

## SINGLE-TAX<sup>1</sup> vs. SOCIALISM

A Debate Between Sergius E. Shevitch and Henry George, at Miner's Theater, New York City, October 23, 1887.--From the *Standard*, Oct. 29.

SINGLE-TAX would do away with all temptation to monopolize land. Mr. Blank is mistaken in saying that the laborer would have to pay for land. There would be no tax upon land,—only upon the value of land.

(Question from audience; “What is the difference?”)

Here is the difference: that land of itself has no (exchange) value. Land never has any value until two men want to use it. The prices that are charged for land on the outskirts of a city are a speculative value due to the anticipation of what it will be worth when the population crowds out. Under our system the employment of labor would be facilitated in every direction. Laborers would not be merely saved from paying rent, but would get employment during times when they were not engaged in their trades. Every man who goes to work extracting wealth from nature not only does something to lessen the glut of labor in other occupations, but by producing wealth for which he demands other wealth in exchange creates a demand for labor of other kinds.—Mr. George in the debate, printed in 5 cols. in his paper.

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The trouble with Socialism is its superficiality. The socialistic view is the view of industrial relations *as they appear on the surface* in those centers where they have assumed their most complex and most highly developed form—as where pavements obscure the ground and tall houses obscure the stars,—the prominence into which the finishing processes of industry are brought, obscures the absolute dependence of man and all his works on mother earth.

Professor Ely<sup>2</sup> and the Socialists generally are like those who would teach a blindfolded man to read by raised alphabets, and provide for him a staff with which to painfully grope his way. We, on the contrary, would simply remove the bandage and let him see.

The connection which Professor Ely fails to perceive between what we propose and what we claim that it would accomplish, lies

in the belief in the harmony of God's laws; in our belief that right and wrong, mine and thine, are anterior to and superior to all human enactments; that social laws are coincident with moral laws, and that these have the same ever pressing sanction as have the physical laws. What we propose is not a mere fiscal change; not a mere clever scheme of equalization—it is a conforming of the most important and most fundamental of all human adjustments to the supreme law of justice; a recognition of that natural right of property which exists irrespective of what kings or emperors or parliaments or legislatures may enact and which is attested by the clear perceptions of the moral sense. What we seek by a simple change in taxation is to put all men on the plane of equal opportunity. We would not take from one to give to another; we would not beg one class to relieve by their alms another class. But by abolishing all taxation upon labor and the products of labor we would leave to the individual the full rewards of individual industry, skill and thrift. By taking for the community those values which attach to land by reason of the growth and improvement of the community we would take for the benefit of all that which is brought forth by the presence and effort of all. In all things we would follow *Freedom*. Where freedom of competition is possible, there we would leave everything to individual action; where freedom of competition becomes impossible, there we would have the state step in, so far and only so far as may be necessary to secure individual freedom.

To give permanent and remunerative employment to every one of the "thousands upon thousands of men who now seek work in vain" it is not necessary for society to give any guarantees; it is not necessary to nationalize capital, as the socialists would have us do, nor yet to coax employers to benevolently give a larger share of their earnings to their workmen. It is not necessary to call on Christian endeavor to base a division of the products upon some equitable principle. That equitable principle already exists in natural laws, which, if left unobstructed, will with a certainty that no human adjustment could rival, give to each who takes part in the work of production that which is justly his due.—From an editorial in the *Standard*, December 31, 1887.

NOTES—(1) This is the first instance where Henry George used the term "Single Tax" as the name for a philosophy, non-descriptively, and thus as "Single-Tax-ism". (2) Prof. Richard T. Ely of Johns Hopkins University attacked Mr. George's philosophy in an article in the *Independent* of December 22, and Mr. George replied in this editorial.

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