

THE STANDARD

EXTRA. No. 8.

Published Weekly by Wm. T. Croastale, at the Office of The Standard, 12 University Pl.
(Entered at the Post Office in New York as second class matter.)

Price 2 Cts. NEW YORK, JUNE 27, 1891. \$1.00 a Year.

Price of this number in quantities, 10 copies 10 Cts.; 100 copies \$0 Cts.; 1,000 copies \$5.

THE DETROIT NEWS ON THE SINGLE TAX.

By Judson Grinnell.

The following articles appeared in the editorial columns of the Detroit Evening News and the Detroit Sunday News, and they are reproduced, with the author's permission, in a STANDARD extra to meet a general demand:

THE ONLY SOLUTION.

A free agent can always make a better bargain than can one under constraint. The wage-worker who has only one occupation in which he is proficient is less independent than he who can turn his hand to a variety of trades. The artisan owning his own homestead free from debt, especially when the area is sufficient to give him employment during the gardening season, need submit to no such rate of wages as he who must provide for the periodic call of the landlord. In a word, the laborer who is so situated that he can employ himself, and from his toil reap the full benefits, is on such an equality with the employing class that he is enabled to make a satisfactory bargain both as to wages and hours.

The power to employ one's self rests in the power to get on the land. The occupation of the farmer is the only one in the world that can occupy all the people at one time and provide sufficient to sustain life. Given a piece of fertile land, no one need starve. From its bosom can be obtained every element that conserves the happiness and prosperity of the human family.

The very first element, then, necessary to the complete emancipation of the wage-receiving classes from their economic bondage, is freedom to employ themselves. The opportunity must always be open to exert themselves for their individual benefit, free from rules or regulations made by others. Without this they can never be free. They must submit to such terms as the owners of land and the owners of wealth employed productively choose to make.

As taxation, as enforced to-day, combined with the legal monopoly of natural opportunities to labor, causes the exploitation of labor, so changes in the system of taxation may be made the chan-

nel for labor's redemption. Socialists and Nationalists have created elaborate schemes of governmentalism, wherein the State will be the parent and the wealth producer the child, to be dealt with as the parent conceives best; whereas all that is necessary to make a laborer independent is to leave him alone, free to employ himself, free to exchange his products, free from the exactions of the tax gatherer.

Whenever a successful labor-saving machine is first invented, one must be prepared to see a complicated mechanism. There are wheels, and cogs, and cams, and springs, all seemingly inextricably mixed. But apply the power, and lo! the result is surprising. The machine almost seems to think. It is a success. Go back and look at that machine in a decade. Its capacity has been doubled, but instead of a multitude of frightfully complicated arms, bolts, cogs, belts, wheels and cams, there are seen a few pieces of steel, brass and iron, with direct and positive motions. It is not so pretty a machine, but it is a much better one. Simplicity has brought greater efficiency.

The labor world has for years been constructing complicated machinery for its industrial ills. Sometimes the machines have seemingly worked well for a time; again they have been a burden instead of a benefit. And these machines for the emancipation of labor, unlike the successful ones, are becoming all the time more complicated, until now, when they get out of order, such distress follows as to put the whole commercial world into convulsions. The tendency has been away from simplicity in dealing with the distresses engendered by the concentration of great masses of humanity into our commercial centres, where, huddled together in ill-ventilated and disease-breeding tenements, they evolve a miasma and a gangrene perilous alike to all classes.

To enable labor to come by its own, to enable the wealth producer to enjoy the fruits of his labor, to enable enterprise to reap its full reward, it is only necessary to relieve the people of their burdens by freeing trade, and by relieving every species of property the result of human exertion from the visits of the Assessor and taxgatherer, collecting all the revenue necessary for those functions that should properly be exercised by that social organism called Government, by a tax on land values only.

A tax on land values is the chief cure for low wages and long hours. But it is despised by the masses because of its simplicity. They cling to their complicated schemes for social regulation, and reject that which is the very essence of justice and equity. For a tax on land values will not take one minute's worth of labor from the laborer that is his by right. It will only take for community uses the values which the community itself as a whole has brought into existence.

