

A third questioner asked: Whether, if the land was held by the country, it would not be the duty of the Government to let every acre of land at the highest rent they could get, and if so, how would the poor man be one bit the better for such a condition?

*Mr. George:* Unquestionably it would be the duty of the Government to rent land for the very highest price it could get. If ten of us owned a horse, and only one could ride him, would it not be the fair thing, and the only fair thing, for the whole ten of us, that man, if he is willing to pay the highest price for the horse, should ride him? Certainly. The rent, then, would go back to the people. (Cheers.) There is [no] harm in rent. Rent to my mind is one of the most beautiful adaptations of Nature, one of those things in which a man who looks can see an absolute proof of a divine and beneficent intelligence. It is that we have perverted the good gifts of the Creator that the children's bread is tossed to the dogs. Rent rises and increases as society progresses. What does that mean? Simply this, that in the order of Nature the progress in civilization should be a progress towards truer and truer quality: that the common interest of all should grow larger and larger as against the individual interest. (Cheers.)

I would like to ask this audience a question for my own curiosity and information. I have been told that English audiences do not, and would not, agree with me on this point of compensation to the landowners before the resumption by the people of their rights. I would put it to the vote of this audience, I want to ask you, all who stand with me: Who hold that vested interests cannot stand in the way of natural rights, and that it is not necessary to buy the land from those who now hold it before the people resume their own[?] – say aye; contrary no. (Loud cries of “aye” and “no.”) I believe the ayes have it. (Loud cheers.)

A fourth questioner asked Mr. George: What distinction he would draw between the landowner and the capitalist whose income came in the same way, from the earnings of the people. (“Hear, hear.”)

*Mr. George:* Your capitalist has done something. The very fact that he is a capitalist proves that. Your landlord has done nothing whatever; he takes no more part in production than a wild animal. I do not say that there may not be landlords, there are many, who do other things, but I say that the landlord as a landlord does nothing. There was one landlord in Ireland who went to bed and stayed there for eight years.

*The Questioner:* But suppose I inherit those shares and have done nothing at all for them.

*Mr. George:* Shares! What do the shares represent? They represent actual work done.

*The Questioner:* Not by me.

*Mr. George:* By somebody. Whoever does work, the product of that work belongs to him by the law of Nature. Nature gives nothing to man without hard labor, and he can transfer that right to whoever he pleases; that which the man produces is his as against the world, to give, to sell, to bequeath, or to destroy. Let the man who has real property, real wealth do what he likes with it. What we want is the soil, the element of Nature for which all wealth proceeds. (Cheers.)

### SOCIALISM AND RENT APPROPRIATION: A DIALOGUE

(Henry George and Henry M. Hyndman,  
*The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, 1885).<sup>34</sup>

*Mr. Hyndman:* I see that you have been hard at work since you have been over here in land agitation. I think, as you know, that you expect far too much from nationalization of the land by itself.

*Mr. George:* Why?

*H.:* Because I understand you to advocate merely the confiscation of competition rents, and that, to my mind, will not benefit the laborers.

*G.:* I advocate the recognition of equal rights to land. As for any particular plan of doing this, I care little; but it seems to me that the only practicable way is to take rent for common purposes. Rent is, of course, fixed by competition.

*H.:* That is rather vague to me. I am as much in favor of nationalization and communization of the land as you are; but taking rent would not bring this about; it would leave the laborers, whom we both wish to benefit, competing against one another for subsistence wages just as they were before.

*G.:* That I think a mistake. It would not only give the laborers their equal share in the benefits of an enormous fund which now goes to individuals, but, by making land valuable only to the user, would break up the monopoly which forces men who have nothing but their own powers to that fierce competition which drives wages down to the lowest possible rate. The fundamental mistake of Socialists of your school, it seems to me, is in your failure to see that this competition is not a natural thing, but solely the result of the monopolization of land.

*H.:* I should dispute to begin with, if it were worthwhile, that all rent is necessarily competition rent. Customary rents are still far more common than competition rents. But let that pass. What we contend is that the confiscation of rent leaves the competition untouched. This you admit yourself. And if you broke up the landlord monopoly tomorrow by taxing land up to what you would

call its full value – an impossibility as I believe in practice – the control by the capitalist class of the means and instruments of production would remain untouched, and the laborers would still compete under the control of that class, who would derive all the advantage from the change. The historical growth of private property in land has ended in the domination of the capitalist class or *bourgeoisie*. In England, at any rate, the landlord is a mere hanger-on of this class – a sleeping partner in the product taken from the laborer by the capitalist.

