

If addressee has moved notify sender on FORM 3547 postage guaranteed

OUR COMMON WEALTH

Our Common Wealth is the Rent of Land. We, the Citizens, create that Value.

Published monthly since 1937. Dependent on voluntary donations. Produced and distributed by voluntary effort.

Available at the New York Public Library, New York; The Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; and the San Francisco and Oakland Public Libraries.

Vol. 8

San Francisco, February, 1944

No. 2

CLARENCE DARROW TELLS HOW TO ABOLISH TAXES

Address at Los Angeles Singletax Banquet, March 1913

The "Singletax" is so simple, so fundamental, and so easy to carry into effect that I have no doubt it will be about the last reform the world will ever get. People in this world are not often logical; in fact, there is never any considerable number of them that are logical. I am pretty sure the people will never get started in the right direction; they will go a long way around.

Political economy is not an exact science, and you cannot make an exact science where you have to take account of the various whims of men and women. I think singletax is the most fundamental and the simplest of all reforms.

People are always slow to accept anything that is fundamental. Everybody now-a-days is anxious to help do something for the poor, especially they who are on the backs of the poor; they will do anything that is not fundamental. Nobody ever dreams of giving the poor a chance to help themselves. The reformers in this state have passed a law prohibiting women from working more than eight hours in one day in certain industries—so much do women love to work that they must be stopped by law. If any benevolent heathen see fit to come here and do work, we send them to jail or send them back where they came from.

All these prohibitory laws are froth. You can only cure effects by curing the cause. Every sin and every wrong that exists in the world is the product of law, and you cannot cure it without curing the cause. Lawyers, as a class, are very stupid. What would you think

of a doctor, who, finding a case of malaria, instead of draining the swamp, would send the patient to jail, and leave the swamp where it is? We are seeking to improve conditions of life by improving symptoms.

No man created the earth, but to a large extent all take from the earth a portion of it and mold it into useful things for the use of man. Without land man cannot live; without access to it man cannot labor. First of all, he must have the earth, and this he cannot have access to until the singletax is applied. It has been proven by the history of the human race that the singletax does work, and that it will work as its advocates claim. For instance, man turned from Europe, filled with a population of the poor, and discovered the great continent of America. Here, when he could not get profitable employment, he went on the free land and worked for himself, and in those early days there were no problems of poverty, no wonderfully rich and no extremely poor—because there was cheap land. Men could go to work for themselves, and thus take the surplus off the labor market. There were no beggars in the early days. It was only when the landlord got in his work—when the earth monopoly was complete—that the great mass of men had to look to a boss for a job.

All the remedial laws on earth can scarcely help the poor when the earth is monopolized. Men must live from the earth, they must till the soil, dig the coal and iron and cut down the forest. Wise men know it, and cunning men know it,

PROGRESS GUIDE

"PROGRESS GUIDE" at your newstand, February 1944 issue begins the free 10 lesson correspondence course of Henry George School of Social Science and many other valuable features.

This magazine of national circulation is going all-out for the Single Tax as a world peace movement.

**TELL YOUR FRIENDS
ABOUT IT AND SUBSCRIBE
TO IT YOURSELF.**

and so a few have reached out their hands and grasped the earth; and they say, "These mines of coal and iron, which it took nature ages and ages to store, belong to me; and no man can touch them until he sees fit to pay the tribute I demand."

Nature prepared the earth for ages to make a mine of iron ore, which is so useful in civilized life. It was here before man came, and will be here after he is gone; and yet a plundering, soulless, conscienceless band of pirates, called the steel trust, have taken possession of all the iron in America, and they say to every man who will use it: "You must pay us tribute." And every time 2 dollars is paid for their product one dollar goes to labor, and one dollar is taken as plunder pure and simple, because of the foolish laws of man. They can take from the farmer and laborer all that they earn except enough to keep them alive still to toil for the monopolist.

You may make eight-hour laws, you may make laws regulating

(Continued on Page Four)

How To Abolish Taxes

(Continued from Page One)

sweat shops and factories, but so long as a few rich men own the earth, there will be a few rich and many millions of helpless poor. As population becomes more dense, the proportion of poor will increase.

The laboring man takes no account of fundamentals. Millions of working men have organized themselves into great unions to protect themselves, to force up their side to counteract the forcing up by the other side. These millions have organized for a most impossible purpose. They seek to change the social life in an impossible way. Their higher wages will be handed back to monopoly in higher prices. If a small fraction of the energy and money that has been given by the working men to support labor unions had been spent to change fundamental conditions, there would be no need of a labor union in the world today. Everywhere about us we can see that the conditions cannot change while land monopoly continues.