Why is land on the corner of Woodward and Michigan avenues valued at \$2,500 a foot front? It is not because of anything the present owner has done to it. Why is land all along Woodward

avenue, from the river front to Grand Circus Park, worth on an average at least \$1,500 a front foot? Not because of anything the owners have done to it. This great value is due wholly and solely to the fact that the avenue is more convenient for trade than any other street in Detroit. It is nearest to the largest number of people, and more bargaining is carried on there at a less expense than it can be carried on elsewhere. Therefore a smaller percentage can be added to the cost of manufacturing in making the selling price, and yet the total gain be larger than where there is less trade. So this availability of position registers the value of the land. Take the people away and it will fall. Increase the number surrounding it and it will rise.

To take this land value for the expense of government and to relieve industry of every other burden, is the key to the industrial situation. That will make land easy to get. When a good thing is easy to get it is more largely used. When land is used productively it increases the wealth of the community. And when wealth is being produced, under freedom of trade and freedom of contract, the portion going to labor is the full reward of labor. That is labor's millennium. It can get no more. There is no more to get.

HOW THE SINGLE TAX WILL WORK.

In the opinion of *The News*, the only solution of the labor problem, the only remedy for the deplorable industrial conditions that induce strikes and lockouts, will be found in producing such a state of affairs that each wage worker will receive the full results of his toil. His wages must be the equivalent for his exertion, to be ascertained in a perfectly free market where demand and supply acts and reacts without let or hindrance from any unnatural source.

How can this condition of affairs be brought about?

By repealing all laws for the collection of taxes, and replacing them with a tax on land values.

The present system of taxation has two effects. First, it prevents people, anxious to work, from employing themselves; and next, it takes, in an indirect way, a large percentage of the products of those who are working. And this percentage is not in proportion to their ability to pay, or in proportion to the benefits derived from government, but in proportion to what they consume of the things taxed. So, between being deprived of work and of having confiscated a large part of their products when they do work, many of the real wealth producers of the country are reduced to a condition that makes a mock-cry of our boasted nineteenth civilization.

A tax on land values alone would have two immediate effects. It would make every department of industry boom healthfully and naturally, and it would reduce the selling price of commodities to the labor cost. That is to say, the value of an article would be the wages paid to labor to produce it.

With plenty of work, and every thing at cost, could a more equitable condition of affairs be demanded by the labor world?

But, says some doubting Thomas, how would a tax on land

values, in connection with the repeal of all other taxes, produce such beneficent results?

One cannot tax anything the result of human exertion without reducing the demand. The more anything useful costs, the fewer are they used. The less anything useful costs, the more are there used. Taxes, therefore, on the products of labor, discourage industry, for thereby the demand for the things produced are curtailed. Labor is deprived of a market, and so labor goes hungry. The tax on leather reduces the number of shoes worn; so that fewer shoemakers are needed. The tax on cloth reduces the number of garments demanded and so fewer tailors are needed. The tax on iron, on lumber, on glass, on paper, reduces the number of houses that can find a market, and so the carpenter and iron worker and the innumerable artisans manipulating these raw materials are restricted, and these trades become congested, resulting in wage reductions that only accentuate the distress. To repeat, anything that increases the cost of an article reduces the demand for that article, and this reduced demand stagnates the labor market and tends to wage reduction. This is the effect of taxing the products of labor. This is one of the real enemies of the wage-worker.

A tax on land values is attended with no such evil results. It will have just the opposite effect. As has been shown, a tax on products reduces the amount of products produced. But a tax on land values cannot reduce the amount of land in the world by a single inch. Whether land is taxed 2 per cent. or 50 per cent. on its value there will be just as much. It is here, and it will remain here when all the people are swept into oblivion.

A tax on land values will bring land that now lies idle into use.

