SINGLE TAX
VS
SOCIALISM.



J. G. MAGUIRE, M. C. JOB HARRIMAN.

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DEBATE

BETWEEN

JAMES G. MAGUIRE, M. C.

AND

JOB HARRIMAN

JUNE 16th, 1895.

Robert T. McIvor occupied the chair and introduced the principals to the debate in the following language:– Ladies and Gentlemen, the first speaker, the Hon. James G. Maguire will have twenty minutes. Mr. Job Harriman will have twenty minutes to reply. Mr. Maguire will have twenty minutes more. Mr. Harriman will then have twenty five minutes and Mr. Maguire will then have five minutes in which to conclude the debate.

The chairman then expressed the desire that the audience would help him to keep good order, and stated that if either of the combatants in the opinion of the audience was winner, neither the one nor the other was likely to have his hopes realized to-morrow, but that we should hope that what is best would be established at an early date, and each work earnestly withthat end in view. He then stated the question:

Affirmed:– That the establishment of the following principles would conflict with the science of political economy and the interests of the race: To replace the system of private capital (i, e. the speculative method of production, regulated on behalf of society only by the free competition of private enterprises) by a system of collective capital, that is, by a method of production which would introduce a unified (social or "collective") organization of national labor, on the basis of collective or common ownership of the means of production by all the members of society.

Hon. James G. Maguire:—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen; A mighty conflict of thought is going on in the world to day agitating the thinking world as it has rarely been agitated before. And in the opinion of the leading thinkers a social change far reaching in its consequences will be the ultimate outcome. In the course of human effort and human progress as they are going on to day,

too many lives are crushed into misery and wretchedness; too many of our fellow men are placed at a disadvantage in the rivalry of life; too much injustice; too much privilege to some and denial of opportunities to others.

Against these recognized evils in the existing social order, the spirit of altruism happily rebels. It is not calculated to tolerate these things; they must go. They must be remodeled so that the vices of which I speak but generally may be eliminated or chaos and disaster must be the ultimate end of what we see progressing before us.

In the conflict against these evils, inspired by the same spirit of altruism, there are two conflicting schools of thought. One represented by the socialists who believe in transforming the entire system of producing and distributing by making these public functions. On the other hand there is a school of individualists who believe in doing away with special privileges, giving to each and every man and woman an equal opportunity in the rivalry of life.

My sympathies, my judgment, my best opinions are with the latter class. And Mr. Harriman is one of the ablest and one of the most sincere and straightforward of the representatives of the other class. Nor would I praise the man and disparage his movement. I do not. Socialism is doing a great work for good in the world; although I believe and hope that it will never accomplish its ultimate purpose. But it is doing a valuable work in arresting the attention of mankind to the miseries and wrongs that accompany the material advancement of to day. I say it is doing an immense work in that direction, and to that point we are entirely agreed.

The modern socialist declares, in accordance with the statement negatived by the proposition before the house to-night, in establishing a collective ownership of all means of production, including machinery and implements of production as well as the resources from which these are to be had. The forming of a great industrial army for the production of such things as shall satisfy the wants of all according to the service rendered by each in their production—That I believe is the method of distribution proposed by the modern socialists. And here let me say like the president of this meeting who also represents the other side of this question, I believe that the honesty of every man who endeavors to present any well considered theory for the amelioration of social wrongs ought to be respected as sincere and honest and ought to be met fairly and frankly without any effort to gain advantage by rhetorical tricks. The contest is valuable when the end is truth,—and truth will at last prevail in spite of all wishes for the triumph of anything but the truth. What is false may gain ascendency for a time, but truth ever struggles upward with the energy of youth.

I would not stay her progress and I will yield to her mandate whenever I know that it is her own. (Applause.)