G.: You are using the term rent in one sense, and I in another. By rent I mean the value of the advantage which accrues from the use of a particular piece of land, not what may, as a matter of fact, be paid by the user to the owner. The amount paid by custom, or the amount paid under lease, may be lower or higher than the true rent. In the one case the owner gets more than is really rent, in the other case he gets less, and the tenant or intermediate tenants get the difference.

Rent involves competition. Until two men both desire the same piece of ground, land, no matter what its capacities, can have no value. True rent is always that rent which could be obtained by free competition, nor is it desirable that it should, but it would destroy that power of withholding land from use which in so many cases forces its price far beyond the point which free competition would fix. The price which crofters and agricultural laborers pay for land, the price, many times the agricultural value, which must be paid for building sites on the outskirts of town, is in reality not rent, but blackmail. In short, were every holder of land compelled to pay its competitive value to the community, the power of withholding land from use would be gone, and there would be substituted for the present one-sided competition in which men deprived of the natural means of livelihood are forced to underbid each other, a free competition in which employer would compete with employer as fully as laborer must now compete with laborer.

The social difficulties we are both conscious of do not arise from competition, but from one-sided competition. No monopoly of capital of which it is possible to conceive would, so long as land was open to labor, drive wages to the starvation point. As for the landlord being a mere hanger-on of the capitalist, the monopoly of land is the parent of all other monopolies. Give men land and they can get capital, but shut men out from land, and they must either get someone to let them work for him or starve.

H.: Perfectly free competition for land is unknown, but I am quite content to argue the question as you put it. Without going into the genesis of capital in its modern sense, I urge that the system of production which assumes the payment of wages to “free” competitors who necessarily produce commodities

for exchange, and have no control, individually or collectively, over the means and instruments of production or their own products, would not be in the least affected by the confiscation of competition rents. The men who attempted to work on the land would inevitably fall under the yoke of the capitalist class just as they do now. They would be producing for the world market under the control of the employing class just as they are now, and would be at their mercy as a class in the same way.

Moreover, even from the individual point of view, crops or buildings can be hypothecated<sup>35</sup> just as easily as the land. I repeat, therefore, that the capitalists as a class would be the sole gainers by the confiscation of rent and its application to the reduction of taxation or to public purposes. The workers would be no freer than they are today.

G.: I cannot see why not. The confiscation of rent would give to all laborers, as well as capitalists, a share in the income thus arising. This would necessarily be to the far greater relative gain of the laborer than of the capitalist, and would greatly increase his power of making a fair bargain. Even now an equal division of the rent of the United Kingdom would give to a large number of families more than they have at present to live upon. Further than this, the effect, as I have before pointed out, would be to make land valuable only to the user, that is to say, to make it free to labor and to keep it free. No harm whatever that I can see could come from the power of hypothecating crops and buildings or anything of that nature.

As for producing for one's own use or producing for the world market, that form of production is best for the producer which will give him most of the things he wants, and which are the real objects of his production. The effect of the recognition of equal rights to land would be necessarily to greatly diminish the proportion of wage workers, but I can see nothing wrong in that system in itself. The trouble is not in men's working for wages, but in the fact that, deprived of the natural means of employing themselves, they are forced to work for unfair wages.

You speak of the means and instruments of production as though they did not include land, which is the principal and only indispensable means and instrument of production. All other means and instruments have been produced from land. Give men land, and they may produce capital in all its forms. But give them all the capital you please, and deprive them of land, and they can produce nothing.

H.: I venture to think my argument is quite clear. You say that an equal division of the rent of the United Kingdom at the present time would give a large number of families more than they now have to live upon. The total rent of Great Britain, agricultural rent and ground rent together, apart from interest

on capital invested, is estimated by no authority worth a moment's consideration at more than £60,000,000 or £70,000,000 a year. The population of Great Britain is 30,000,000. An equal division would therefore give £2 to £2 7s. a head, or from £10 to £11 15s. per family. None but pauper families can possibly subsist on that yearly sum, and they of course are kept by ratepayers at a much higher cost.

