to give, as I do have to give, part of my labor every month to someone who makes me no return for it. I am virtually, to that extent, a slave.

It is perfectly clear that we are all here with an equal right to the use of the land of our country. This is said to be anarchistic. I quoted Thomas Jefferson; let me quote the great prelate, Dr. Thomas Nulty, Bishop of Meath: "Now, therefore, the land of a country is the common property of the people of that country, because its real owner — the Creator who made it — hath bequeathed it a voluntary gift unto them. The earth hath He made for the children of men. Since every human being is a creature and a child of God, and all His creatures are equal in His sight, any settlement of the land of this or any other country that would exclude the humblest man in this or that country from his share of the common inheritance, would not only be an injustice and a wrong to that man, but would, moreover, be an impious resistance to the benevolent intentions of his Creator." Isn't that true? Isn't that, as Thomas Jefferson said — self-evident?

Very well, it is perfectly clear that we are all equally entitled to land. Now, how are we going to get our equal share of land? How are we going to divide New York equally? If we were going to divide it into equal pieces we would all want our piece in Wall Street. If we did divide it equally once it wouldn't stay equal. Population is constantly increasing. What would you do with the new people? It is not necessary to cut land in pieces. We need not divide the land. All that is necessary is to divide the rent. As Herbert Spencer says, then we would all be landlords.

That is the teaching of abstract justice. That is the teaching of Democracy. How are you going to accomplish it? It is not necessary to make any sudden swoop.

The right to the building belongs absolutely to the man who put it up, or to the man who bought it from the man who put it up. We are sticklers for the rights of property. I believe in what the French convention called, "The sacred rights of property." Upon respect for the rights of property all civilization must be based — it must be based on the eighth commandment. My quarrel with the present state of society is that it denies and violates that command, that it does not enforce the

command — “Thou shalt not steal.” That is the trouble today. That is the reason there are millionaires on one side and paupers on the other.

The right of property, what does it rest on? It rests on the right of a man to himself, to the use of his own powers. Whatever a man makes, whether it be a desk, a coat, a hat, a tree that he raises, a fish that he catches — whatever a man produces, that is his, and ought to be as against the whole world. But who produced the land? When any man can show a title from the producer of the land, then let us acknowledge it.

But, as I said, to carry this principle into effect, it isn't necessary to take land and lease it. All that is necessary to do is to take taxation off of other things and put it on the value of land, until finally you get it at such a height that you can get the entire economic rent. The building will stand just as securely as now. Everything will go on as well as it does now and a great deal better.

I would talk to you a great deal longer, but I may take time in which somebody may want to ask questions. But I want to say, that the platform we lay down is this: Take taxation off of buildings and put it on the value of land. That is what Mr. Hewitt calls anarchistic and communistic.

At the close of Mr. George's argument the Chairman stated that Mr. Hewitt was invited to debate the question Mr. George presented, and, although Mr. Hewitt was not present, friends of his might be who desired to ask questions. “If any such there be,” the Chairman asked, “shall he have fair play and courteous treatment from you?” The audience having given hearty assent, the Chairman said: “Then let there be no signs of disapproval — no hissing at any man's name or any man's views. Any person in the audience may now propound courteous and pertinent inquiries through me, and Mr. George will answer him. I guarantee in behalf of the audience courteous treatment and in behalf of Mr. George candid replies.”

“Mr. Chairman,” said a young man in the orchestra-circle, “Mr. George, in speaking of taxes as a means for the suppression of evils, said: ‘Saloons are a bad thing,’ and that to get rid of them he would put a high tax on them. I want to ask what he proposes in his scheme to do with the saloon evil and its abuses?”

MR. GEORGE. — I don't think that is pertinent to the questions I am here to answer. Nevertheless, let me say that I think the saloon is rather an effect than a cause, and that by striking at the root of poverty and want we would strike at the root of all that is objectionable in society.

“I would like to ask you, Mr. Chairman,” came a voice from the gallery, “will he promise the citizens, when he gets to the Mayor's chair, to do away with the rotten machinery we have had in this city the past thirty years?”

MR. GEORGE.—That is not pertinent either; but I am free to say I will do the best I can.

“If I have a lot worth \$2,000 and a house on it worth \$5,000,” was the next inquiry, “what difference would it make to me whether a tax is levied on both the house and the lot or whether it is levied on the value of the lot alone?”

MR. GEORGE.—It will make this difference to you: If taxes are levied on the value of the lot, you will have less taxes to pay, for the reason that there are more lots than there are houses, and the taxation which is taken off of your house is not put on your lot, but on the value of your lot in connection with a great many lots that have no houses on them. There is an enormous economy in collecting taxes that way, and you will get the benefit of it. The great gainer will be the man who has neither house nor lot, but wants to buy a house and lot. He is the man who will gain in proportion more than you.

