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"No consecrated absurdity would have stood its ground in this world if the man had not silenced the objection of the child."



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By Arthur P. Davis.

Frank Vierth, Publisher, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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(Continued on the other side.)

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We have on hand plenty of the latest issue of "Why?" containing "The Story of My Dictatorship." The price for single copies is 10c; lots of 5 or more they may be had for 5 cents each. If every one who believes in the single tax will place a few copies in circulation, much good would result therefrom.

After reading this, hand it, or mail it, to some other person who will give it a thoughtful reading, and in that way assist in increasing our subscription list.

At the Cross-Roads Tavern.

By T. M. Rambler.

It was Saturday evening, and as was the usual custom a large number of people had gathered at the cross-roads tavern to exchange the news of the week and have a social time.

Hi Wilson was a genial landlord, and also filled the honorable position of township assessor, and as it was about the time of the year when assessors went around to find how much taxable property people had, he took advantage of the occasion to make a program for the following week.

Zeb Smith spoke up and said: "See here, Hi, I don't see any use of your coming out our way at all. Everybody down on the creek has just about the same as they had last year, and I'll vouch for any of them not having any more than they had a year ago. You can just make my valuation the same as last year—all around, and it will be all right."

The remarks of Zeb caused a general surprise among the crowd, as nearly every one knew that Zeb had made a lucky strike on his last year's crop and had bought a lot of horses and cattle, besides repairing the house and barn and getting a new piano, together with a lot of furniture for the house. Nobody could challenge Zeb's honesty in business transactions, and as he was a regular attendant at church, it went without saying that Zeb Smith was one of the main citizens of the township.

After considerable talking about the remarks of Zeb it remained for Sol Brown to set matters straight. Sol Brown was one those quiet, easy-going sort of men who always said that "a man's success depends on his ability to protect himself from the dishonest intentions of other people, and at the same time be honest in dealing with other people."

Zeb Smith and Sol Brown were well known for their love of arguments, and as Sol saw a favorable opportunity, he lost no time in taking advantage of it. The crowd saw that there was bound to be a discussion and began to gather near the speakers to hear the *pros* and *cons* of the proposition which

Zeb had made to the assessor. Zeb filled his corn-cob pipe, while Sol made a half moon in a piece of natural leaf, and the debate was opened.

"See here, Zeb," said Sol, "I am surprised to hear you make such a remark as you just made to Hi, and don't believe you would have made it at all if you had just stopped to think a little. The idea of your valuation not being any greater than it was last year, when everybody here knows that you have bought a lot of live stock and rebuilt your house and barn, and then bought a bran new piano and a lot of furniture for the house. It seems to me that you have wasted your words, as we all know Hi Wilson is not the kind of an assessor that takes everything for granted, until he has a chance to see and hear what people have got, and even then it is an utter impossibility to do exact justice to every person, and your remarks are proof that it is not a dishonest act to misrepresent facts to the assessor; that is, I mean in your estimation."

"See here, Sol Brown," said Zeb, "I don't want any man to tell me I'm dishonest. I have lived here too long and am too well known to allow any such remarks as you have made to pass any further."

"Now, hold on a minute, Zeb," said Sol, "you always allow your temper to run away with your judgment, and if you will just cool down a little I'll explain what I mean by those remarks. Now, suppose that Hi would have been like some assessors we have had, and done by everybody as you suggested to him to do by you. Don't you see where the dishonesty of the proposition comes in? There are some people here who have more taxable property this year than they had last year. There are some people here who have less taxable property than they had last year. Now, the dishonest part of the proposition is this: Dodging the tax assessor has become a profession that has a large membership, and makes many converts of people who are honest in all their dealings except those with the government."

A general approval of the remarks of Sol was shown by the crowd; but Zeb was ready with his great standby question which was always used when he got in a corner.

"What is your remedy?" said Zeb. "You always tell about conditions, and how things ought to be, but when it comes to a show down, it is the same old story. You never yet have given any definite

explanation of your remarks about my dishonesty, and unless you do we may just as well drop the whole matter where it is and say nothing more about it."

