

EDITORIAL

IMPROVING THE SINGLE TAX.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MR. J.H. Springer of Indianapolis has undertaken the laudable task of improving the Single Tax.

The term Single Tax means, to-day, different things in different minds.

To the strict Single Tax economist the Single Tax, as its name indicate, is an economic theory that demands removal of all taxes and forms of taxation except one. The single tax allowed is a tax upon land values. According to this theory the cause of involuntary poverty is the private appropriation of land values. That appropriation once removed, simultaneous with the removal of all taxes, and the public appropriation of land values by means of a tax thereon, would solve the ages-old Social Problem.—Thus understood, the Single Tax is so untrue to history, economics and sociology that it is simply unimprovable.

In most minds, however, the Single Tax is held in no such strict meaning. To some Single Taxers the idea pursued is that of land nationalization. To others, who call themselves, “Single Taxers, limited,” the nationalization meant is only partial. To still another set, Single Tax means “Righteousness.” This last set very much partake(s) of the nature of those Anarchists, who, having been weaned of the economic and social fallacies of original Anarchy, still cling to the name and understand by it a code of admirable morals, which, however, existed in the human heart and mind long before Anarchy was invented. To the above referred to third set of Single Taxers the term Single Tax is endeared, not because of its premises, but because of its goal—Righteousness.

If there is any improvement possible in the Single Tax the improvement must be with this set. Mr. Springer’s pamphlet *The Industrial Problem—For a Real Prosperity* indicates that the gentleman has not well analyzed the people whom he

would improve. His argument runs along the strict Single Tax lines—premises, reasoning and conclusion.

Mr. Springer wastes his time. It is a waste of time to seek to convert people to the idea that the taking of ground rent would “not be taking from the individual any of his product, but would be taking a fund that rightfully belongs to the public,” and that, therefore, the Single Tax is right. The Sense of Right revolts against a theory that is so one-legged. The dividends that capital appropriates belong to the public as rightfully as “ground rent.” It is the public that produces them. The Sense of Right does not accept as a homage to Right to acknowledge ONE Wrong. The Sense of Right correctly sees in such a theory the express ENDORSEMENT of ALL OTHER Wrongs.

He who would improve the Single Tax should begin by understanding that the goal of Righteousness does not lie via sentimentalism. Sentimentalism attacks AN Evil, but does not attack EVIL. The practical sense of the race is drilling it to be a more practical work than beating the Devil around the stump. The solution of the Industrial Problem demands the felling of the Upas tree of private ownership in both the land and the necessities with which to labor upon it.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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