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SINGLE - TAX COURIER.

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HENRY GEORGE.

ADDRESSES A FINE AUDIENCE IN LONDON, CANADA.

A Fusillade of Questions Readily Answered - His Address Apparently Well Received.

London (Ontario) Advertiser.

A large audience, composed of thoughtful and observant men and women, greeted Henry George, the single-tax apostle and writer on questions of political economy, at the Grand Opera House last night. It was an audience clearly composed of the "thinkers" of the city, and, from the number of questions asked the speaker at the close, it also included many who were evidently a little doubtful of the efficacy of single-taxation as a panacea for all human economic woes. The lecture was a rich intellectual treat, and was equally enjoyed by the ladies as well as the men. It was of an hour and a half's duration, but at the close of the lecture another hour was devoted to answering questions from the audience, which came faster and faster, until Mr. George had to draw the line and bid good-night to listeners, who were unwilling to depart. Mr. George C. Gibbons, Q.C., occupied the chair, and in briefly introducing Mr. George bespoke for him a fair and intelligent hearing, and for the audience a mental treat and a masterly elucidation of the principles of single-tax.

Mr. George was warmly received, and evidently began with the greater part of his hearers favorable to his theory. They applauded frequently, and once in a while an abstracted man with his chin resting on his hands on the balcony railing, would give vent to an exclamation, such as "Ah! that's the point. That's so; that's so," and then draw back hurriedly as the audience would turn to seek him out.

TAXATION THE SUBJECT.

Mr. George's subject was "Taxation," and he began by characterizing taxation as the most improtant function of government, and the government's power to tax only people living in certain areas controlled by it, and then went on to speak of the method employed in managing those large and many-storied buildings in the United States, where the landlords did not make all sorts of charges upon their tenants, such as for the use of elevator, for fire, for light, etc., but simply made one charge - for rent. "Now," said Mr. George, "What is best in that case for the individual, must certainly be best for the community, as a means of raising the largest revenue with the least cost, the least expense and the least waste. This single charge upon the rental commends itself to individuals; why should it not to the community? There is certainly the simplest mode, the best mode, and the least wasteful mode of raising revenue. Now, our governments have not followed that plan. They raise revenue in various ways. For instance, in all civilized countries today a very large part of the revenue needed is raised by taxes upon imports. In some few cases there are also taxes upon exports. Now, that that is a most wasteful way of raising revenue is clear. Customs taxes are always liable to evasion. They always involve the keeping up of a great staff of officials, searchers and seizers. And even then they are not and cannot be fully and fairly collected. Yet the loss to the community, to the people, to the ultimate payers of the taxes, is much more than that which goes to the government. There is not merely a loss of the expense of collecting, or trying to collect, those taxes; there is also the loss to the community of the expense incurred in trying to evade them. And their nature is of that

MOST WASTEFUL FORM

of collecting revenue - that of farming the revenue. The man who directly pays such taxes simply shifts them to the next hands. The importer pays to the government, but the importer charges to the wholesale merchant not merely the cost of his goods, not merely the cost of toil and trouble involved in paying the taxes, but that tax itself, and the profit upon the tax. One thousand dollars' worth of goods costs in taxation $500. Then the importer must collect the profit not upon $1,000 worth of capital, but upon $1,500 worth. So the wholesaler must make such a charge to the retailer, a charge not merely on what he has bought, but on the profits on a larger amount, and when they are finally bought by the consumer he bears all those taxes. In the next place such taxes very much check production, very much increase the inequality of distribution. They fall with great weight upon those least able to bear them, they take much more than that which goes for the purposes of public revenue, and they foster all kinds of corruption, tend inevitably to corrupt the government, to lessen the control of the masses of the people. Take the example which the United States shows. Here two houses of congress are at present elected upon a clear mandate of the people to reduce taxation. They have not done so. Almost the very last act is to impose again a tax of $5,000,000 upon the people of the United States for the benefit of a few Louisiana sugar planters, who had subscribed a million dollars. That is the history of pure legislation in the United States. (Applause.) Even after such a mandate we found it utterly impossible with this congress to even do away with that robbery of the sugar trust, where millions of dollars are

