

PREFACE

I UNDERSTAND that the views expressed in this little book are not held by any school of thought, that they do not represent the policy of any organization. For this reason I have studied them with special interest. Though new to this generation, most of them have been held and stated by leading thinkers and statesmen in the past. Locke in England, Turgot in France, with many of their contemporaries and successors in both countries, advocated a single tax on land values, with no belief that such a tax would reduce the incomes of landlords.

This view of theirs is well worth discussion. The genius, character and achievements of such men as Locke and Turgot are sufficient of themselves to justify the most thorough examination of any view which they held so tenaciously, and advocated with such sincerity. Their counsels were rejected in their day. They

failed to carry their principles, but that failure is steadily turning into success. We are on the eve of great social and economic changes, and one of the most fundamental is connected with the tenure of land and with taxation. We need more light on the path upon which we are entering, and this light can only come from wide thought with full discussion. The same problems which we face to-day confronted our ancestors more than once, and they may have seen things which we have overlooked. Then there is the fact that the taxation of land values is explaining itself through actual working in the British Colonies, and it is important to see from this explanation what the nature of that tax is.

Any lasting change in the institutions of a country must enter into them through the minds of its people. The more people to whom such a change appeals, the more successful and permanent will be its effects. There must be some aspects of the taxation of land values which have not yet been made clear, and there must be many minds

to which the presentation of these aspects would bring the conviction that this is a wise and beneficent proposal. A discussion marked by generous feeling will bring clearness, for it will not unnecessarily disturb passions. A discussion marked by fearlessness will also add something, for it will carry the investigation far enough to reveal more of truth. There is something reasonable in the mind of every man and woman which would condemn whatever is unreasonable in our social system. The endeavour to enlist this reasonable force is always fair. Some of the views expressed here will undoubtedly appear extreme to many people; to others the whole treatment, judged by a moral ideal, will seem to fall short. None the less, but probably the more, they call for careful consideration.

I should not like to say that the new definition of rent given in this book is final, or scientifically complete, but it seems to agree more fully with experience, and to apply more universally, than Ricardo's. The growth of cities, with their great social

activities, has been followed so closely by the increase of rent that the one is obviously the cause of the other. Similar activities on a smaller scale may always have been the cause of rent. Nor is it necessary to assume that the author's attempt to establish a simpler and more scientific basis for Political Economy is successful. This will appear from discussion of the subject. The treatment of it as a science concerned with human feelings, yet perfectly distinct from morals, may make it possible to remove the old charge that it is unrelated to the conditions in which men live. The mere business aspect of human relations is important, and is perhaps an adequate basis for a science. The ideas suggested here admit of expansion. The relations of this movement for the taxation of land values to other movements for the improvement of social conditions are complementary and not hostile.

A vine-dresser to-day, hoeing his vineyard on the banks of the Arno, throws out on the road a stone which obstructs his work. Yet this vineyard has been culti-

vated since the days of Cæsar, and one might think that all such stones had been removed long ago—not so, neither here nor in vineyards of any sort.

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