

THE LAND QUESTION

is at the root of all other questions. It bottoms all reforms. Poverty and the fear of it is the basis of all the evils we are struggling against, and poverty can be banished by throwing open the inexhaustible resources of nature. We are being punished for breaking the natural laws. The barrier raised up by the landowner between the people and the source from which all their wants are supplied must be burst open by the "Taxation of Land Values;" then, and only then, will we see "Thy Kingdom—on earth as it is in Heaven."

You must recognise the root cause of the disease before you can apply a remedy. Health can only come with the physical welfare of all the constituents of the social organism: so long as any of the meaner members of the great body are sickly, enfeebled, and in want, the whole body cannot be healthy. The open sores of our modern civilisation are weakening the whole system, and the mass of the would-be reformers are prescribing soothing syrup, failing to see that the surface complaint arises from an organic disease, a deep-seated and justly-founded discontent that cannot be eradicated by other than radical root remedies. In the "Land Question" lies the cause, and the cure is in the "Taxation of Land Values."

Single Tax v. Socialism.

BY ARCH. M'DONALD.

Mr. Bernard Shaw says that "Socialism would do very well in England if it were not for the Socialists." This is true, I think, for Socialists appear to have the same human nature as the rest of mankind. Self-love seeks self-freedom, and, I believe, is too strong in human nature to agree with the coercive fetters of Socialism, or be suppressed by a Socialist Act of Parliament.

"Two principles in human nature reign,
Self-love to urge, and reason to restrain:
Self-love, the sprig of motion, acts the soul;
Reason's comparing balance rules the whole.
Man, but for that no action could attend,
And, but for this, were active to no end."

No course of reasoning regarding the nature of man can be trustworthy which does not recognise self-love as an essential principle of human nature. Without it there could be no progress in anything which benefits mankind. It is this principle of human nature that gives to man his sense of individuality, without which he could have no sense of justice, or any motive for social reform. Socialists deceive themselves if they think they can suppose it, under the pretence of protecting the weak from going to the wall. The protection of the weak is in freedom. Secure this, and, no matter how selfish or avaricious men may be, they cannot injure their fellows.

It is inconceivable that God could give to man a nature which would unfit him to live in society in accordance with His own divine will, or that He loves injustice. Therefore, self-love must be for a good end, and under a just social system, which recognises individual rights, that end must be to urge men to make the best use of their powers, both for themselves individually and for society. But the Socialists appear to understand as little about this as they do about the Single Tax.

There are Socialists who believe that the Single Tax is part of their programme, and that Single Taxers work only for the extinction of private property in land. They fancy their scheme of social reform to be far in advance of the Single Tax.

For Single Taxers to work for the extinction of private property in land, would be for them to work for the extinction of that which they do not believe to exist. That which really does exist is, that to some men is conceded the power to deprive the rest of mankind of the use of land. That which is bought and sold under the name of land, is not land, but the power to rob men of the products of their labour.

It is quite true that Single Taxers look upon what is called property in land as the cause of our unjust distribution of wealth—the cause which makes the industrious involuntarily poor, and the idle unjustly rich. But it is not true that they work only for the extinction of this supposed private property in land. They work for the abolition of slavery, and for the establishment of a reign of justice that would secure to

each individual the whole product of his own labour, or its equivalent in exchange. This would be justice, and anything in advance of justice would be a violation of individual rights.

It is impossible to have any conception of justice without considering individual rights. Justice and liberty are synonymous terms, which mean that each individual belongs to himself, and that his freedom of thought and action should equal the freedom of thought and action of any other individual member of the State. Any social system in advance of this would but concede to some a license to hold their fellows enslaved. State Socialism would do this, because it would give the greatest freedom to the greatest number.

To abolish that which is called private property in land, it would neither be just nor necessary to treat land as national property. It would not be just, because property in land is inseparable from property in human beings, having the same equal right to live, and pursue the objects of their desires as the predominant majority. Both are the property of God alone. No part of society can lay claim to having a moral right to predominate the rest. To treat land as State property is not necessary, because the people know how to pursue the objects of their own desires without the interference of the State, and by depriving individuals of the advantages of monopoly, all would have equal opportunities.

The Single Tax would destroy monopoly.

State Socialism, with its "nationalisation of the land, the means of production, distribution, and exchange," could not abolish slavery, because it is based on robbery, and robbery is the essence of slavery. It would only replace the present pseudo-owners by others having the same human nature, and with extended powers of evil and tyrannical disposition, the effect of which would by far transcend the evil influence of present landlordism.

It is not might that makes right. Neither is it the greatest good to the greatest number that should be considered when devising a scheme of social reform, but what is due to each individual.

All men have equal permission from the Creator to live on this earth, and this implies an equal right to the use of the land. Therefore, no man can lay claim to having a moral right to demand more wealth than he produces. To do so would be to offer a denial to the equal divine permission of others to live. Any social system that would take any other basis for the distribution of wealth, than that the produce should belong to the producer, to keep, or exchange, or give in gift, is immoral and opposed to the designs of the Creator.

If Socialism is to be held responsible for the teaching of Socialists, it must be looked upon as a conglomeration of contradictory beliefs, and no one can be held as a reliable exponent of its doctrines.

There are Socialists, professing Christianity, who appear to apologise for their connection with a social system of reform which holds no place for God, by saying that ethics, the science of morals, has nothing to do with a belief in God; that men learn by experience to know right from wrong.

Can Socialists believe that there are no natural laws? If they believe that there are no natural laws, how can they believe in right and wrong? If they believe that there are natural laws, how can they believe that there is no natural Law-Maker? If they believe that there is a natural Law-Maker, the omnipotent and omniscient power we call God, how can they believe that He has nothing to do with the laws that govern society, or that the science of morals has nothing to do with His will? All nature proclaims His will to be, "Thou shalt not steal."

No man can learn anything by experience, from the exercise of mere aimless thought or action. He must have an ideal, conceived through the study of, and in accordance with, natural law and the nature of things, before he can distinguish right from wrong.

I hold that it is absurd for Socialists or others to believe that God has omitted to make laws for the observance of society, and that moral law does not apply to politics. Moral law is God's law, and must apply to all we do on this earth, whether as individuals or as

communities, and every act that is not in harmony with the designs of His eternal laws is wrong, and brings its own punishment.

For man to ignore moral law, with regard to society, is to ignore God, and an absurdity of the grossest kind; because, as God is the God to whom all men owe their being, so must His law be the law for all men. Man could no more make or alter moral law than he could make the universe, and it would be most irrational to suppose that finite wisdom could frame laws to carry out the designs of infinite wisdom. It is in accordance with the observance or non-observance of this divine law that civilisation advances or goes backwards, and that nations rise and fall.

By acting in accord with the natural and divine law, society cannot take a backward course; but it is in vain that Socialists or others can oppose the eternal decrees of God. The ancient Romans rejected and denounced, with all the eloquence with which Roman orators excelled, the principles which we Single Taxers aim at embodying into our laws; but that did not prevent the Roman power from breaking up, nor its civilisation from collapsing into barbarism.

Men are not born with equal powers, and equal wealth need not be aimed at; but every man is born with sufficient energy to provide for his wants; and every man is born with equal right to himself, to the power that is in him, and to deprive him of the opportunity of using his power to provide for his wants from nature, or to rob him of the fruits of his labour, is an injustice which must recoil against the society which permits it.

Justice is not the punishment of crime, but the allowing of every man the full exercise of his rights, and is the essential basis of the social order which can build a true, permanent and prosperous civilisation. And what is essential must be not only imperative, but also possible and best, and what is best must be in accord with divine law and the designs of the Creator.

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