This was always Zeb's last play in a debate, and invariably he would walk out and leave the crowd; but as he arose to go Hi Wilson spoke and said:

"Zeb, it looks to me as though you were too hasty in your talk, and, as I am the assessor, you can rest assured that I will call and see you personally, and there will be no use of hiding anything that is taxable, for I will put you on your oath. I will have no favorites and I will keep my books open to the public for inspection, so that everybody will have a chance to judge for himself as to whether I am worthy of the office to which I have been elected."

A chorus of "That's right, Hi!" "You're the stuff!" "Make them all ante up that want the law carried out!" came from the crowd.

Sol Brown walked over to Zeb Smith and the two shook hands while the crowd cheered and shouted. Sol explained to Zeb that he did not intend to impeach his honesty, but that in a general way it was only a matter of protection to himself and others

that prompted him to make the remarks that he had made.

Zeb accepted Sol's explanation, and the conversation became general, when Hi Wilson said: "Gentlemen, when I was elected to the office of assessor it struck me as a very peculiar idea that to carry out the intention of our law on taxation, that the assessor should be compelled to investigate the private business affairs of people. Now, if there is anything in the world that will make an honest person take the first step toward dishonesty it is our present system of taxation.

"I do not mean to say that people who dodge their taxes are dishonest in their other daily transactions, but I will say that there ought to be a system of taxation that will not tax people according to their honesty, but according to the benefits which they receive from organized society.

"Some of the most dishonest acts of people are the result of our laws. The honest person should fear and respect the law, but there are many who have neither fear nor respect for the law, and an inspection of the tax books will plainly show that there are large numbers of people who count houses and money and land as blessings from above, while

in reality the very comforts they enjoy are wrung from the misguided people who pay tribute on their honesty to a system of taxation that is nothing more or less than legalized robbery.

"Gentlemen, I am in favor of the abolition of all taxes except those on the value of land, exclusive of the improvements that have been placed on or in the land by labor. I have been investigating the taxation question, and have arrived at the opinion that if we are to have any justice in government we must have justice in our system of taxation. You may call it what you please, but there is no getting away from the proposition that if we are to have a government, we must have a revenue to pay the expenses of the government.

"Now, I don't want to do all the talking, and if any of you are interested in what is known as "The Single Tax," which is a tax on land values, exclusive of improvements, I will request you to help yourselves to these books on taxation written by Henry George, Thos. G. Shearman, Louis F. Post, and others. We will be better able to discuss this question when we get together again; and I assure Zeb and Sol that there will be no differences of

opinions between them about taxation after we hold a few meetings like this one to-night."

These remarks ended the discussion for that evening and after unanimously agreeing to be present on the next Saturday evening the party dispersed.

II

The discussion of the question of taxation at Hi Wilson's tavern on Saturday night caused a general shaking up of the community; but when on Sunday morning the village minister announced for his text, "Thou shall not steal," and preached a sermon in which he made the sweeping assertion that "the greatest thieves were those who took advantage of the law and robbed society," the members of the congregation were struck dumb with astonishment.

Near the close of his sermon the minister said: "I have no apologies to offer for any of the remarks which I have made, although I presume it will be the opinion of some that I have gone outside of the the usual doctrine of the church in gathering information upon which to to preach from this text; but last evening as I was walking home I chanced to hear Mr. Wilson, the proprietor of the tavern, making some remarks in reference to the duties of

the assessor's office, and among the remarks he said: 'Some of the most dishonest acts of people are the result of our laws,' and I was impressed with the truth of the remarks to such an extent that I determined to lend my humble efforts in aiding the people to see the error of their ways, and be prepared to do their duty toward organized society the same as they should toward their fellowmen in their daily transactions."

The congregation was unusually large and among the number could be seen nearly all the people who had listened to Hi Wilson's remarks at the tavern the night before. At the close of the services the minister read an announcement that was handed to him which ran as follows: "There will be a meeting of the taxpayers and all others who are interested, at Hiram Wilson's tavern next Saturday evening. All are cordially invited to attend." This announcement was signed by Zebulon Smith and Solomon Brown. After reading the announcement the minister added these words: "I will be there, and will be pleased to meet all of you there as I am to meet you here this morning."

It is not necessary to say that the week following that eventful meeting at the cross-roads tavern was

a busy one. On Monday morning a notice was posted at the postoffice calling for a citizens' meeting for the purpose of selecting a committee of three taxpayers to accompany the assessor while the valuation of taxable property was being taken.