Most of our laws were made by the dead, and the dead have no right to legislate for the living. The present generation has no right to bind its legislation upon the generation still unborn. When one generation is dead, it ought to stay dead, and not reach out its dead hand to bind the living. We have no right to fix terms and conditions for those yet unborn; it is for each generation to fix the rules and regulations for itself. The earth should be owned by all men; the coal mines should belong to the people who live here, so they can take what they want while they live, as when they are dead they won't need coal—they will be warm enough without it—and they should not have the power to say who shall have it when they are gone. Carnegie and Morgan cannot use or withhold it much longer, as they will soon be gone—that is one consolation.

Fundamentally, all law recognizes the right of eminent domain, to take the portion of any human being for the welfare of the public—that no man's claim to any portion of the earth shall stand in the way of the common good. This is a common law, but in practice it only applies where a rich railroad wants to get the land of some poor widow.

This is a city of boomers and

one thing and another. A poor man goes out ten or fifteen miles from his work, where he can get a home cheap—one dollar down and one dollar a month, or something like that.

Everybody who works is poor; nobody would work if they were not poor, and nobody can get rich working. I never tried it, but I have seen others try it. The land boomer comes along and gets good car service to this poor man's home, and then charges him ten dollars per month instead of five. A lot of reformers are trying to get parks laid out in the slums, which only make the poor move, for they cannot pay the increased rent. The greater the population, the less the worker gets. As the land becomes valuable, more and more goes to rent. The bigger the city, the deeper the poverty; the bigger the city the more degradation, there are the almshouses and jails filled to overflowing. It is better for the men who own the earth to have big cities—but for no one else. Every man, woman, and child adds to the wealth of the land owner; the others must secure land upon which to live, and they must bid with each other for the right to live.

Beyond a living all surplus goes to the monopolist, and it does go to him. You talk about a city of a million in 1915—who would be benefited? Not the workingman; he would be far worse off than at present, for the greater the city the greater the poverty.

Taxes on goods are added to the price of goods and passed on to the consumer. There is only one kind of tax that is not a curse, and that is the land tax. If you tax a pair of shoes a dollar, the manufacturer will add that to the price of the shoes, and thus diminish the number of shoes the people can buy. The higher you tax the land the more land is thrown on the market and the easier it is to secure, and it is the only thing that increases by taxation.

More than half of England is taken up by hunting estates. A deer is better cared for than a man; when it dies it dies suddenly, and is fat.

The higher the tax on land the more it comes into use, and so singletax is a positive blessing. It is the only tax that does not come out of labor; it comes out of the monopolist; it stays right there, and that fact compels them to put the land to some use, and that employs labor.

The singletax theory is that the

public should take all the value of land, as it was made by the public. Land value goes up because of population, and not because of the owner of the title deed, and the value should be taken by the community, and thus create a natural fund from which to make improvements for the comfort of all, and thus make life easier. It would abolish poverty, that crime of the century, which has always come with civilization; inequality of wealth, which comes as the world grows older, and which we have never been able to cure, because man wants to hold what he cannot use, and pass on to future generations what they will not use.

The personal property tax always was a delusion, a humbug, and a snare; it never could be administered justly. The conscientious man, the widow and the orphans (whose fund is in trust) pay in full while the rich get off. It is unscientific, it is bad as a fiscal measure. What we are after is the earth, and it can be had in an easy, simple, direct way.

There are two kinds of singletaxers—the limited and the unlimited. The former simply want to abolish taxes on personality and improvements, and put that tax on the land; the singletaxer unlimited wants to abolish all indirect taxes, such as tariff and patent license taxes, etc., and take all the annual rental value of the land in lieu of all other taxes. I am a singletaxer unlimited. I want the earth for the people.

Every right-of-way of every railroad should be owned by the people; all public franchises, every mine and every forest, all should belong to the community itself. Then we would not need the repressive laws we have today. Men love peace, and if not antagonized, they will behave, and until justice is done in that good time to come, all the jails on earth cannot make them behave. It never did, and it never will.

We won't need any labor unions. You cannot keep up wages until every man can measure his own wages by the work he does. We won't need to pass laws to keep men and women from working themselves to death. We will have no jails, no white slavery, no poverty, no class distinction, when the earth is owned by the people. Poverty will disappear, and men will be as happy as they may be in this world in which we live. But, above all, they will be industrially and economically free.