“If you decrease the amount of taxation,” said another, “will not that make a deficiency in the money required for the support of the municipal government?”

MR. GEORGE —No; I propose to raise in that way all that is required for the support of the municipal government, and if I had my way, I would raise a good deal more than the municipal government now takes. I would take all these increments that now go to our landlords, who live, many of them, in idleness here — some of them residents of Paris, and Dublin, and Italy — I would take all that vast fund and use it for the benefit of the whole city. At this present day we want about twenty Cooper Institutes and about the same number of Astor Libraries. I respect the memory of Peter Cooper. I respect the benevolence of the Astors in giving to New York that fine library, and allowing New Yorkers to go there several hours every day; but I do not think it creditable to the people of New York that they have to resort to charity for these things. I would rather have them provided at the public expense out of our own money — from our own estate. I would not only do that, but I would do a great deal more. Did you ever think of the wickedness or injustice of bringing up the children of New York as they are today, with no place to play except in the crowded streets? We can use plenty of money, no fear.

“A poor farmer living in the State of Connecticut,” began a ministerial-looking auditor, who, at the Chairman’s request, came to the orchestra-rail to propose his question, “owning a small farm of fifty or sixty acres, has married him a wife, and in the providence of God has four or five little ones; he has lived to be thirty or thirty-five years old, and by his own labor and industry has supported his wife and children; and now, in the providence of God, is stricken down with sickness and is laid away in the grave. All that he has in the world is that little farm. What disposition would the gentleman make of that land?”

MR. GEORGE.—With one special and particular farm I don’t propose to do anything. I propose an adjustment which affects society at large and all land. Under the present system, when that farmer dies and leaves his little farm of a few acres, with a lot of small children, all the chances are that he leaves it with a mortgage on it. Whether he does or not his wife is soon obliged to give one, and then his children are cast upon society to make their way the best they can. Under the state of things which I propose, with taxation levied as I propose to have it levied, no one will be able to monopolize land.

Consequently, land not in use would be free to be used by anyone who wanted to use it, and these small children, the moment they were able to work, would find abundant opportunity.

“The question the gentleman raises is a most important one,” continued Mr. George, “and must come home to every man who has young children. Today the most terrible weight upon the mind of every man is the question, ‘What will become of my family if I die?’ And here in civilized Christian society, as we call it, when such a man dies his widow and his children have to take care of themselves the best they can. I would have the surplus fund of the community make provision for things of that kind; I would take this vast fund that is created by the whole community; that grows with the growth of society; that is added to by every improvement; that belongs, therefore, to the whole people — I would take a portion of it for just such purposes as that, so that there would be no widow and no orphan in the whole community who would need to accept charity. And what security has the rich man that his children’s children will not beg their bread? I would rather leave my children without one penny, in a society where labor was highly paid, where employment was easy to obtain, than leave them millionaires in a society like this.”

“Mr. George, what did you actually say,” was the next inquiry, “regarding the house that Mr. Hewitt lives in that I see the press is talking about so much?”

MR. GEORGE.—That is no more pertinent to this discussion than what I think about the house that Jack built. I have not had time today to answer Mr. Hewitt’s last letter but I will answer it tomorrow, and you will find my answer in the Sunday papers.

“Mr. George, in taxing the land would you also take off the taxes from imported goods, and thus take away employment from our laborers?” inquired a protectionist in the audience.

MR. GEORGE.—I certainly would. Goods are good things, and the more we have of them in this country the better. I would fine nobody for bringing good things into the country — only for bringing bad things. But the gentleman also added, “and thus take away employment from the laborers.” The very reason that it seems to you the abolition of the tariff would take away employment is because of the way we treat our land.

“Do you want to hear my views on the tariff?” inquired Mr. George, addressing the audience. [“Yes, yes, yes,” came from all parts of the house.] “You have all heard of Robinson Crusoe. Suppose him to be still on that desert island of his — suppose a ship to pass and an American protectionist, like my good friend Patrick Ford here, to go ashore and say, ‘Robinson Crusoe, this island will be visited by all sorts of ships bringing all sorts of goods, and then you will have no employment for your labor.’ Robinson Crusoe would say: ‘Do they want to give me those goods?’ The protectionist might answer: ‘Not give those goods, but sell them to you, and then you wouldn’t have any work to do.’ Robinson Crusoe would reply: ‘I don’t want to work; what I want is the goods. I didn’t spend months in digging out that canoe and weeks in making this goat-skin coat because I wanted to work, but because I wanted the things.’ Looked at in that way protection is

utterly absurd. Robinson Crusoe stands for a whole community; what is true in this case would be true of a community of a hundred millions.

