

## Which? SINGLE-TAX or ONE BIG UNION Which?

Can a million men be wrong? They certainly can. For truth cares nothing for numbers or majorities. Yet millions of people believe that "One Big Union" for the workers is the remedy for low wages and bad working conditions. However we maintain that Single-Tax (à la Henry George) is the remedy and we suggest that you read his *Progress and Poverty*, Bk.6, ch.1, after reading Prof. Jevons' article concerning the logic on which the theory of trade-unionism rests. George's way is the better way.—C.LeB.G.

### Fallacies of Ambiguity

29. Any word which has two or more meanings, and is used in such a way that we are likely to confuse one meaning with another, is said to be **ambiguous**, or to have the quality of **ambiguity**. By far the greater number of words are ambiguous, and it is not easy to find many words which are quite free from ambiguity. Whether we are writing, or reading, or speaking, or merely thinking, we should always be trying to avoid confusion in the use of words, but no one can hope to avoid making blunders and falling into occasional fallacies, as we shall learn in another part of this Primer.

173. Perhaps the most common cause of bad reasoning is the **use of ambiguous terms**, which mean one thing in one place and another thing elsewhere. **A word with two meanings is really two words.**

176. There are, indeed, several kinds of fallacy arising from ambiguity, which may be more or less exactly distinguished. Sometimes the **confusion arises between a term in its collective and its general meaning**, and I pointed out in Art. 17, the need of bearing in mind the existence of collective terms.

17. I have said that a general name is the name of many things; but then it is the name of any one of those things separately from the others. Thus "island" is the name of any one of the thousands of small pieces of land making up Polynesia. Island, then, is a general term; Polynesia is a collective and singular term. The British Museum Library is the name of a great collection of books, not of any one of those books; it is, therefore, a collective term, and also singular.

We thus see that the same term may be at once collective and singular, or collective and general; but we must always take great care to **avoid confusing collective terms with general terms.**

177. It may be shown that members of trades-unions often fall into a fallacy of the same kind. They argue that stone-masons, by limiting the number of apprentices may raise their own wages; carpenters can do the like; and also brickmakers, engineers, cotton spinners, and so on through the whole list of trades. It is quite true that any one trade may do so to a certain extent; but it does not follow that all trades taken together can do it, because each trade, in thus raising its own wages, tends to injure the others in some degree. We may see in this and many other cases, that a logical distinction, which seems absurdly obvious when first stated, may really be overlooked by immense numbers of men, and the confusion gives rise to very great harm,

178. It is probably a fallacy of this kind, too, which leads persons to argue that a very rich man ought to give a handsome subscription to a particular institution, because he would never feel the loss. It may be quite true that he would never feel the one subscription solicited, but exactly the same argument might be used in many other cases. The richest person would soon be ruined by the great number of demands which could be made on the same grounds. What a subscriber must look to is not the effect of each separate subscription, but of the whole of the subscriptions which may be expected from him.—*LOGIC*, by W. Stanley Jevons, pub. D. Appleton & Co. (1889), New York.

*Progress and Poverty* (\$1.00 a copy, postpaid) and other books by Henry George may be obtained from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation,  
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