TAKEN FROM THE PEOPLE

for no purpose whatever than to put millions into the hands of bribers and corruptionists. (Applause.) It has grown with our growth, it must continue so long as the present system of taxation is continued. And we never can get rid of it until the people clearly express their will that there shall be no more taxation or custom houses. (Applause.) We must sweep the whole thing away. So it is in less degree with the taxes which we levy for purposes of state and municipal revenue. The greater part of our local taxes are levied in a tax on real estate - land and the buildings upon it. Now, that part of the taxes which falls upon the buildings and improvements is not paid by the first payers of the taxes, unless they happen to be the users of the land or buildings that are taxed. That part which falls upon the buildings is necessarily and inevitably shifted by the payer of the taxes to the user, simply law - the law which applies to all forms of taxation, the law of competition. Where a tax increases the power of him on whom it falls to shift it, to levy it again upon someone else, it must always be paid by the user or consumer. It never rests upon the first payer. Those taxes choke production, promote corruption, and cost the people much more than the government receives. Now, as a mere matter of collecting the largest revenue with the least cost, with the least evasion, with the least fraud or perjury, if the state were to resolve to adopt the plan which individuals have found the best way to collect revenue, by one single tax, or, rather, from one single source of taxation - the value of land - it could collect the largest revenue with the least cost and the least injury. ~~No~~ a tax upon the products of labor, ~~no~~ a tax upon the wealth in any of its forms, must check the

PRODUCTION OF WEALTH.

We all want more wealth. Why, then, should we kill the goose that lays the golden egg by taxing people for producing wealth? We may tax land values to their full amount. We cannot lessen the production of wealth. Land is not a thing of human production. Land is created, not produced. All the land there is is here; all the land there can be is here. No taxation upon the value of land will lessen the amount of land. No taxation upon land, upon land values, can fall upon the user of land; make it any more difficult to get land to use. For this reason, that the value of land, the rent of land - what is called by the economist rent - never can go to the user, always must go to the owner. By taxing land values we would make it even easier for those who want to use land to get land to use. For this reason, that when land yielded no profit to the mere owner, no one would want land unless he wanted to use it. And the temptation would be gone to get land and hold land without using it, in the expectation of profiting by the general growth of the community. And that monopolistic ownership, that speculative value in land, that puts that artificial value upon it, that acts precisely as an actual scarcity of land, would be gone. That is the simple, common-sense way of levying the taxes - a way that we call the single-tax. What we mean by the single-tax is that there shall be but one source of revenue, applied for purposes of raising public revenue - that value which the economists call rent. In its popular name it is known as ground rent. ~~The value which attaches to~~ land ~~rent, especially~~

~~to improvements upon it, or the use to which it is put.~~ But there is a deeper side to the question than this fiscal side."

Mr. George then devoted the second half of his address to a picture of the social evils of the present day, and explained how his method of single-tax would remedy them.

A FUSILLADE OF QUESTIONS.

Mr. George then announced that he would answer any brief questions put to him. He took a chair and awaited them.

Dr. Bucke rose and asked: What steps would you take to transfer taxation from its present position to the position you indicate?

Mr. George: Very simply. Abolish as fast as we can all other taxation except that on real estate. Remove that which bears on buildings and improvements, and you have taxation on land values, which makes the single-tax. (Applause.)

Dr. Bucke: What would become of the right of the owner at the present time?

Mr. George: He would still have the right to collect the revenue from other people, but our system would take a ~~longer~~ larger and larger portion, until finally the owner, as owner, would have nothing left. The owner, as an owner, is an utterly useless animal - a mere parasite.

Dr. Bucke: How will you make the people consent to the proposition?

Mr. George: By appealing to their intelligence. (Laughter and applause.)

A Voice: Is it not one of the general principles that taxation shall be equal?

Mr. George: Yes; we don't carry it out, though. (Applause.) The man who simply holds land without using it is more lightly taxed than the man who erects a building, or plants an orchard or a farm. (Hear! Hear!) This is all wrong. I stopped one night at the Astor House, New York, and by mistake carried the keys around for three or four days. I was charged for the use of the room all that time. I could not object to the bill on the ground that I did not use the room, for I knew the clerk would say that I prevented somebody else from using it. It is the same with the land speculator. He does not use his land, and he prevents somebody else from using it. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr. H.B.Ashplant put a series of questions. He asked how, as a wage earner, the single-tax would affect him, as he received a fixed amount from his employer.