The meeting was called for Monday night, and before night every taxpayer had received a notice of the meeting. The place of meeting was at the town hall, which was crowded with people who very rarely came to the village but once a week. Sol Brown called the meeting to order and stated the objects of the gathering, and introduced as chairman of the meeting Hiram Wilson, the assessor. Mr. Wilson spoke as follows:

"Fellow Citizens: The events of the past few days have been of such a character as to cause me to think that at last the people are on the right road which leads to a social condition under which justice will be recognized as the basis upon which organized society or government should be based. Justice will and must prevail before the people can enjoy the fruits of their industry. Justice will destroy the present conditions under which idle tramps and idle landowners get an easy living without work. Justice will compel every person to pay toward the

expenses of government in a just proportion to the benefits derived from the government.

"It was my intention to start this morning and assess the taxable property of this township, but at the request of a number of taxpayers I have changed my program so that the objects of this meeting could be carried out. The objects of this meeting have been explained to you by Mr. Brown, and before you take any action I would suggest that after the committee has been elected that a collection be taken to defray their expenses. As for myself, I will say that I will contribute my whole income from this source, and that it be included in the collection and be divided equally among the four, including myself."

Zeb Smith nominated Ezra Jones, the minister; Ezra Jones nominated Solomon Brown, and Sol Brown nominated Zebulon Smith. A motion was made and carried unanimously that the three men nominated should serve as a committee to accompany Hiram Wilson and assist in the duty of assessing the valuation of the taxable property of the township.

The news of the action of the meeting at the town hall spread consternation among some of the

taxpayers who were made conspicuous by their absence, and immediately there was a hurry to dispose of or conceal taxable property. Some of the people drew their deposits from the banks, or took New York drafts in exchange for them. Horses, cattle, pianos and other taxable property took wings and fled from the township to escape the assessor. In fact, before the week was over there was scarcely anything except *land*, buildings, and other improvements left for the assessor to investigate.

III.

The people in the vicinity of the Cross-Roads Tavern and a large number of people from other villages had assembled at the tavern to exchange their opinions on the question of taxation. It was very evident that the discussions were not to be one-sided, as there were a number of people present who did not agree with the single tax ideas of Hiram Wilson.

The dining room was arranged so that the crowd were all comfortably seated. There had never before been such a gathering in the village and when Rev. Jones, Sol Brown, Zeb Smith, and Ben Johnson, the

postmaster, mounted the platform they were enthusiastically applauded. Conspicuous in the decorations of the room were portraits of noted single taxers.

After the cheering had subsided Rev. Jones called the meeting to order and spoke as follows: "Ladies and Gentlemen: It is a great pleasure to meet with you here this evening, and the honor of being requested to act as temporary chairman is appreciated. I am opposed to monopoly in all its forms, except when the government owns the monopoly, so I will not monopolize any of your time in talking, as there are others here who are able and willing to share the pleasure and honor of addressing you. I now declare this meeting open for business, and await your pleasure."

By the customary formal methods Mr. Jones was chosen chairman and Postmaster Johnson secretary. As the newly elected secretary advanced to the speaker's stand the cheering was renewed, but when he unrolled a large sheet of paper which was covered with a maze of flourishes and lines, and seemingly in great confusion, and at the bottom these words—"Can you see the cat?" the audience shouted

themselves hoarse. The chairman called for order, and finally the secretary spoke as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: It is very evident that the diagram explains itself to a majority of you but those to whom it does not we request your attention and 'the cat' will be made as plain to you as it is to those who can see it already.

"The question of taxation is a simple proposition when taken by itself but like the cat in the picture it is surrounded by a lot of unnecessary frills and flourishes, and to make less difficult to see the real object in the drawing we propose to remove some of the unnecessary features, and then probably all will understand why so many propositions seem complicated while in reality they are as plain as sunshine when looked at in the proper way."

As the secretary was speaking Sol Brown took the picture of the cat and tacked it on a blackboard and placed it a position where all the people could see it while the explanation of it was being made. The secretary then announced that Hiram Wilson would be the speaker for the evening.

The approach of Wilson to the speaker's stand was the signal for another demonstration and he

smilingly waited for an opportunity to begin his address. He said:

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: The honor of speaking here this evening to so enthusiastic an audience is a pleasure to me, and I hope your expectations will be realized.