I assert then that, in all the ages of human progression, man's progress has been along the lines of individual development; that the collective, the aggregate result of individual development has brought the race up to its present high standard; and that there is a differentiation of abilities which can never be brought out except by individual liberty and individual enterprise, allowing each to follow out his own independent career. I say that has been the progress of human history from the beginning to the present time; and I say that whenever in the history of the world any check has been put upon the individual stimulus to self development upon individualist lines, some form of progressive degeneration has set in destructive to the methods which have brought us to our present position. I do not mean with regard to physical strength, but the greater capacity for controlling the forces of nature and shaping natural objects to satisfy the wants of man.

If the socialist system is to be substituted for this individualist system as they call it, then I say that every incentive that springs from self interest in man to progress will be taken away and nothing will be substituted for it.

When self interest assumes the form of greed, locking up nature's storehouse thus interfering with the rights of men to draw from it the satisfaction of their needs, it should be restrained; but that selfishness, that principle of self preservation working to the highest and grandest development of the race, should not be destroyed simply because evils have arisen in the system which has given unjust advantages to some.

What difficulty is before us and what remedy is needed?

In the material progress of the race we find great bodies of the workers of the world displaced by machine developement. We find it difficult to find employment for the idle. Socialism proposes to destroy the entire system of individual effort which has brought us to our present civilization, because of one particular evil which has brought with it all the other evils of which we complain. On the other hand, we propose to take away the privilege under which any man holds more than a fair share of natural opportunites which were intended for all, and which when monopolized makes one man the slave of another.

I say further that there never has been a socialist organization in the world that has justified the claims of the advocates of socialism. I say that no such organization as they propose to make universal among men has ever shown a willingness among its members to fairly perform their duties to society; has never developed a satisfaction with conditions even in a majority of such com-

munity. They have all ended in conflict and ruin, as must all attempts to organize society on any but a natural basis. (Applause.)

Mr. Job Harriman:—Mr. Chairman, The gentleman states the position quite correctly when he says that we are endeavoring to bring about a condition where each and every man will have an equal opportunity with every other man. If we all had equal opportunities we would not be here tonight discussing this question.

As the gentleman has said, all the ages of human progress have been marked with conflicting individual economic interests, i. e. by competition. It is competition which has brought us where we are. In other words ,monopolies, corporations and syndicates are the ripe fruits of competition. It is against the bitterness of this fruit and its cause that we are both protesting to night.

I propose to show that these combinations are absolutely inevitable as long as competition exists; that concentration of power conforms to the science of political economy; and that we cannot avoid it. We can only take advantage of it. As the gentleman says: "It is a part of the great process." We cannot evade the fundamental process of things; statutory laws will not change the course of development.

The reason we have concentration of capital in its present form is because of the wages system which makes possible the monopolization of industries. This combined power supersedes and supplants the single efforts of the individual man. The weaker power must go down before the strong one. These corporations prove this as they entrench themselves behind our laws and mold them as they will. They control so much power which they bring to bear on the organized laws, and reconstruct them to their own advantage.

Why is this so, and what is the remedy?

The gentleman proposes to throw open the natural resources to the laboring men who have been dispossessed. He did not tell us how he was going to do it. But we all know the remedy which he would propose, and that is the reason, probably why he did not state it. He thought it was not necessary to suggest it. I venture that it is the single tax.

Mr. Maguire:—That is right.

Mr. Harriman:—Now I maintain that you cannot free the land with single tax, bnt if you could thus free it even that would not bring about fair competition, and if it should bring competion that, that would not solve the problem.

Henry George tells us that labor produces all wealth; that wages are not drawn from capital but from the products of labor.

I am sure the gentleman will not deny this proposition.

Mr. Maguire:—That is right.

Mr. Harriman: He says that is right, so I can proceed to the logical conclusion of this principle.

If labor produces all wealth, and wages are drawn from the products of labor, then where does the rest of the product go? Why the rest of it becomes capital. That is to say, capital is unpaid labor.