But admitting the division to be so made, what then? Each working family could afford, in periods of severe competition, dull times, crisis, or the like, to accept 4s. a week less wages from the employing class by reason of this dole, and thus the £10 a year per family would almost immediately go into the pockets of the capitalist class. Surely that is clear.

*G.:* Rent is generally underestimated, many important items being omitted, and I am inclined to think that the estimate of £300,000,000 as the true rental value of the three kingdoms is nearer the mark than that you gave. But we have not time to dispute as to statistics. Even £2 per head would be a most important addition to the income of many working-class families, relieving them from the necessity of forcing women and children into the labor market for any pittance they can obtain.

But such a division would not be the best way of utilizing the fund. By substituting the income thus derived for the income now raised by taxation, which, falling upon production and consumption, represses enterprise and bears most heavily on the poorer classes, the gain of the laborer would be much more considerable than from a simple division of rent; and while it is true that, land being monopolized, any general addition to the income of the working classes would ultimately carry wages still further down, the breaking up of the land monopoly, which the appropriation of rent for public purposes would cause, would prevent the competition that has this effect. Here is the main point which it seems to me you fail to appreciate, that the tendency of wages to a minimum which will merely enable the laborer to live and reproduce is not an inherent tendency, but results solely from the monopolization of land.

*H.:* The first argument is merely a contravention of my figures. As a matter of fact, agricultural rents are falling all over England today, and will continue to fall in the face of American competition and the rapid improvements of transport. With relation to municipal rents, I am talking merely of the ground landlords; the moment you go beyond that, you enter upon the expropriation of the capitalist, and, even as it is, the capitalist class takes a large percentage of the ground rents and agricultural rents as interest on mortgage. The effect of the reduction of taxation would be precisely the same as the division of the income from rent among the population; the working classes would be able to accept to that degree lower wages in a period of fierce competition, and the

total benefit in the long run would go to the capitalist class. My answer to your last statement will come better later on.

*G.:* Agricultural rents are falling in England, but I think this fall is overestimated, and cannot long continue, for they are rising elsewhere, noticeably in the United States, where in new sections of the country half the crop is now being paid as rent. But urban rent and mineral rents, which in this country are more important than agricultural rents, are steadily rising. In the cities the rise of house rent is entirely the rise of ground rent. Buildings do not become more valuable, but land does. Where the capitalist gets interest on a mortgage on land, he is simply getting a portion of the rent.

*H.:* Of course, as his class gets a much greater portion of all products of labor (being more powerful under present conditions) than the landlord class.

*G.:* Capitalists, as capitalists, are not, and never can be, more powerful than landlords. Men can live in a rude fashion without capital, but cannot live without land. But the point I wish to make is, that where the capitalist receives rent he is to that extent a landlord. The effect of a mortgage is simply to divide proprietary rights.

*H.:* If you come to that, the effect of the whole system is to confiscate labor. The question is, which of the expropriating classes is dependent on the other. I say, under the present economic conditions, which result from an historical growth extending over centuries, the landlord class is dependent on the capitalist class. You say the contrary. It is at any rate impossible to argue as if conditions of society which have long since passed away still existed.

*G.:* It is only necessary to argue from the facts of Nature, which are the same today as they always have been. Give men land, and they can produce capital. Deprive them of land, and they cease to exist. Were all the capital of this nation destroyed tomorrow, some remnant would continue to live, and would in time reproduce capital; but destroy the land, and what would become of the nation? You are talking of a capitalist class and of a landlord class; as a matter of fact, these classes blend into each other. There are probably no landlords who are not to some extent capitalists, and few capitalists that are not to some extent landlords. If we talk of the capitalists and the landlords, it must be by considering them in the abstract.

*H.:* The facts of Nature are perpetually modified by man, and in an increasing degree as social forms develop. I have already said that in England the landlord is merely a hanger-on of the capitalist, and that the two classes therefore do blend. Capital, to my mind, expresses a whole series of social relations; class monopoly of the means of production on the one hand, and competition of wage earners on the other.