"To see the cat' in the picture will be our first undertaking, and then I will try to explain why the single tax is just as plain when it is understood and looked upon in the right manner.

"I will take this piece of paper and place it over the cat in this way, and as all the unnecessary flourishes are hidden from view you can plainly see that the cat is there. In the same way the true and proper method of taxation is obscured by the multiplicity of taxes and terms that compose our present system. In the maze of import and export duties, ad valorem and specific, internal revenue, licenses, personal property taxes, poll taxes, dog taxes, and other taxes, we lose sight of the fact that just taxation would fall on each in proportion to the benefits received and that the value of the land which each person occupies is the exact measure of the benefits or advantages which result from the presence of other people and the protection of government. It

is a value that is created by the community and for that reason it can justly be taken for public purposes. This should not be difficult to see, and that is about all there is to the single tax cat.

"The cat ought to stand out especially clear to those who own no land and are paying rent to those who do. The rent which the landless man must pay to the landowner represents the value of the benefits of society and government. But this renter is a part of society or the community and supports the government by paying taxes on the products of his labor. He therefore pays twice for the benefits of government, while the landowner, as a landowner, pays practically nothing.

"A tax on the products of labor is a tax on consumption. A tax on consumption of the necessities falls heavily on those who do not own any land and are existing from day to day in a state of bondage that is worse than chattel slavery. The greater part of our population can be classed as non-owners of land and to them the advantages of the single tax should be plain as the cat in the picture.

"Another class which suffers from the effects of the present system of taxation are the small land owners and the small business people. When the

assessor goes round to assess their property, their small amount of property will not permit the assessor to cut their valuation down very much and the consequences are that the great burden of taxes is borne by the small property owners and small business people. No matter how honest the assessor may be, it is a fact that under the present system of taxation the true valuation of taxable property is, in a great measure, dependent on the honesty of the property owner, and the more property the tax payer has the easier it will be for him to conceal it from the assessor.

"The results of the present system are more plainly to seen in places that are populated by idle land owners, who not only escape the payment of taxes on their land values but they also neglect to turn in the valuation of other property which, under the present system, is taxable.

"A large class of people who suffer from the effects of the present system of taxation is composed of both rich and poor who desire to improve their property by erecting buildings and cultivating the soil. The assessor is sworn to place a valuation on all improvements, and it is plain to be seen that the present system of taxation places a fine against peo-

ple who employ labor in the improvement of their land. These are but a few of the bad features of the present system of taxation for which we offer the single tax as a remedy.

"We do not advocate the single tax as a panacea for all the ills of government; but as the life of government is sustained by revenue raised from taxation, we claim that the crooked and unjust system of taxation which we have to-day is the root of the greatest of the social ills from which we are suffering.

"There is so much that can be said for this reform in taxation that I hardly know where to end my remarks. But as this is our first meeting and as we hope to continue these meetings until you all 'see the cat,' I will now give place to others who may wish to speak on this subject."

After the address a few short talks were listened to and when the meeting adjourned the sentiment was unanimously in favor of continuing the gatherings from week to week.

THE SINGLE TAX FROM THE FARMERS STANDPOINT.

By Arthur P. Davis.

It is often asserted by opponents of the single tax that to repeal all the taxes on personal property and improvements and concentrate them on the value of land, would relieve the cities of a large portion of their taxes, and proportionately increase the burdens of the farmers. This opinion is very prevalent among farmers themselves. They are accustomed to think that the great wealth of the cities as being in the form of monies, credits, jewelry, furniture, valuable buildings, etc., while they regard themselves as the chief users of land.

As a matter of fact, while the greatest areas of land are undoubtedly in the country, the greatest land values are in the cities. The farm lands of Illinois are exceedingly fertile, and being in the midst of one of the greatest mining and manufac

turing communities in the country, have a home market for their produce, and altogether may be taken as about the most valuable agricultural lands in the country. A careful appraisalment by the State Bureau of Labor Statistics shows their average value to be \$32.97 per acre, exclusive of all improvements, while a single acre of land in the business portion of Chicago has a value of \$8,000,000. Thus an acre of land near the business center of Chicago is worth as much as 250,000 acres of fine farm land. The area of the city is 121,000 acres, and though it is not all as valuable as the tract referred to, it is nearly all hundreds of times more valuable than farm land. While the land in the business portion of New York reaches \$15,000,000 per acre, or more than 6,000 Illinois farms of eighty acres each.

