

A Weekly "Single Tax."

Mr. W. CHAPMAN WRIGHT says:—"I should say that the progress made in Scotland would justify you making the attempt, that is if any reasonable offers of support are made. It is all very well to use the existing press in England, but a regular weekly publication would have a very great influence in rousing our members to active work. That is where the advantage would be felt. Without something of the sort members will not attempt to attack (single handed as they feel themselves) a world of opposition. It is by destroying this feeling of loneliness that a paper effects great results."

Mr. FRED SKIRROW writes:—"I have seen our friends at Shipley and Bradford. All are of opinion that in a very short time a weekly *Single Tax* would pay its way; and what is more, they are all anxious for the change and would be willing to help you all in their power. When one looks at the penny rags that are published, and which must pay or they wouldn't go on, it may well be asked, 'What is to prevent a bright, intelligent paper, like yours, and with such a grand mission, from working its way into the hearts and affections of all true reformers?'"

Mr. EDWIN ADAM writes:—"I fully reciprocate the paragraph in the December *Single Tax* which asks, why not have a weekly issue? So much is now being crowded out of the monthly issue. Mr. Murray got a capital hearing at Jedburgh last week. We seem to have lots of supporters here."

Mr. LOUIS H. BERENS writes:—"I would do anything in my power to make the *Single Tax* weekly a success. I certainly think the past career of your paper entitles it to the support and confidence of all Single Taxers. Let me know in what manner I can be of assistance to you, and keep me posted of your proposal."

Socialist Economics.

A Criticism of the Pamphlet issued by the Fabian Society, entitled "Capital and Land."

BY WM. CASSELS.

This pamphlet is called "Capital and Land" not by accident but evidently by design, for the intention of the writer or writers is manifest on every page; it is to render absurd and useless the separation in thought of Capital and Land.

At the beginning we are told that "The practical aim of Socialists with regard to the materials of wealth is the emancipation of land and industrial capital from individual and class ownership and the vesting of them in the community."

Now if we analyse this sentence we find land and industrial capital placed under the general term "materials of wealth."

That Land is a material of wealth is incontrovertible, and being a material of wealth, it cannot be wealth itself—it requires something to be superadded to make it wealth. In the same way, if Industrial Capital be a material of wealth it cannot at the same time be wealth, and per contra, if it be wealth it cannot be a material of wealth. Taken either way the statement is illogical and leads to the vitiation of thought. It may be said this is a quibble, but a moment's thought will show that it is a vital criticism and that Land is the only material of wealth. The statement is somewhat analogous to that made by a schoolboy in an examination paper, when he was asked what were the principal products of the United States, and he replied, "Fruit, apples, and tomatoes." So much for the practical aim of Socialists.

The writer or writers there go on to say that "land and capital are instruments with which man works for the production of wealth material for the maintenance of his existence and comfort. Now, it is important to notice that though in common talk we separate the two, and though political economists have given a scientific dignity to this rough classification of the instruments of production, distinguishing as land that which has been provided by nature, and as 'capital' that which has been made by human industry. The distinction is not one which can be clearly traced in dealing with the actual things which are the instruments of production, because most of these are compounded of the gifts of nature, and the results of human activity."

In the first place, classification into land and capital is not merely the classification of common talk; it is a classification in the nature of things like that of "man and nature," nature and art due to a common perception of a position and environment necessary to the exertions of human industry, and to the common understanding of man that he has not created that position and that environment.

How transitory the human element is may be seen in the relics of great civilisations, such as the Pre-Incan.

Let man but disappear or be cut off from existence for a few years, and where will the great human element which is intermingled with land go to? It will pass away. But land, nature, position, will remain for man when he shall appear again.

The classification into land and capital is not a rough classification, because it is not capable of concrete manifestation; no classification is concrete. The idea of classification involves abstraction. A concrete classification is an absurdity.

Again, the classification of the elements of production into land and capital has not been given a scientific dignity by economists without reason. A scientific man could make no other classification; for science must be logical. We are not inclined to throw overboard the economics of the economists, with its occasional absurdities, for the Fabian Socialist economics, with its abstract of all the absurdities of all the economics.

Another point worthy of notice is that while land and capital are necessarily compounded, or, to speak more correctly, while capital is very generally compounded with land, it does not follow that the values of land and capital cannot be clearly separated, indeed they are separated daily, no one has ever heard of an insurance company insuring land. Insurance companies separate the value of land from improvements or the value of capital daily. While it is true that such undertakings as railways, canals, mines, etc., are necessarily compounded of land and capital, yet there is no capable manager of any of these things who will not give you a separate valuation of the two elements.

All through this pamphlet there is such an inconsistent mixture of terms that one is not surprised that the writers should accept false conclusions, indeed if they ever come to any correct conclusion it must be by accident.

There is a special word for Land Nationalisers, in which category, Henry George and perforce all Single Taxers are included.