Again, what is the good of giving men access to land if they have to compete with other men who own much larger capital, and therefore can undersell them by sheer force of cheaper production owing to superior machinery and greater command over the forces of Nature – who can produce with less labor, that is? Man cannot live by bread alone. He must exchange his agricultural products if he is to attain a decent standard of life in other respects.

Yet here the big capitalist steps in and reduces the exchange value of his raw commodities as estimated in the universal measure of value – gold. Big capitals must in the long run crush small; you admit that, I know. Agricultural land in short, whether “nationalized” or not, is just as much capital today as any factory, and is used as a factory, the wear and tear being made good in precisely the same way as the wear and tear of machinery or buildings. Louisiana is a great raw cotton and sugar factory; Minnesota and Wisconsin are great grain factories; Lancashire is a great manufacture[r of] cotton and iron factory, and so on; all carried on under the control of the capitalist class who produce for profit on the world market.

Nationalize the land as much as you please, therefore, without giving the producers the collective control of the social machinery, the means of production and distribution as well as of the exchange, and no good really will have been done. The land is only one of the means of production and under existing conditions is useless without the others. Production for profit, and competition for wages under the control of capital, will in my opinion go on equally when the land is nationalized; wages will equally tend to a minimum; and there will be as now the same phenomena, the causes of which we Socialists alone explain – overproduction, crisis, and glut, followed by periods of boom and prosperity.

G.: It seems to me that you Socialists confuse yourselves by using terms in varying senses. Here we are discussing the relations of capital and land, the inference necessarily being that they are separate things, whereas you include land as capital, and also include as capital such things as monopoly and competition. Land is not merely one of the means of production, but the natural factor in all production, the field and material upon which alone human labor can be exerted. No matter how much Nature may be modified by man, man can never get beyond his dependence upon land until he can discover some way of producing things out of nothing. Capital is simply wealth (that is to say, the material products of human labor exerted upon land) applied to assist in further production.

It is the monopolization of land that always drives men into such competition with each other that they must take any wages they can get, and thus forces wages down, as may be seen by the fact that in new countries, where land is more easily obtained, the wages of laborers are always higher than where the

monopoly of land has further progressed. Land being free, capital cannot force wages down, for capital must compete with capital; a competition which where monopoly does not exist is quicker and more intense than any other competition. Break up the land monopoly, and not only would capital become more equally diffused, but capitalists must compete against capitalists for the employment of labor; or, to put it in more absolute form, labor would have the use and assistance of capital on the lowest terms which the competition between capitalists would bring about.

H.: Whether Socialists explain the phenomena of industrial crisis or not is a point we have not yet discussed, and may come later. Nobody has ever disputed that land is necessary to the production of wealth; but land has been used very differently, and has been the basis of very varying social relations in the history of mankind, as you are perfectly aware. You say that capital is wealth applied to further production.

A spinning jenny is a machine for spinning cotton;<sup>36</sup> only in certain conditions is it transformed into capital. When torn away from those conditions it is just as little capital as gold is money in the abstract or sugar the price of sugar. In the work of production men do not stand in relation to Nature alone: They only produce when they work together in a certain way, and mutually exchange their different kinds of energy. In order to produce, they mutually enter upon certain relations and conditions, and it is only by means of those relations and conditions that their relation to Nature takes place, and production becomes possible.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that in new countries wages are high arises from the fact that there a man is, in many cases, able to take himself out of the wage earning class altogether, to dissociate himself from his period in fact, as the Mormons did in Utah, and as other people have done in the West of America and other parts of the world; but this cannot be permanent, whether land were common property or not. We Socialists, as I have said before, are as much in favor of making land common property as you are; our only difference arises as to the means whereby such nationalization and communication should be brought about.

There are two other points I must touch upon briefly. The capitalist system of production involves class monopoly of the means of production and competition among propertyless wage earners. As to the competition between capital and capitalists, that is going on most fiercely today; the result always is that in the long run the capitalist class, as a whole, gets a greater relative proportion of the products of labor, and the working class a less relative proportion. The same would be the case if the land were nationalized, the other conditions remaining unchanged.

G.: The point at issue between us is as to what would be the effects of nationalization of the land unaccompanied by nationalization of capital. We are talking of land, of labor, and of capital, and of three corresponding classes – landlords,

laborers, and capitalists. We can never reach any clear conclusion unless we attach to those words a definite meaning and exclude from what we embrace in one that which is embraced in others.

