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EDITORIAL

TAXING PROBLEM WITH THE BIG LIE

A SUCCESSFUL Danish politician — he was elected to the European Parliament — had a baleful message for Georgists who met at their international congress in July. He warned members of the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade meeting in Roskilde that advocacy of the Single Tax was a vote loser.

This policy — of funding government services out of the rent of land — originated with the French Physiocrats in the mid-18th century. It found its most ardent advocacy in American social reformer Henry George in the 1880s.

But today, said the Danish politician, anyone going onto TV a week before an election and proposing the Single Tax would be met with derision. Why? Obviously, he explained, because the numbers do not add up. And he provided two statistics. Rent: 5%. Government spending: 55%. Conclusion — anyone trying to associate those numbers in a radically new tax policy would face disbelief.

But beware this dismissive treatment of the Single Tax. It is based on a lie. The rent of land in Denmark or anywhere else is not 5%. *Land & Liberty* continues to believe that the financial cost of the public sector — and here we are talking about the provision of

services that cannot be supplied by the private sector — corresponds to the rent of land.

The statisticians of the 20th century nation-state have been allowed to get away with cooking the books. At the same time, it has to be admitted that the advocates of the Single Tax have failed to sponsor the research that would prove that the rent of land is nearer 40% than 5% in a tax-free society!

Work is currently in hand to remedy that gap in knowledge. Meanwhile, it is necessary to prepare the re-presentation of the Single Tax in a coherent political form: one that makes sense to people in the late 20th century. The word "tax" itself has to be challenged when we are talking about people paying for the benefit of using land. Why bother? Because the economic and moral problems that afflict society cannot be resolved unless the so-called Single Tax policy is adopted.

Anything less than the 100% collection of the rent of land for the equal benefit of everyone — offset by the abolition of taxes on earned incomes — is not just a betrayal of justice. It is also literally a sentence of death for millions of people around the world, every year who suffer from the effects of poverty. Which is why the statistics have to be convincingly made to add up.