

SINGLE TAX AND IMMIGRATION

The problem of immigration is not a problem of people; it is a problem of land. The land systems of Europe have controlled immigration to the United States from the beginning. It was land monopoly that drove the settlers from England to the United States in the 17th and 18th centuries; it was land monopoly in Ireland that depopulated that unfortunate island. Land monopoly drove the peasants from Hungary, Poland, Austria and Italy to America. Conversely the countries which have peasant proprietorship, in which the people own the land, are countries from which little or no immigration comes. We receive but few immigrants from Switzerland, Denmark and France. These people stay at home.

There was no immigration problem so long as free land existed in America, which could be taken up by the settler. Not until the great public domain had been enclosed by private owners did the immigration problem appear. This drove people into the cities; it created the municipal problem as well as the immigration problem that now confronts us. Wages were affected by the pressure of incoming workers who had to compete with other workers in the mill, the factory and the mine. Surplus labor reduces wages. Even organization among the workers could not prevent the tendency of wages to fall.

And the immigration problem today is a land problem. It can easily be cured through a proper land policy; by taxing land values so heavily that the great resources of America will be opened up to use. At the present time people live in this country at about thirty to the square mile. In many countries of Europe there are three hundred people to the square mile. Germany with 67,000,000 people could be placed inside of Texas and still leave room for Switzerland. There is wealth enough and land enough in America for ten times our present population if the resources were opened to use rather than to idle monopoly holding.

The Single Tax will solve the land problem. And it alone will solve the immigration problem. The taxation of land value, too, will call aloud for workers to cultivate the soil, to develop the resources, to build houses, to produce wealth. And if we tax land heavily enough people will move from the city onto the land cheapened by the taxes which we impose upon it. For men cannot hold land idle when it becomes too expensive to do so. They will sell it or cultivate it themselves. In the cities they will build houses, which will reduce rents. They will open up lands and natural resources which will demand labor and increase wages. They will break up great estates, which now include one-fourth of the cultivable area of America, into small farms. The great West from the Mississippi to the Rockies will under the Single Tax blossom into an empire of home owners instead of great feudal estates, inadequately cultivated or used for grazing purposes.

The European War has checked immigration. It has fallen to about 250,000 per annum. The outgoing flood balances the incoming tide. This check in immigration may continue after the war. Emigration may be prohibited by the warring countries. This may solve the immigration problem so far as the United States is concerned. It will not solve it as to the 35,000,000 people who are living in cities, congested, rack-rented, and oppressed by industrial conditions. The first step in an immigration policy is the opening of the land to use; and this step can only be taken by levying taxes upon land sufficiently heavy to compel those who own it either to use or sell to some one who will use.—F. C. H.