In other states, where the land is less level or less fertile, or further from market, it is the exception rather than the rule to find an improved farm which has any great cash value exclusive of all improvements, and no farm land can be put to its best use unless its improvements are worth more than the bare land.

Value of City and Farm Land. On the other hand a careful estimate has shown that in the business center of Chicago, the value of the lots is in almost every case greater than that of the building standing thereon. This is true even of the great modern sky-scrapers, with their twenty stories, their fire-proof construction, marble floors, onyx wainscoting, bronze staircases, and elegant finishing and ornamentation. A careful appraisalment of the cost of such structures and the value of the land on which they are built shows that the value of the forty-four steel "sky-scrapers" constitute less than half the value of the land and buildings taken together. The buildings constitute forty-nine per cent. of the value, and the land on which they stand, fifty-one per cent. Most of these are over twelve stories high, and all of them have seven stories or more. All have the latest modern improvements, and are as a class the most costly buildings in the city. Yet the land on which they stand is still more valuable, and increases in value every day, while the value of all the buildings decrease from year to year, owing to decay.

Eliminating these "sky-scrapers," the construction of which is now forbidden by law, we now

select fifteen of the best modern buildings of brick and stone, ranging from five to ten stories, including such massive monuments as the Pullman Block, the Chicago Opera House, and the Equitable Building. We find that not a single one of these buildings is worth as much as the land on which it stands, while on the average, the buildings constitute 27 per cent. and the land 73 per cent. of the total value. Of course this discrepancy is emphasized with the smaller buildings that stand among these great structures, and when it is considered that large numbers of lots in all cities are held vacant by speculators, it will be seen that to exempt improvements and to tax land values only, would increase the burdens of the cities, and proportionately relieve rural districts.

Probably the only state in which the farm lands have a greater acreage value than in Illinois is New York. Fertile as these lands are, occupied by a dense and thrifty population, convenient to transportation by water and land, and near the great cities as markets for their produce, it is certainly here if anywhere, that the farmer would be burdened by a single tax on land values.

A careful investigation in that state, recently

made by the United States Department of Agriculture, shows the contrary to be the case. The conclusion of the report based on the ascertained values is as follows:

"These statistics show that if farms were assessed only at their strictly unimproved value, that would be less than 40 per cent. of the improved value, while on the other hand, an assessment of city lots upon their unimproved value would amount to rather more than 58 per cent. of the improved value.

"The great advantage that would accrue to the farmer by this change is manifest from this simple statement"—Circular No. 5, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1897.

Greatest	But the greatest relief which the single
Relief to	tax would bring would come to
Farmers.	the farmer through the exemption of
	personal property. This arises from
	the fact that the personal property owned by the
	farmer not only bears a greater ratio to his land
	values, but is mostly of such a nature that it cannot
	be concealed. His affairs are well known to his
	neighbors, including the assessor or his deputy, his
	cattle, horses and hogs can be counted and the value
	of his belongings can be very fairly estimated. On

the other hand, the money, stocks, bonds, jewelry, etc., of the cities can be easily concealed, and nearly all forms of personal property in the cities manage to keep off the tax rolls.

A recent report of the Controller of the state of New York shows that in the rural counties of that state, the personal property returned for taxation ranges from 13 to 40 per cent. of the total assessment, while in those counties containing the large cities, the percentage was only from 4 to 7; but even this was paid mostly by the comparatively poor, in proof of which the Controller cites 107 estates probated in that state, ranging from \$50,000 to \$80,000,000. Of these great fortunes, 34, or nearly one-third, paid no personal property tax at all, while those of which did, the assessment amounted to less than one-fiftieth part of the actual appraised value of the personality belonging to the estate, while ten estates having each over \$2,000,000 worth of personal property, returned an average of less than one-half of one per cent. to the assessor. Imagine a sixty-dollar horse assessed at 30 cents, or a cow worth \$30 assessed at 15 cents! Such evasions can never be practiced by farmers.