Here is the key to the solution of the industrial problem—labor. To use land requires labor. Labor is a thing which every human being has to sell, and the more it is in demand the greater price will it bring. "By labor is brought forth the kindly fruits of the earth in rich abundance," but to labor one must have access to land—an access now denied the laborer except at a price that demands the sacrifice of a portion of whatever he produces. This price is called rent, in the case of a tenant. When one buys outright, the rent is capitalized and the purchaser pays a sum sufficient, when placed at interest, to give the original owner a perpetual lien, equal to the rent on the products of labor.

A tax on land values will bring land into use, because it will be unprofitable to keep it out of use. The owners of valuable land will either have to use it themselves, or leave others to use it. The owners of valueless land will have nothing to pay, because there will be no demand at all for their possessions. The owners of rural land will pay very little, because their values are almost entirely improvement values, and under a single land value tax these will be exempt. The owners of city property will pay a sum equal to the value of the opportunities they monopolize over landholders not so agreeably situated for business purposes.

As under the operations of a tax on land values no valuable land will be kept out of use, the present condition of the labor market will be reversed. The demand for labor will exceed the supply of labor. The owners of the 40,000 or more vacant lots in Detroit, for example, will either build on them themselves or sell to others able to build. They must do this, unless they are willing to pay the tax, without the opportunity of shifting the burden. For a land value tax is the one tax they cannot shift. A tax on chairs is paid by the manufacturer, added to the price of the chair, and finally shifted on the consumer. A tax on the house is paid by the tenant. A tax on land value is paid by the owner.

So the effect of a tax on land values will be to reduce the selling price of land without destroying its usefulness. An acre will cut up into just as many lots, and give homesteads to just as many people under the operations of the Single Tax as now. It will simply make the homesteads easier to get, and thus will increase the demand for this kind of property.

One cannot build a homestead without employing labor. What would be the effect on the Detroit labor market if even 10,000 families started to build? And they would, if they could, get a lot for merely paying an annual tax equal to the value of the privilege enjoyed. Cannot the most simple-minded man see that to build houses, to cultivate land, to dig down into the earth for the stores of metal there secreted, will give employment to labor? And cannot the most simple-minded man also see that one of the great reasons why so much land is lying idle and keeping so many people idle is because the owners are allowed to practically keep it out of use and thus increase the value of what is in use?

Tax land in proportion to its value—the value created by the community and not by the landowner—and it will immediately be brought into use. Bring land into use and labor will find employment. Employ labor, and wages will rise to a sum equal to the value of the products created. Let the demand for labor equal the supply of labor—and this is what will happen under the operation of the single tax—and immediately the laborer will be on an equality with his employer in making a bargain. But this will be no detriment to the employer, for the demand for his goods will be constant and he will always be able to get what they cost.

When the Single Tax on land values is adopted the days of the ignorant labor agitator, who looks for labor's redemption by the use of dynamite and other deadly weapons, will be numbered. So, also, will the days of those other almost as ignorant labor agitators who see only in paternalism the means for labor's redemption.

Given the Single Tax and freedom of trade, and the individual can have full swing without fear of anarchy or paternalism. Given the Single Tax, and monopolies of every kind and character will disappear with the increase of intelligence, the natural diffusion of wealth and the prosperity that results from a happy and contented community.

THE SINGLE TAX.

The News to-day prints a series of interviews with well-known Detroit business men who, for various reasons, express their preference for that system of taxation known as the Single Tax on land

values. The News welcomes these gentlemen to the ranks of that now rapidly growing class who are paying some attention to economic subjects, and who are thereby becoming better citizens and less likely to be led by the noses by party leaders.

To know what is best is the very first step to getting what is best. When a strong minority in any community are thinking in the right direction, they are bound to drag the rest with them. People are beginning to see that to take taxes off of products is to increase the incentive to produce. And as it is what human exertion creates that brings happiness, so the more labor is encouraged by exemption from firms the more will prosperity smile on the workers.

But means must be provided for national, State and municipal purposes. Money must be had to "run the Government." In every civilized community there are joint services rendered, such, for example, as carrying out the system of drainage, and the enforcing of regulations for the protection of life and property, that must be paid for by a tax levied on those benefited. How shall this be raised?