A spinning jenny is an article of wealth, a product of labor and land, and, like all other articles of wealth, may or may not be capital according as it is used. But land or labor never can be classed as capital as long as the three terms are used in contradistinction. Whatever varying social relations may exist among men land always remains the prime necessity – the only indispensable requisite for existence.

The development of exchange and the division of labor do not change the essential facts that each laborer is endeavoring to produce for himself the things which he desires, and that land is the raw material from which they must come. Make labor free to [work the] land, and it will be impossible for capital to take any undue advantage of it. Just as men in new countries can take themselves out of the wage-receiving class by going to work for themselves, so would it be in such a country as this.

The competition of capital with capital is intense today, and its effects may be seen in the lowering rate of interest. But labor being shut out from land, wages tend to a minimum, and the advantages of the improved processes of production and exchange go either to the landowner who possesses the natural element indispensable to production or to capitalists who in other ways secure a monopoly which shelters them from competition and who thus take what, if these monopolies were abolished, would go not to the laborers but to the landowners. In short, our social difficulties arise not from capital or from capitalistic production but from monopoly.

*H.:* As to monopoly, capitalism, and a wage earning class involve class monopoly, or we should not be arguing now. It is almost unnecessary for me to repeat that, in England, at any rate, I consider the landlord to be a mere appendage to the capitalist, and that you cannot get at the land with any advantage to the people except through capital. You seem to forget that the mass of mankind who labor would be wholly helpless on the land if they had perfect freedom to go there. Each man produces not what he himself desires to keep and to use for himself, but things which other people desire to have in exchange under the control of the capitalist class, all production now being practically conducted with a view to exchange.

As to the competition of capital lowering the rate of interest, 3% on £100,000 is the same as 30% on £10,000, and the capitalist class may be taking a very much higher amount out of the total product of labor, although the rate of interest may be very low. We are both agreed of course that labor applied to natural objects is the sole source of wealth; and that the quantity of labor socially

necessary to produce commodities is on the average the measure of their relative value in exchange.

*G.:* The mass of mankind, even the men of the cities, would not be wholly helpless on the land. Man had in the beginning nothing but land, and it is from land that all the instruments that he uses to assist production are derived. But even admitting that man in the present state of society can make no use of land without some capital, the effect of throwing open land to labor would be that those who had some capital would go upon the land, thus at once relieving the competition of wage earners and increasing the demand for their labor.

Not to prolong the discussion on these lines, it seems to me the difference between us is simply this. We both agree that labor does not find its proper opportunities or get its fair reward. Your contention is that, to remedy this state of things, not merely land but also capital must be made common property; while I contend that it is only necessary to make common property of that to which natural rights are clearly equal, and without which men cannot exist or produce – land.

*H.:* With regard to your last sentence I agree that it formulates our difference (omitting the phrase “natural rights”), and using “capital” in the sense of means and instruments of production, and all improvements upon them.

*G.:* What do you mean by “capital” in that sense?

*H.:* I mean railways, shipping, machinery, mines, factories, and so forth. I contend, in short, that all production today is necessarily social, and that exchange is conducted for the benefit of individuals or a class, the products belonging to the capitalists, not to the producers. I wish to socialize both the means of production and the forms of exchange as well as the land.

*G.:* This seems to me indefinite. I am quite with you as to the desirability of carrying on for public benefit all businesses which are in their nature monopolies, such as telegraphs and railways; but it does not seem to me necessary to go any further than this, as, where free competition is possible, the same end will be much better served by leaving such things to individual enterprise. Even as to railways, telegraphs, and such agencies, the assumption of them by the community is quite a minor matter. Give the people land, and they can live without either the railway or the telegraph, and though a railway or telegraph may be a monopoly, its owners must in their own interest fix their charges at such a rate as would induce people to use them.

As a matter of fact, we see everywhere, the advantages that accrue from such improved instruments as railways and telegraphs do not go to the capitalists who construct them, but very largely to landowners in the increased value of land. I can understand how a society must at sometime become possible in which all production and exchange should be carried on under public supervision and for

the public benefit, but I do not think it possible to attain that state at one leap, or to attain it now.

