

QUESTION OF COMPENSATION.

against the benefited land holders is as applicable to national works as to municipal. This was made very plain by the discussion in the last Congress relative to the zoological gardens and park to be erected in the northwestern part of the District of Columbia.

When the States shall have made the changes suggested, Congress may then avail itself of that provision of the national constitution which provides for the apportionment of direct taxes among the States according to population; for, as those values of land that constitute social wages are wholly due to the presence, activities and necessities of population, it follows that to apportion national taxes among the States according to population would be to apportion them according to land values, and hence to call upon each State to furnish its equitable share for the support of the national government.

But Congress need not even wait for the States to adopt these changes. None of our national revenue is now derived from social values; but is all taken from the people in such a way as to come out of their individual wages. If they were to be apportioned among the States and collected as State taxes now are, much more than half would be taken from social values, and thus a long step would be taken toward equity.

And nothing would so stimulate the discussion of the whole problem of taxation, nothing would so soon force the people to the adoption of an equitable system of State and local taxation, as to be confronted with the necessity of raising directly those additional sums that are now taken from them in such a manner as to prove many times more burdensome, and with the added evil that the individual does not know how much he pays for national purposes, nor just when he pays it. The change proposed would enable every taxpayer to refer to his tax receipts and learn just how many dollars and cents the national, State or municipal government costs him annually. He would be able to form some opinion as to whether he had got the worth of his money.

Thus it appears that the changes necessary to an equitable system of taxation are very simple and easily understood. All that is needed is to educate the people to see the necessity for these changes.



REPLIES TO MR. PETER AITKEN ON THE QUESTION OF COMPENSATION.

By L. H. BERENS.

(Honorable Treasurer English League for the Taxation of Land Values.)

Single Taxers everywhere are inspired by the same ideals, upheld by the same convictions. Their one aim is to see the curse of landlordism removed, the blight of landlordism uplifted. Their advocacy of the Single Tax, or rather of the Taxation of Land Values, is but as a means to this end. They realize that the first important step in this direction will break down the power of land monopoly, and remove the evils of landlordism. For, manifestly, to give but one example, the worst evils of landlordism, as applied to our mineral resources, do not arise from the tribute the privileged holders of our coal and iron lands are enabled to extort from the coal and iron workers on the deposits they graciously allow to be put to use, but rather from their withholding of other similar resources from use. The land in use is yielding its blessings, not only to the land-holders and the land-users, but also to the innumerable other work-

ers whose wants they supply, and who, conversely, find remunerative work in supplying their wants. On such land the springs of industry have been set loose, to the advantage of all concerned; but on the land withheld from use, the first link in the great chain of co-operative production is wanting, to the injury, not only of would-be coal and iron workers, but of the community as a whole. In truth, the real hindrance to economic freedom, the direct enslaver and impoverisher of the industrial masses of the country, is *not* the exclusive possession of land by individuals, or trusts, but land monopoly, the power to withhold land from use. And it is this power, as Single Taxers together with the large privileged land-holders and their parasites as yet alone seem to realize, which would immediately come to an end with the imposition of a substantial installment of the system of taxation known as the taxation of land values. In short, as it seems to me, the great claim to originality, I had almost written, to immortality, of our great teacher, Henry George, is that, excluding only Patrick Edward Dove, he was the first to bring home to the thoughtful of the world that by this means all the advantages, real and imaginary, of the exclusive possession of land could be reconciled to the demands of social justice, and combined with all the benefits accruing to the common ownership of land.

