

The SINGLE TAX

THE ORGAN OF THE SCOTTISH LAND RESTORATION UNION.

VOL. I.—No. 5.

GLASGOW, OCTOBER, 1894.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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Notes and Comments.

THE "PERPLEXED PHILOSOPHER" AGAIN.—In a further letter to the London *Daily Chronicle* on the 28th August, in reply to the English Land Restoration League Executive, Mr. Herbert Spencer says:—

"As I have pointed out in 'The Principles of Ethics,' there is at present no such thing as *absolute right*, but only *least wrong*. In our transitional state all things are wrong, and only in the slow progress of things approach nearer to right. My argument in 'Social Statics' was based upon the untenable assumption that the existing English community had a *moral right* to the land. They never had anything of the kind. They were robbers all round. Normans robbed Danes and Saxons, Saxons robbed Celts, Celts robbed the aborigines, traces of whose earth-houses we find here and there. Let the English Land Restoration League find the descendants of these last and restore the land to them. There never was any equity in the matter, and re-establishment of a supposed original equity is a dream. The stronger peoples have been land-thieves from the beginning, and have remained land-thieves down to the present hour."

"To what baser uses may we not return?" But that the English community have no *moral right* to the land, and that they cannot discover the descendants of the aborigines, is no reason why "Sir John and His Grace" should retain exclusive ownership against all others. They are only strong as "land-thieves" because of the ignorance of the many. If might is right, and wrong *can* become right "at so much ratio per annum," so much the worse for the few at present in possession of the land when the Democracy make up their minds to have their innings. The day of reckoning is at hand, thanks not a little to the "untenable assumption" in "Social Statics."

THE CASE PLAINLY STATED.—In another column we give an account of the case for the taxation of land values for Glasgow, and supply a question on the subject to be put to the various candidates at the forthcoming November elections. The article will be specially printed in leaflet form, and copies for distribution at ward and other public meetings can be had at the office, 45 Montrose Street.

THE STORY OF MY DICTATORSHIP.—We have received a copy of a neat, paper-cover, one-shilling edition of this most attractive Single-Tax ideal story. It is in good type, and contains a preface by W. Lloyd Garrison, America, in which he says:—"He (the author) has a fundamental truth to expound, and does it withal so attractively and with so much fairness that one can easily imagine him a disputant in Plato's republic." As we go to press we are receiving the names of a number of friends who desire a copy, and we shall be only too glad to take

names for any quantity at one shilling each. In another place we give a shopkeeper's opposition to the "dictator's" policy and his conversion. In view of the interest this question of taxation has for the shopkeeping class, this policy—the taxation of land values—which is being inquired into by a committee of the Town Council, ought to be put clearly before him. Quantities of this month's *Single Tax* can be had at special terms for this purpose.

We learn through the *Clarion* that one of the wealthiest landowners in Germany, Prince Fürstenberg, is about to make some "sweeping radical changes in the management of his estate." According to the *Abend Zeitung* (Augsburgh):—

"The Fürstenberg estate in future renounces public taxes paid formerly by the tenants. This includes county, church, school, State, fire insurance, and parish taxes. Special provision is made to relieve holdings which had to pay separate contributions for the assistance of the poor. The estate, in future, pays all such dues out of its own funds. The obligations regarding repairs of buildings on a leasehold have been largely reduced, as well as those for renewal of such buildings, and expenses of this kind, if amounting to more than a year's rent, will in future be borne by the estate. The term of lease has been increased by several years, and, in order to insure to the tenant as much profit as possible, the leasehold will be offered for rent two years before the end of a term, such tenants as fulfil their obligations having the privilege of renewal."

There is no mention whatever of the public appropriation of the values of land, nor of the Single Tax falling on any vacant land at present withheld from use at monopoly prices, but the *Clarion* says the prince is going to give the *Single Tax* a fair trial. The *Clarion* knows! We "smile and smile."

THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS.—"In his presidential address," says the *Labour Leader*, "Mr. Frank Delves had nothing new to tell us about the unemployed; thought that part of its solution lay in placing women upon the same wage plane as men, and by raising the age of timers and half-timers. He denounced the anti-alien emigration agitation, and spoke out strongly upon drink and gambling; looked forward to the international solidarity of labour as a safeguard against war, and finally gave himself away by referring to the futility of the labour party (he did not say which labour party) splitting the progressive vote, and thereby enhancing the chance of election for those opposed to Employer's Liability and other Government bills. This was very poor, the I.L.P.ers present could have given better reasons against I.L.P. action than did the President. He concluded with the hope that greater comradeship should prevail in the Labour ranks for the future. There was no note of inspiration, no war-cry."

"WHY LAND REFORM IS NEEDED."—In a leading article, under the above heading, the *North British Daily Mail* says:—

"On Monday night the Cathcart School Board held a meeting, at which they had to decide regarding the site of a new school, which is urgently required. The Committee who had been looking about for a suitable site recommended the Board to purchase a piece of land belonging to Mr. Gordon of Aikenhead, whose

price was 8s. per yard. This the Board agreed to do, because 'though the price was high, better terms could not be got.' Here we have an object lesson which is worthy of consideration. It shows what is meant by the 'unearned increment,' and it shows where the unearned increment goes. What is this land which Mr. Gordon will not sell at less than 8s. a yard? It is simply agricultural land, and that not of the best, for which we may safely say he does not get a rent of more than £2 to £2 10s. an acre. There is a difference between that and the price at which he has been graciously pleased to sell the land to the School Board. The price of an acre at the rate of 8s. per yard is £1,936. If Mr. Gordon invests this sum at 3 per cent. it will yield him an annual income of over £58—in place of the £2 or £2 10s. which he now draws from the land. What then is it which has so enormously increased the value, in the opinion of the land lord, when he is asked to sell? It is not anything that he has done to the land. He has done nothing. The increased value is unearned increment. It is simply the result of Glasgow's growth, and improvement, and need of more land. Glasgow people want to build houses in the direction of Cathcart, and when they come to the land that happens to be in the possession of Mr. Gordon, he says—'No, you don't, unless you pay me the building or city value which you yourselves have added to it by your own enterprise.' What right has he to such a price? The law, which was made by landlords, gives it to him; but he has not the slightest moral right to it, and therefore the law ought to be changed as speedily as possible."

LIBERALISM AND LABOUR.—Commenting on the position of the Independent Labour Party and the Liberal Associations, Mr. J. A. Picton, ex-M.P., says:—

"Even with Liberal Associations that are mere middle-class political clubs Labour will find it easier and quicker to democratise and annex that association than to start a new one. Now, if the Labour leaders will not improve, and then annex, the imperfect Liberal organisations already existing, they will find that the creation of a new machinery in such populations as I have indicated will be a work lasting their lives, and the life of the next generation. Where is the money to come from that is to provide the sinews of war against both Liberalism and Toryism? From the pence of the millions? I acknowledge the power of pence; but it is of very slow accumulation. Besides, pence are not got from unconvinced men, and most of the millions are unconvinced. Of course, if time enough be given—say, to the end of next century—I can set no limits to what may be achieved. But the other method of annexing and using the Liberal organisations would be much quicker. If, however, the grander but less practical method of the I.L.P. is to be followed, landowners and royalty-owners may take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry; the House of Lords will afresh illustrate the proverb that 'threatened men live long;' ecclesiastical anachronisms will flourish like a green bay tree; and all things will continue as in the days of our fathers."

The Melbourne *Argus* mentions the case of a certain Mr. Williams who, in 1868, purchased from the crown three acres of land on the Yarra bank for £300, the crown reserving the right to buy the land back for the same price with