In the meantime, people are suffering and are starving because the element which is indispensable to existence, and to which all have naturally equal rights, has been monopolized by some. Destroy this monopoly, and the present state of things would at the very least be enormously improved. If it were then found expedient to go further on the lines of Socialism, we could do so, but why postpone the most necessary and the most important thing until all that you may think desirable could be accomplished?

*H.:* The capitalists as a class would meantime be strengthened. But we wish to postpone nothing. In our opinion, given the necessary political predominance of the producers, the economic forms are all ready for the nationalization of the means and instruments of production of which I have spoken. From the Company to State or Communal control is an easy, and, as you would say, a natural transition – the salaried officials and wage earners of the Companies becoming the salaried officials and wage earners of the State or the Municipalities, and would certainly have nothing to gain by making profits out of their own overwork or underpay.

The economic forms for the nationalization and communization of agricultural land for productive purposes are in my opinion not ready, except in the way I state. The suffering and starvation which we see around us now are due to the capitalist system of production, which throws people out of employment the moment production at a profit to the capitalist class ceases to be possible. This brings us, I think, to practical proposals. I, at any rate, have said all I wish to say at present on the main issue between us.

*G.:* Taxation supplies the form for the virtual nationalization of land, and I cannot see your reason for thinking that of itself it would not relieve labor. Take, for instance, the overcrowding of cities. That does not arise from any system of capitalistic production, but merely from the fact that people are not permitted to build houses without first paying an enormous price, and that when the houses are built a further tax is placed upon them which must necessarily fall upon the user. The effect of appropriating rent would be to at once [to] increase the number of houses by reducing the price that must be paid for their sites and abolishing the tax now imposed upon them. So, all through the agricultural districts men would be able to go upon and cultivate land from which they are now debarred, thus relieving the labor markets and producing a greater demand for the commodities which the working classes of the towns and cities produce. It would make it impossible for men to shut up mineral resources as a certain Scotchman recently shut up an iron mine employing a great number of hands, saying he could afford to keep it idle as it would “not

eat anything.” In short, the effect would be to stimulate production in every direction.

*H.:* Taxation leaves competition among wage earners untouched. The people are driven into the towns by improvements in machinery which enable the farmers to do the same amount of work with fewer hands, and therefore ought to benefit the whole community; partly also, in England at any rate, by the substitution of pasturage for arable culture. Thus, driven into the towns, they compete with their fellows. Moreover, overcrowding in cottages in the country, where the ground rent and the taxation is a mere trifle, is just as bad as it is in towns. As to shutting up the iron mine, the men could not work that mine unless they appropriated the mineowner’s capital. The causes of the present universal crisis, the seventh of this century, lie, I think much deeper than you suppose, and would not be affected by any one single proposal.<sup>38</sup>

*G.:* I think, on analysis, all these evils are traceable to the fact that land, which is necessary to all, is made the property of some.

*H.:* That is your contention, I know; but do you not think we have argued sufficiently now to be able to speak on points of agreement rather than of difference? For instance, we are quite at one in wishing to bring about greater freedom, comfort, and happiness for the mass of mankind, who at the present moment are driven into degradation and misery by class monopoly of one sort or another.

Whichever way we look we see the adulteration of goods; overwork of women and children; science and art at the command of a privileged few; education in any high sense shut away from the mass of the people; hours of labor unduly prolonged; men forced into idleness who wish nothing better than to work for the good of themselves and their fellow creatures.

Anything, therefore, which tends to bring the workers of the world together upon a common basis, whether of nationalization of land or collective ownership of capital, must necessarily tend to the overthrow of these abuses. You know that today peasant proprietorship is being put forward as a remedy for the ills of this country. On this point, at any rate, looking across the Channel and seeing the condition of the French and other peasant proprietors all over Europe we are thoroughly of one mind, that no benefit whatever can accrue by such an extension of the rights of private property.

Here, in England, a bill is before Parliament which, I believe, will be carried, for the enfranchisement of leaseholds. This, again, will but interest a larger class in that very monopoly of land to which you and I equally object. With regard to the thousands of the unemployed whom you spoke for yesterday in front of the Royal Exchange, and in whose interests we Socialists have been working for many months past, you, I presume, would be as glad as we should

be to see the Government recognize its responsibility and organize their labor alike in town and country for the benefit of the community at large.