In several states, notably Ohio, Missouri and

California, a special effort has been made to reach the personal property of cities, by means of drastic inquisitorial laws, which require a minute detailed list of all personal property, classified under about ninety headings, and elaborately sworn to. The passage of these laws was accompanied by the election of assessors pledged to their rigorous enforcement. The result was that in Ohio, the counties that include the four great cities of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo report personal property as worth 26 per cent. of the whole valuation of real and personal, while in five counties which are almost exclusively rural and contain no large towns whatever, the result showed a value of assessed personal property of 32.5 per cent.

Again, comparing the county of Hamilton, containing Cincinnati, in which seven-eighths of the land consists of town lots, with the county of Medina, in which nine-tenths of the land consists of farms, we find that personal property is assessed at only 24.5 per cent. of the entire valuation for the county of Hamilton, against 37.5 per cent. for the rural county of Medina.

In the state of Missouri there are only four counties that have any important cities within their limits. In these four counties personal property is assessed at less than 20 per cent. of the real estate valuation, while in the rural counties it is assessed at 46 per cent. of the real estate valuation.

Taxation of ing most forms of personal property
Mortgages. in the cities was recognized by the
farmer legislature, but it was pointed

out that there was one form of personal property that could be reached, and that was mortgages. The wealthy capitalist could conceal his moneys, stocks, bonds, notes, jewelry, etc., but his mortgages had to be recorded, and they could be accurately assessed by a simple inspection of the county records. Accordingly it was provided that a stiff tax should be collected from mortgages. This tax amounted to nearly two per cent. of the face value and of course that sum was taken from the owners of the then existing mortgages. But when renewals or new loans were wanted, the interest rate immediately advanced sufficiently to cover the tax with a safe margin over, and the current rate of interest became ten per cent. instead of eight. When the mortgaged debtors of California grow tired of bearing this onerous burden and repeal the law the process will be reversed.

Special emphasis is laid on the taxation of moneys, stocks and credits, as a means of reaching the wealthy financial institutions of the cities, yet the practical result of such taxation is to enormously increase the burdens of rural communities. In 1893, all the state and private banks, money lenders and brokers of Cook county, in which Chicago is situated, returned for taxation less than \$44,000 in

money, or only one-hundredth of the per capita average for several of the rural counties, while the farmers of the same Cook county paid on nearly twice that value of agricultural implements. These same financial institutions returned only \$10,000 in net credits, or eight mills per capita for the population for 1890, while the rural counties returned from thirty to six hundred times as much per capita.

In the state of Washington in 1885, in the rural county of Whitman, with-
How Stocks out a single large town, under the
and Bonds head of stocks, bonds, shares in
Escape. bank, etc., there was an assessment

of \$519,000, while in Pierce county, with three times the population, which embraces the great banking center of Tacoma, the assessment was only \$6,630, only a little more than one per cent. of that of its rural neighbor. Such conditions as these hold true also regarding almost all other forms of personal property. It would redound greatly to the benefit of rural communities to have all such property entirely exempt from taxation. This has been proved beyond dispute by detailed investigation of records in New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, California, Washington, and in fact wherever it has been investigated.

Even those taxes on personal property and improvements which are collected in the cities are not ultimately paid by them in fact. For so far as they

rest on business property, upon the machinery of production, and stocks of goods held for sale, they add to the cost of production, and are by natural economic laws added to the price. The consumers on whom the tax thus ultimately falls, must pay not only the amount of the tax, but also a profit on this amount to every one who has thus advanced it—for profit on the capital he has advanced in paying taxes is as much required by each dealer as profit on the capital he has advanced in paying for goods. The farmer is an extensive consumer of all manner of manufactured goods, and thus pays a large share of the personal property taxes that are apparently paid by the cities. This is also true of all tariff and internal revenue taxes, many of which are levied for the avowed purpose of increasing the price of the articles taxed. The farmer cannot recoup himself for the taxes he pays, because his staple products, such as wheat, corn, beef, pork and cotton constitute the bulk of American exports, and their price is fixed by competition in foreign markets not affected by our tax laws. All indirect taxes therefore bear with especial hardship on the farmer, even when equitably assessed and collected. But as we have seen, a large part of such taxes are evaded, and the consumer has to pay the greater part even of those. The tax-dodger does not perjure himself for nothing. He does not sell his goods at less than competition forces him to, and his competitors some of them

pay the tax, while those who do not, either bribe a tax-collector or lay themselves liable to prosecution for perjury, or both, and they do it for the financial gain there is in it. Such taxes are therefore, ordinarily added to the price of the article taxed whether the tax is collected or not; and as we have seen, the farmer has them to pay eventually.