"Land Nationalisers," it is said, "go so far with Socialists that they work for the extinction of private property in land." We must demur to this as applicable to Single Taxmen. Single Taxmen do not work for the extinction of private property in land. They work for the extinction of property in land, the state, in their view, has no more right to the land than the individual has; the state being merely a collection of individuals. How much does 36 million nothings come to? Single Taxmen want the values of land to be taken for common purposes, but they want the land not in the hands of the state but in the hands of the users of land, as we say in Scotland, we want the land restored to the people.

It is pointed out as an argument for the nationalisation of capital, that landlords have been robbing Irish tenants and everybody of their wealth (or capital as the writers say), and it is said that we are prepared to treat as sacred capital acquired by thefts of this kind.

Not so fast, Mr. Fabian. We do not look upon such wealth as sacred, but we are more anxious to stop the drain of wealth in the future than to follow any such will of the wisp as this.

"The landlord" (says this Fabian Pamphlet) "compels the worker to convert his land into a railway, his fen into a drained level, his barren sea-side waste into a fashionable watering place, his mountain into a tunnel, his manor-park into a suburb full of houses let on repairing leases; and lo! he has escaped the land nationalisers; his land is now become capital, and is sacred."

We had scarcely believed it was possible even for Socialists to write such a nonsensical paragraph as this.

In the first place the land is not converted into a railway; the fen into a drained level; the barren sea-side waste into the fashionable watering place; the mountain into a tunnel; the manor park into a suburb full of houses; in every case the land is still there and has not been converted into anything. A railway has been constructed on the land, the fen land has been drained, a fashionable watering place has been made of a barren sea-side waste, a tunnel has been drilled through the mountain, and houses and streets have been constructed on manor park land.

Under the Single Tax regime the values of these lands would be taken in taxation, along with increased values due to the increased competition for such lands. This would be the case, suppose such conditions were possible, after land values were all taken for public purposes. But how does the landlord compel labourers to work for him under present conditions? Simply because he owns the element essential to all production. But when all land values are taken for public purposes the land speculator is killed; and if there be sufficient opportunities, as we believe, for all men, Labour will be compelled to work for no man.

Captain Pirie, M.P., on the Single Tax.

LAND MONOPOLY IN ABERDEEN AND THE GLASGOW VICTORY.

Speaking to his constituents at Woodside, on the 17th December, Captain Pirie said:—

The greatest reform of the land laws which could take place was the Taxation of Land Values, or what was now known as the Single Tax. It was in this direction that the real solution was to be found for those ideas at present finding expression in Socialism and Collectivism, for the Socialist and Collectivist ideas otherwise impossible and impracticable. And the Taxation of Land Values was no robbery, and no application but one of the justest and fairest measures which any one could conceive. In this matter, as in everything that was good, Scotland was taking the lead, the city of Glasgow taking a pre-eminent part in pressing on the reform. When he spoke last in Aberdeen the Municipal elections in Glasgow had not taken place. They had now, and out of the 25 wards in Glasgow, 49 members were in favour of the Taxation of Land Values—a clear majority of 28 of the Town Council in favour of that principle. To bring matters nearer home, he asked his audience to consider the paragraph that appeared the other day to the effect that in the Finance Committee of the Aberdeen Town Council various sites were mentioned as suitable for the new Post Office, and the prices were stated as varying from £30,000 to £50,000. Who made those sites worth from £30,000 to £50,000? It was not the present owners of them. It was the community of Aberdeen. Therefore, it was only reasonable that the ground should be taxed for the benefit of the city of Aberdeen. Yet the present state of things were supposed by some people to be in accordance with the principles of right and justice! It was the firm belief that on this great question of the Taxation of Land Values, involving the other reforms of which he spoke, the next election would be fought; it was a question on which the Liberal party could again become united and strong; for it was a question that was grounded upon the principles of righteousness, in which the mental and physical welfare and the happiness of the community depended.

Captain Pirie was repeatedly cheered during his address. We heartily compliment him on this straight pronouncement. It shows a grasp of the Land Question such as few Scotch Radical M.P.'s possess, and the courage to speak out these truths that the people can understand. Mr. John Morley has said that the boldest thought will not be too bold for him; Captain Pirie does better—he examines the boldest thought, and when he discovers in Socialism and Collectivism nothing but the impossible and the impracticable, he doesn't rest content with a mere negation but offers as a reasonable and just remedy for social evils the boldest thought practicable and possible—the Taxation of Land Values.

The government as well as the ruling classes, know in their secret hearts that the Land Question contains all social questions; that with its solution all special privileges would disappear, and that this question is the leading subject of the day. Yet, while they pretend to care for the well-being of the masses, and while they raise for them benefit societies, factory inspection, income taxes, aye, and eight-hour working days, they carefully ignore the Land Question.—*Count Leo Tolstoi.*

Ask all Candidates for Municipal and Parliamentary Honours this Question—