The theory of the Single Tax advocates is very simple. They believe that whatever is necessary to be done should be paid for from those values created by the community as a whole. This is land value.

Let one illustration of what is meant by land value suffice. Thirteen pioneers start out with their families to hew for themselves homes in a new country. They come to a stream along the banks of which the land is fertile, and "where every prospect pleases." Here they decide to locate. The valley is divided into thirteen equal strips, each one running from the river back to the hills. All are equally fertile and equally desirable as farming lands.

This little community will require a school house, a grist mill, a church, a store and a blacksmith shop right from the start. Where is the most desirable location for these? Anyone will say in the centre of the thirteen farms, for that is the most accessible. That is No. 7:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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So, then, it is seen that farm No. 7 has a value independent of its soil. So have farms Nos. 6 and 8, but these values are not so great. So also have farms Nos. 5 and 9, yet in a diminishing ratio. Until at last when one comes to farm Nos. 1 and 13 the only value there is that created by the cultivators themselves.

Any new settler coming in would pay more for farm No. 7 than for any other. It would have advantages over the others worth paying for. And this advantage arises solely from *location*, and the owner has contributed nothing to it. It is a community value, to take which, in taxes for community purposes, does no injustice to anyone.

This is just what has happened in Detroit. The value of one lot over another is solely because of location, and when taxes are so placed that each lot will pay only its share of the community expenses, in proportion to the value created by the community, those values created by labor will remain with the laborers and no one except land speculators, as speculators, will be injured.

"THE WEALTHY MAN" AND THE "POOR GARDENER."

The Detroit News editorially sets forth an explanation of "the Single Tax" idea, in which it shows that lands in a town or settled place have value according to location, the value being the result of the improvements made by the community around a business centre. After all, then, it is not the land value merely that this system proposes, to tax but the location.

Improvements on the land are not to be taxed; strictly, the land is not to be taxed, but the place it occupies. Now suppose two lots of land, say of five acres each, lying side by side, in the outskirts of the supposed village, equally distant from the business centre. One of these is occupied by a wealthy man, who has \$200,000 worth of buildings, furniture, musical instruments, fine trotting horses, carriages, etc., on his lot, while the other is owned by a poor gardener, whose buildings, furniture, horse and wagon, cow, everything, are worth but \$800. His land is better than his rich neighbor's. The rich neighbor's house, horses, etc., are products, and we understand the theory to be, as the News puts it, to "take taxes off of products." Then is the poor gardener to pay the same tax as the rich neighbor? If so, why should farmers and gardeners be asked to adopt the doctrine?—Midland Republican.

The question of the Republican is pertinent, but rather hard on the farmers and market gardeners, in as much as it puts them in the position of not desiring equity in the system of taxation. Here are two pieces of ground, to use the Republican's illustration, to which the community has given an equal value. A rich man, the owner of one place, builds a fine house on his, and a gardener, the owner of the other, cultivates his. Suppose the improvements on the rich man's land are more valuable than those on the market gardener's land, should the market gardener object, so long as all his labor products are relieved from all taxes?

But perhaps the Republican's farmers and gardeners think one should be taxed in accordance to his ability and industry. Let us investigate. Suppose two market gardeners occupy this land, which is equally fertile and accessible, and on which the community value is exactly equal. One gardener is industrious and cultivates his land to the top notch, draining and fertilizing and fencing and building good barns and outhouses. The other gardener is lazy, shiftless, improvident, and works spasmodically. His buildings are in all conditions of decay, his tools are left exposed to the elements, and his crops are in keeping with his surroundings. Is there equity in a system of taxation that fines the industrious man for his enterprise and lets the lazy and shiftless one free? Doesn't the Republican see that the community has everything to lose by such a system of taxation? What does the industrious gardener think about it? What the people want is the maximum of crops at the minimum of expense. This the industrious gardener gives. The crops of the lazy gardener, on the other hand, are produced at the maximum of expense. They are dear at almost any price. If all the gardeners in that vicinity were as shiftless, this maximum cost would control prices—a bad condition of affairs for the community. Now, the community having given the two gardeners equal opportunities to find a market, why not tax only this community value for necessary municipal expenses?

