

that is to put the name of the Single Tax on the million copies of the ballots, besides enthusing 25 or 30 outdoor propagandists, each of whom spoke to thousands of persons at hundreds of meetings each week during the campaign."

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### TAXATION

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Taxation affects everybody, to a degree not to be measured by the amount of taxes paid. For every tax operates either to stimulate or oppress industry.

A tax on vocations oppresses industry. A tax on the product of labor adds to the cost, diminishing consumption. But a tax on land, according to its value irrespective of improvements, stimulates the use of land, thereby encouraging production and industry, and, at the same time, discouraging speculation and monopoly in land.

(Land values are the social product of the community, and increase with population and social progress. Land values, therefore, constitute a natural and proper fund from which to defray public expenses).

Manifestly, the people that pay the taxes have the right to choose by which method those taxes shall be raised.

To establish this right it is essential that every community shall have Home Rule in Taxation—W A. HUNTER.

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### "WHAT IS PROPERTY?"

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REV. CHAS. HARDON IN POMONA, CALIF.  
*Daily Review.*

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There was a short time ago in the *New York Herald* an account (with photograph) of Ran Peacock, who was formerly a slave in Georgia. Sixty years ago he was traded for a piece of land in Atlanta, at the corner of Whitehall and Alabama streets. He was then twenty years old and was reckoned worth \$1,200. The ground for which he was given in payment is now worth \$10,000 a front foot, and it is occupied by an office building.

Trading a "nigger" for a piece of land, as an exchange of one piece of property for

another seems like a rather incongruous performance at the present day. I remember the time, for I was twenty-one at the time and was reading "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Note the two classes of "property" in this deal. Since that time our ideas of things have so far advanced that it seems to us a sort of blasphemy to call a human being, even a "nigger," property. If we had looked up the auction bills of that period, we might have seen in posters "the following described pieces of property," among which would be a farm and dwelling house, so many negroes, horses, cows, and swine, carriages, furniture, farming tools and "many other articles too numerous to mention."

We don't do that now, even in the South.

Nevertheless, the negro never was properly "property." He was property, so to speak. The laws made him such if he wasn't. He had a right to run away if he could in spite of all laws to the contrary. The little scrap we had about that time knocked off the "nigger" from the auction bills, and cut him out from the definition of "property" in the dictionary. Sixty years have gone by and now the time has come for another cut out of the property list.

The sun shines equally and impartially for all. Either by oversight, mistake or otherwise, the great Creator seems to have made it so. No syndicate can be found to shut out its light and heat from us and charge so much an hour or an acre for its use. We cannot call the sun the property of an individual or company. So of the moon. Lovers may enjoy together its mild evening rays without paying a fee as they pass out at the office, nor has the farmer to pay at the end of each month a bill for so many nights of moonshine.

Happily, so too of the stars. Astronomers, almanac makers and sailors may make a free use of them, they are nobody's "property." Jupiter, Venus and the dog-star, the three brightest and biggest to us, of the whole bunch, cannot be claimed as theirs by any corporation. They are given free to any nation and people on the face of the earth.

This, however, is not the end of the free list. There is the air. That is one of the things we all believe in, but none of us has ever seen. It cannot be cornered. Nobody can say "It belongs to me." You can take it in and use it, but you have to give it back again and have to be quick about it too. We can shut ourselves up and use but little of it and spoil that but we don't save anything by doing so. We have only to open our windows and it will come in fresh and pure in any corner of the world.

I am getting pretty near the end of my rope, but there still remains the ocean, or the oceans. Nobody can control or shut them up, except unjustly and in time of war. The nations are allowed to have dominion over them, three miles out, but no nation owns them or any one of them. Nor does any man own a square mile or an acre of space in any ocean whereby he can say no ships can sail over it without his permission. The nearest that anyone that I know of comes to it is down among the oyster beds on the Providence River. There they stake out the flats and pay rent to the State for the space they occupy in catching oysters.

And here I have got to the end. There remains only the land. Ah, the land! I have mentioned the stars; the astronomers tell us the earth is one of them. It no doubt is, though it hardly looks it from our point of view. Nevertheless, I insist that it is and I think nobody but real estate men will venture to deny it. The earth like the sun, moon and stars, the air, and the ocean, have been given as the heritage of the human race, but not to any individual or company of individuals whereby he or they can rightfully say this piece of earth is my or our "property."

This, however, is done. We set up stakes around certain portions of the earth and say, "This is ours." We have laws that allow us to do this; we have made these laws ourselves. Nobody can come on this land without our permission. It belongs to us; it is our property, and whosoever we allow to use it must pay us for the privilege. All others are excluded.

Such is our present system. Such is the origin of private property in land—a system as unnatural as that of one man making property of another man, even though a negro.

But we are not, after all, so awfully to blame about this thing, any more than the owners of *Ran Peacock* were in Georgia. We have been brought up that way, and the ministers who have been so cryingly anxious to have us converted haven't seemed to be in any hurry to get us converted from the notion that we own the earth any more than they were to make people abolitionists in Georgia in 1855, when men, women and children were allowed to be sold at auction.

To get what we earn and keep it, we must have private possession of the land, and though no man can morally hold land as private property he must be secure in the possession of it, which is quite a different matter. Without this, men would starve to death or, in any climate farther north than California, freeze. Here comes in the need of organized government, to protect a man in order that he may secure the results of his labor applied to the land. Hence arises the necessity of public revenue and what we call "taxation." Exclusive possession, backed by the government, creates the salable value of land. Private possession by one of course excludes all others, and the privilege of having all others legally excluded, inasmuch as one is naturally as much entitled to the earth as another, should be paid for, not to some other man, but to all men who are thus excluded; that is, it should be paid into the public treasury. This would secure justice to all in their relation to their fellowmen and to the earth from which they get their living.

Of course every one of us by any means applies his labor directly to the earth, but the maker of flour depends on the man who sows the wheat, and the dress-wearers in Georgia depended on the *Peacocks*, who picked the cotton. Under our present system land is "property"—but it is property "so to speak;" and so was *Ran Peacock*.