Mr. George: If what your employer gives you is not deemed a fair wage, why do you continue to work for him?

Mr. Ashplant said that was not the question. And employer had no right to put him a position of taking half a loaf or starving. If he went elsewhere he would displace someone else.

Mr. George: If wages are less than a fair rate, it is generally because of competition for employment. That is produced by shutting up all the natural opportunities for work. (Applause.) Mr. George referred to Mr. Ashplant's lengthy letter in the "Advertiser." He said he did not hold that all the benefit of increased production in modern times had gone to the land owners. A great deal had been absorbed by other monopolies, such as the tariff and patent monopolies, and the power that came from the aggregation of great capital. But even if these were swept away, wages would not increase. All the benefit would accrue to the land owners, who would take all that was left except what was necessary to pay as wages, which with the lowest class of laborers would be scarcely enough to enable them to live.

Mr. Ashplant charged that his question had been evaded.

Voice: In this province there has been open for settlement some twenty-three townships withing a few days' walk. The land is free to those who will take it up. If your theories are right, why this festering in the cities when land is free?

Mr. George: I was not aware there was any festering in the population here as yet.

Same speaker: I refer to Toronto, where there is certainly much misery.

Mr. George: If people prefer festering to taking up this land there must be some difficulty about the land.

Another Voice: It's a pretty rocky country; people can't afford to open a gold mine. (Loud laughter.)

Mr. George: Wherever I have heard such stories the land referred to is unable to afford a living. There is plenty of good land lying idle near Toronto. (Applause.) Why send men to the outskirts of civilization? I know of no free land in my own country that can be used. Look at the rushes that were made when the Indian strips were opened for settlement. Men came thousands of miles and waited days for the lands to open. (Applause.)

First Voice: Your answer is satisfactory. (Applause.)

Voice: How much did you say in your book would be secured from land owners under your system?

Mr. George: I made no such statement, but Mr. Shearman, one of our ablest statisticians, has calculated that there would be more than enough to pay the public expenses of the United States, national, state, county and municipal, leaving an enormous surplus.

Mr. Ashplant: We want to know how to get the value of what we work for and not the work.

Mr. George: Because behind you there is a class lacking the opportunity to work. (Applause.)

A Voice: All men can't be farmers.

Mr. George: That is the one thing all men can be. (Applause.) All men can't be preachers, lawyers, doctors or tailors, but they can be farmers. That is what men were in the first place. (Laughter and cheers.) We don't propose that all men shall be farmers, though farming must always be the fundamental occupation. Does not the monopoly of land check the building trade? (Applause.) So with other occupations. Show me the occupation that does not require land. All our work is the product of the union of labor, the active factor, with land the passive factor.

To Mr. P.H.Bartlett Mr. George said that single-tax did not mean government ownership of land. They proposed simply to take the rent in the form of taxation.

Mr. Bartlett asked if it would not be unfair discrimination to tax A, who was worth $10,000 in land, and exempt B, who had the same amount in stocks.

Mr. George said that if heretofore individuals had been suffered to take what belonged to the community it was surely no wrong to say they should not do it any more. As for being taken by surprise, they have warning already of what is coming. (Laughter and applause.) At the time slavery was abolished it was said to be cruelty to the slave owners. The value of a slave was not what he had done, but what he was expected to do. (Hear! hear!) In abolishing slavery they merely deprived the owner of the right of using slaves any longer.

Mr. Bartlett: But do you compare slave owners with land owners?

Mr. George: Yes. (Laughter.) Industrial slavery is worse than chattel slavery. There are many men to-day who would rather sell themselves into chattel slavery than go down, and have their children go down, not merely to the death of the body, but of the soul. (Applause.)

Another questioner arose, but Mr. George said he had talked long enough. If they desired more light they could read up the system. He retired amid applause.

Mr. Gibbons called attention to the existence of the London Single-Tax Club and their meeting nights. The big audience then dispersed.

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