Henry George, however, was far too philosophic to imagine for a moment, or even to desire, that the great and far-reaching reform he proposed could or should be inaugurated immediately and at one fell swoop. He knew and faced unflinchingly the barriers in its path. He realized to the full the economic ignorance of the disinherited many and the strong social position and almost overwhelming social influence of the privileged few. As "Behind ignorance and prejudice," he told us in his immortal work, "there is a powerful interest, which has hitherto dominated literature, education and opinion." It was this powerful interest he so courageously attacked, and to combat which he unstintingly devoted his life, even though he realized, as clearly as Mr. Aitkin, that "a great wrong always dies hard, and the great wrong which in every civilized country condemns the masses of men to poverty and want will not die without a bitter struggle." The publication of "Progress and Poverty" inaugurated that struggle, which has become more widespread and more bitter with every succeeding year. And the real question behind Mr. Aitkin's article, the question it at once raised in my mind, as doubtless in that of others, is whether we Single Taxers are really working on the right or best lines, whether we have reason to be satisfied or dissatisfied, encouraged or discouraged, by the success we have so far achieved, with the progress our basic ideas and ideals have made within the short space of some twenty-five years? As one who has closely watched and to the uttermost of my powers have taken part in the movement, both in Australia and Great Britain, since 1885, I would fain claim space, in contradiction to Mr. Aitkin's suggestion, to answer this first question in the affirmative. I firmly believe that the progress made has been as great and as rapid as we had any real reason to hope for: that it not only bids us to be of good hope for the future, but indicates that we have been working on the right lines, and should encourage us to renewed and, if possible, more vigorous efforts for the overthrow of that most fertile source of all social curses—Land Monopoly.

As regards Mr. Aitkin's suggestions, I cannot see that they would in any way promote, though they might easily injure, the further progress of our cause. If the choice were between the continuance of the present accursed system and the buying of all the land of the country, then I should agree with him that "it would be greatly to our advantage to buy out the landowners, even at their own price." Nor should I think that by advocating and voting for any such scheme I should be sacrificing my Single Tax principles. The one advantage of this proposal is that it would in part remove,

but in part only, what Mr. Aitken terms "the terrible spectre of confiscation," of which our interested opponents make such good use, and which he evidently regards as the chief obstacle to the general acceptance of our proposals and of Henry George's teachings. I for one do not believe this. In any case I would remind Mr. Aitken, and those who agree with him, that the buying up of the whole land of the country is so far removed from the field of practical politics as to justify practical men in classing it amongst impracticable, unrealizable ideals. And manifestly our cause must necessarily suffer if we allow it to be associated in the public mind with any such scheme. On the other hand, thanks to the unceasing efforts of Single Taxers to-day in America, Australia and even in conservative Great Britain, the taxation of land values, the first direct step toward the Single Tax, is well within the field of practical politics, and is daily gaining fresh friends and increased support. True, there is much work yet to be done, many spectres yet to be laid to rest, many real difficulties yet to be overcome. But I, for one, have no doubt but that we should only injure our cause and render our work unnecessarily difficult by coquetting with or advocating any unnecessary, unjust and utterly misleading compensation proposals. And hence, that we should do well unswervingly to persevere along the lines laid down for our guidance by our great master, which have already enabled us powerfully to influence, if not to dominate, the progressive thought of the world.

LONDON, Eng.

By Dr. EDWARD D. BURLEIGH.

Mr Peter Aitken's article on "The Chief Obstacle to the Single Tax and how to Remove it," is curious reading. He plainly sees that landlords have no moral right to "rent," never did have, never could have; that "rent" is rightfully the property of the whole people; that a man's earnings are his own and cannot rightfully be taken from him; and yet he writes a big article to advocate robbing the worker, under the forms of law, to pay "compensation" to landlords for the loss of something they never had any right to, and have been wrongfully appropriating for some hundreds of years. It would seem as if the "compensation," if any, should go in the other direction. Really it is almost impossible to treat the article seriously, especially in view of the fact that, as Mr. Aitken confessed in conversation, the time could never come when compensation could be even claimed, much less granted.

If Single Taxers proposed to "nationalize" the land, to abolish all private titles and let it out in lots to suit, then the question would undoubtedly come up, and claims for compensation would be made by those whose land was taken. But Single Taxers do not propose to nationalize land. They propose to abolish all other taxes and levy a "Single Tax" on the rental value of land. They propose to leave the *form* of land ownership just as it is now; to take away no landlord's land, but merely to require him to pay a tax on it equal to its annual rental value. Every landlord holds his land subject to such taxes as the State may levy on it. Whether the Single Tax were introduced suddenly, as we should like it to be, or gradually, as it is likely to be, there could never come a time when anyone would even think of asking, or paying, "compensation." How could the question ever come up?

Mr. Aitken is anxious, as we all are, to get people to listen to our proposal, and, to do it, he seems to propose a "bunco" game on them, to make them think that the landlords are to be compensated for the loss of their present privilege of appropriating the public property, when he has no idea of ever doing it. And he seems to think that such a scheme would remove "the chief obstacle to the Single Tax."