But now suppose Friday was there — suppose after the protectionist had tried it with Robinson Crusoe, he took Friday aside and said, ‘Look here, this place will be visited by ships laden with goods and they will give them to Robinson Crusoe for a few bananas, and then Crusoe won’t have any use for you, and the chances are that he will give you back to the cannibals.’ What would Friday do? He might want a protective tariff. The land being monopolized, there is in this country a large class of men who cannot employ themselves and are dependent on others for employment. From that arises the idea that it is necessary to shut out the competition of foreign labor. If we were all landlords — if we were all in the position of Robinson Crusoe — we would say, ‘Let everybody who wants to, furnish anything — the cheaper they do it, the better.’ But in the present state of things any improvement in production is not for the men who have merely their labor. If production could be carried on without labor it could not be carried on without land, and landlords would get every thing, while the rest of mankind would be paupers.

At this point the ministerial questioner rose for a point of information, saying: “The gentleman stated, in his opening, if I understood him correctly, that the assessed value of personal property in this city was actually diminishing. I would like to know if that is the fact.”

MR. GEORGE.—It is.

“I doubt it,” said the questioner.

The following question in writing was handed up: “What can Mr. George’s election do toward bringing his theories into practice, and what have they to do with this campaign?”

MR. GEORGE.—They have this to do with the campaign: Mr. Hewitt says that I ought to be beaten on account of my theories — that I am a mere theorist. My election will forward those theories simply by increasing the discussion of them. They cannot be carried into effect until the great majority of the people wish them to be carried into effect, and the great majority of the people will never wish them to be carried into effect until they have thoroughly discussed and considered them.

“Should a small piece of land pay as much tax as a larger piece?” came next.

MR. GEORGE.—That depends entirely on its value. A small piece of land in Wall Street would pay more than a larger piece of land in 116th Street.

The next question was in writing: “If elected will you clean out the slums?”

MR. GEORGE.—That is hardly pertinent; nevertheless, I will say what I have before, that I will do all I can.

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A colored man got the attention of the chair, and said: "Our race have been in habit of asking questions through others, but common-sense teaches us to ask questions for ourselves. I do not know of any people who are looked at with more contempt than the negro. I want to ask Mr. George, if he wishes to be supported by the negroes, will it help us when we approach a landlord and he says, no matter how respectable we may be, "I can't let that to a negro?"

MR. GEORGE.—I think so. If you will notice the men into whose minds these ideas have entered, you will find them rising above all prejudices of nationality, or race, or color, because the bottom principles for which we contend — the whole base of the theory — is that we are all the equal creatures of a common God. And as these ideas grow in the mind, so appears the sentiment of the brotherhood of man. There was deep significance in the attitude assumed by the Knights of Labor in Richmond. It meant that the men who have really turned their faces toward the emancipation of labor did recognize a common brotherhood.

"Do you expect the title of real estate to remain in the present owners?" was the next query.

MR. GEORGE.—Certainly. The title amounts to nothing. Individuals may keep the title when the community gets the rent. As I explained before, the title to anything produced by labor is sacred. The title to a house is absolute, but the earth was not made by man. It was made by the Creator, not for one man or one generation of men, but for all generations of men.

"Mr. Brown, on one side of the street, owns a lot of ground, and Mr. Smith, on the other side, owns a lot of equal size. The one proposes to improve it with a building worth \$1,000,000 and the other with a building worth \$100,000. Would Mr. George tax them both alike?" was asked.

MR. GEORGE.—Certainly. Both alike. The man in putting up a building worth \$1,000,000 does no harm to anyone — he does a benefit even to Mr. Brown. It isn't fair to tax him any more. If Mr. Smith doesn't put up a building worth as much as Mr. Brown's, he has the same opportunity — he has the same amount and value of land; therefore let him pay the same tax.

"Who would be the builders of houses under the new system, and how would the right to build a house be obtained, and from whom?"

MR. GEORGE.—Who would be the builders of houses? Bricklayers, carpenters, masons. Who would have them built? A good many who now never dream of having a house built. Capitalists would build them to rent to other people. How would the right to build a house be obtained and from whom? All that we propose in our platform is to take taxes off buildings and put them on land values. You would have to obtain the right to build from the owner of the land. You would, however, get the land cheaper, because the man

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who holds land at present, seeing the growth of the community, charges a speculative price, not what the land is worth now, but what he expects it to be worth years hence. But if he had to pay taxes upon the valuation at which he holds it, he could not keep it vacant long. He would have to sell; and when you have to sell a thing, you must come down in price. If he could not sell it and would not use it, he would have to give it away.