But to make this plain let us take a third illustration. These two pieces of ground, made equally valuable by the community, are owned one by the industrious gardener and the other by a land speculator. The gardener cultivates his, but the speculator not only does not use his, but he will allow no one else to use it. He prefers to have it lie idle so that people will build around and beyond it, and he can afford to do this, because the Assessor will tax it very lightly as "unimproved," collecting the taxes from those foolish enough to make visible manifestation of their exertions. What inducement to improve is there under such a system? If the Republican will go out into the country it will find scores of instances of improvements held back for fear of the Assessor. There will be seen houses unpainted, lots undrained, barns lacking many conveniences that, if added, would be accompanied by a fine from the Supervisor. When a farmer cannot add to his stock, cannot buy a labor-saving implement, cannot make his little home more habitable, without seeing his taxes yearly increase, it is time he began

to think if some other system of taxation could not be devised wherein industry would be encouraged instead of discouraged, and wherein increased crops and comforts would not be followed by a bigger tax roll. Is there equity in taxing the gardener more than the land speculator? Which tax system should the farmers and gardeners advocate—a tax on industry or a tax on land values?

Then there is the question of expediency. If the Republican will find two pieces of land, equally valuable, one owned and occupied by a "poor gardener whose buildings, furniture, horse and wagon, cow, everything, are worth but \$800," and the other owned and occupied by "a wealthy man who has \$200,000 worth of improvements thereon," the Republican will find the Assessor has taxed the gardener 60 to 85 per cent. on the value of his personal property, while the wealthy man may be taxed 40 per cent. of the value of his improvements, but is more likely to get off with 30. Where is the equity here? Is this the system farmers and gardeners desire? Well, this is what they have now—the personal property and improvements of the agricultural community taxed 75 per cent; the personal property and improvements of the wealthy in the cities taxed 25 to 40 per cent. As a mere question of expediency there should go up a demand for the abolition of all taxes save the Single Tax on land values. This value is all above ground; it cannot be hid; it is independent of the liability and peculiarities of the occupier; it is sure to spread itself equitably over all classes in the community. No one will escape his just share, and no one—as now—can shift his burden on to the shoulders of his neighbors.

Let the Republican's farmers and gardeners keep another fact in mind. There is nothing on the wealthy man's land that has not already been taxed. All taxes are paid from labor's products; and it is products that constitute wealth. The wealthy man has a fine span of horses. These horses were raised, where? On the land. Their cost was increased in proportion to the amount of taxation the horse breeder was compelled to pay. He added it to the selling price. The wealthy man paid it. The groom who tends the horses, and the coachman who drives them, must eat to live. What they eat is raised off the land. The wealthy man and the wealthy man's family eat also, and they wear fine raiment, too. All come from the land, all bear their proportion of the burdens of the government. To tax manufacturers adds to the burdens of the farmers, for he must pay the increased cost consequent upon the adding the price to the tax. Out of the land comes everything that ministers to our necessities and our desires. Tax land in proportion to its value, and the things thus produced will bear this tax, and distribute itself wherever the products are carried. There is no escape for the wealthy any more than for the poor. Each will pay in proportion to his consumption, to his monopoly of natural opportunities to create wealth, and to his use of those values created by the community. The Single Tax is no patent scheme to relieve the world of taxes. But it will so regulate taxation that the industrious will not be taxed for being industrious, and the lazy and shiftless cannot escape by neglecting his opportunities to produce wealth. As a rule, valuable land has valuable improvements. The value of one reflects the value of the other.

THE STANDARD.

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

A twenty-four page paper issued every Wednesday. The accepted exponent of the Single Tax doctrine, and the only absolute Free Trade advocate having a general circulation throughout the United States. One year, \$2. Four months, \$1. Sample copy sent free on application. Address.

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42 University Place, New York.