The present depression which has extended through every civilized country is independent of despotism or republic, protection or free trade.<sup>39</sup> These social questions evidently lie below all forms of government and all fiscal arrangements. We hold, as you know, that these decennial crises are due to the revolt of the socialized form of production against the individual form of exchange all over the civilized world. The incapacity of the *bourgeoisie* or middle class to handle its own system is, at any rate, proclaimed in every industrial and commercial center. Whether we are right, or whether we are wrong, no doubt it makes a difference to the tactics of the immediate future, but it can make no difference in the desire which we all must have to work in common for the great end of the emancipation of our fellowmen.

The mere fact that you and I are meeting here to discuss in a friendly manner the deepest social and economic problems, however, cursorily, is a proof that men are learning to sink differences of opinion in the sincere desire to find a base of agreement in view of the silent anarchy of today, and the furious anarchy which, unless some serious and important measures are immediately taken, threatens to overwhelm the civilized world tomorrow. The equality of men and the enfranchisement of women, which today are spoken of by many as a dream, are becoming really a necessity for the advance of civilization. Only by and through an International Socialist feeling, and a brotherhood among the workers of the world, can we hope for the happy future which thousands of the noblest of our race have longed to see.

G.: With all your sentiments I heartily agree. We who seek to substitute for the present social order one in which poverty should be unknown are not the men who threaten society. They are really the dangerous men who insist that injustice must continue because it exists. Nothing but good can come from a free interchange of opinion. Every man who looks at civilized society today must feel that the order that exists, and which you have so graphically described, is not that order which the Creator has intended.

The only question between us is as to the best way of substituting for it that order of things which will give free play to the powers and full scope to the aspirations of mankind. And questions of method are as yet but secondary. The great work is to break up the "pitiable contentment of the poor," and rouse the conscience of the rich, to spread everywhere the feeling of brotherhood. And this your Socialists are doing. These are indeed worldwide questions. We on the other side of the Atlantic have the same social problems to solve that are forcing themselves upon you here. The great change in public feeling that I have observed since my visit here a year ago proves to me that you in England

are indeed taking hold of these questions with a determination to solve them. In my opinion, the greatest of English revolutions has already commenced, and it means not merely revolution in England, but one which will extend over the whole civilized world.

## HENRY GEORGE AND THE SINGLE TAX

(J. Bruce Glasier, *Commonweal*, June 1, 1889).<sup>40</sup>

The large audiences which assembled to hear Mr. George during his recent lecturing tour in Scotland and the enthusiasm with which his denunciation of private property in land was received, are cheering signs to Socialists. It was especially gratifying to observe that almost every speaker who preceded and followed Mr. George at those meetings, spoke more Socialism than Single Tax; and that just in proportion as their utterances were boldly Socialistic – and many of them were remarkably so – was the applause and enthusiasm of the meetings.

I think, however, that I am not guilty of bias in saying that when Mr. George attempted to show that land can be nationalized by the imposition of a single tax on land values, there was a palpable fall in his argument, if not from the sublime to the ridiculous, at least from the convincing to the confounding – a fall, too, that was apparent alike in the lecturer's manner of speech and in the audience's manner of receiving it. It is true Mr. George admitted that he did not believe the imposition of a single tax upon land values would do "everything," and that he defined the right of private property in the products of labor in terms that implied Socialism; yet the general tenor of his utterance when eulogizing his tax theory and when replying to questions put by Socialists, was so patently sophisticated and reactionary, that one could not help agreeing with Dr. Clark when he said – speaking at the farewell meeting in the City Hall, Glasgow – that: "He (pointing to Mr. George) was the most Conservative man in Scotland."

As Mr. George's single-tax theory has no doubt charms for those whose minds have been warped by the unhealthy teaching of expedients and palliatives common to all political reformers, and for those who feel almost persuaded to become Socialists but hesitate, looking for some stepping-stone, fearing to take the bold leap, I will endeavor to show briefly the error of fact and thought upon which it is founded. A reply given to Mr. George to a question asked in Glasgow, seems to me to expose the radical defect of perception upon which the whole superstructure of his method is built. When asked if a man was justified in taking the highest price he could get for a product of his labor, Mr. George replied: "Yes! If I make a rod and line and go and fish in a stream and