In reply to this evidence it has been argued that if taxes be concentrated upon the value of land it would relieve the farmer and unjustly burden the cities. The answer to this objection is that it is largely to the industry and trade of the rural districts that the great land values of our cities are due. As a modern statesman has said, you may burn the cities and leave our farms, and the cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy the farms and grass will grow in every city in the land. It is the trade, the industry and the population of the entire country that gives such fabulous value to land in New York city. The same is true of Chicago, and every other large city, and it is but fair that rural communities be permitted to share in those great values that they produce. They can do so by means of the single tax on land values. But this is not all.

Indirect taxation is not only especially burdensome, and operates as a reward to dishonesty, but it discourages industry. The thrifty man is punished while the sluggard is rewarded. When a man builds a house, beautifies his premises, constructs a

machine, or in any manner improves his neighborhood, or employs labor in the production of wealth, we fine him by taxation as though he were a public nuisance.

Indirect taxation is a device of the wealthy for shifting the burdens of taxation upon the shoulders of the poor. It is the only method by which the laborer can be made to bear the chief burden of taxation. When he buys goods at the store, the taxes theretofore paid on those goods, whether in the form of import duties or personal property taxes, are included in the price with a profit. And in addition, all the multiplicity of taxes upon the buildings, materials and machinery necessary to bring those apartments and those goods into place and condition for his use, have had their cumulative influence in raising the rent of his house, and the price of his food and clothing and furniture. The poorest are all the time paying taxes when indirect taxation prevails, and as most of our taxation is indirect, the greater part of the taxes which rich men advance and upon which they pose as taxpayers are actually paid by the poor.

The original purpose of the imposition of indirect taxation, however, is to be found in the following extracts from a speech delivered by William Pitt in the House of Commons:

"To levy a direct tax of seven per cent. is a dangerous experiment in a free country, and may incite revolt; but there is a method by which you can

tax the last rag from the back and the last bite from the mouth, without causing a murmur against high taxes; and that is to tax a great many articles of daily use and necessity so indirectly that the people will pay them and not know it. Their grumbling then will be of hard times, but they will not know that the hard times are caused by taxation."

Or, as another politician has expressed it, indirect taxation is the science of "plucking the goose without making it cry."

It is thus a device of despotic governments for obtaining the funds for extravagant expenditures which the people would not approve if they realized that they were paying for them. It is in its essence a fraud and a swindle on the taxpayer and is moreover very demoralizing to the whole body politic. Not only is it a fine upon industry and an incentive to sloth, a tax upon honesty and a premium on perjury, but one of its worse general effects is the notion that it generates and nourishes that the public treasury is a public crib, at which he who gets a chance to feed is in luck. The fact that others pay what public beneficiaries receive is hidden in the complication and secrecy of the system. The government is supposed to derive its income from some magical source. In the case of the tariff we are told that the foreigner pays the tax! Neither in the beneficiaries, therefore, nor in the public conscience is there any serious sense of

wrong in getting from it all that can be got, provided that criminal conviction be avoided. Thus the whole community is demoralized. Bounties are lobbied for, fat contracts are awarded, subsidies are grabbed, and a public office is looked upon as a private snap. Thus fraud and robbery flourishes so long as indirect taxation prevails. What of it? No one suffers! All comes from the government's magical purse. It is not like robbing a neighbor, it is more like Aladdin receiving the gift of the genius of his wonderful lamp! Thus there grows up a public sentiment that public funds are objects for common plunder, and he who gets most is the best fellow. Could there be a more ingenious device for debauching public morals?

These indirect taxes, which are so oppressive to the poor, require such an elaborate, expensive and inquisitorial methods in their collection, are so degrading to public morals, which fine industry and thrift, punish honesty, and reward perjury, would all be repealed in the application of the single tax. The public revenues would be taken from the fund that the community as a whole creates. The rights of property that are now denied would be secured by leaving to each individual the entire product of his labor without tax or fine, and taking for community use the value which no man produced individually, but which is the product of the presence and industry of the whole community as such—the value of land, exclusive of improvements.

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