Under competition, if some man or some firm, for instance the Union Iron Works, were to employ a thousand men, making one dollar a day profit from each man's labor, and after years of accumulation, if this amount, which has been with-held from labor, should be invested in Rail Road stocks, my opponent would tell you it would be all right; or if it were invested in a great factory or in Standard Oil stocks, he would sanction the procedure; or if it were invested in the D. O. Mills Building, he would say that it was a legitimate transaction; but if it were invested in the land on which the Mills Building stands he would at once cry, there is the thief, take away from him the unpaid labor, it belongs to the people who produced it.

Now by what process of reasoning does the gentleman conclude that unpaid labor is common property when invested in land, but is not common property when invested in any other thing? The fact that capital is unpaid labor and that it is not the product of any one man but of society, and that it cannot be divided and each part traced to its particular producer, leads us to the conclusion that the total productive capital should be owned in common and used for the benefit of all regardless of what it may be invested in. (Applause.)

As to free competition upon free land; there is a strip of land in this country as free as the air. It is 50 feet wide and 3000 miles long. It reaches from San Francisco to New York. It is the public high-way. Now why in the name of all that is good does not the man, who believes that free land is the only essential thing, take his wheel-barrow or his horse and cart and say to the public, now I am ready to transport freight and passengers to New York, come on with your custom? Why? For the simple reason that he cannot compete with the capital of the Southern Pacific. Answer me, printers, could you set any more type to-morrow, or be able to compete with the type-setting machines of the Examiner office, if the land were made free? Could a man gather forty times as much cotton as he can to day and compete with the cotton picking machines, if the land were free? Could you carry a thousand times as much freight on your back because you walked on free land? Would free land so stimulate the cigar maker that he would be able to compete with the machine which is now doing the work of ten men? Oh, but the gentleman says you

would work upon the land. Would you? There is where you would make your fatal mistake, for you would have also to compete with the machines on the great ranches where six men are now able to cut, thresh and sack one hundred acres of wheat in one day. Could a man single handed, compete with this machine if the land were free? Would not the land be free to the owner of the machine as well as to the man without capital? This is precisely the reason the small farms of the east are being mortgaged. Many thousand farmers have earned and paid for their homes and with the same economy and hard work have been compelled to mortgage them and must eventually lose them. They come into competition with these machines and they cannot sell their produce at the low price at which the capitalists, owning the machines, are able to sell, hence they are compelled to borrow money to make up the deficit. They are caught as producers by their competitors. They are not able to pay even the usual tax, much less the economic rent; so you see that even if you had free land you would still have a competition, not of individual against individual, but of individual against capital.

It is evident, therefore, that equality of opportunity would not, as the gentleman would have you believe, result from single tax. Further, I have shown that single tax would not free the land and, that if land were free, it would not bring about individual competition. Now if we had free land and individual competition what would be the result?

The essence of competition is that one individual shall get more of the goods for which he competes than does his competitor. But if he gets more goods he has the advantage by the difference in the amount he acquires, hence there would come a time in successful competition (and if it were not successful the gentleman's proposition would be a failure) when one would employ the other.

But if I work for you, I do so because there is a profit in it for you, else you would not employ me. Is not that so? Then you have the advantage by virtue of that profit. If a thousand men work for you, you have a still greater advantage, have you not? It matters not in what capacity they work, that profit, the unpaid labor, becomes a power which enables you to monopolize. Why? Because you are continually taking a greater and greater amount of labor power with which you can purchase the best machines and displace labor, as was recently done in a local shoe factory, where such a machine displaced sixteen men and yet the same number of shoes were produced. It is evident therefore that even if we have free land and individual competition that capital would still spring up and continue to monopolize.

Labor power acts just as powerfully whether invested in land or machines.

Socialists argue, therefore, that if the labor power which is invested in land were socialized that it would remove only a part of the trouble. Now if this is true why shouid not the total labor power become a social factor regardless of where it is invested. This seems to the socialist to be a logical conclusion. But the gentleman says that that would be wrong because it would destroy the possibilities of human rivalry. I say no. Whenever men are compelled to spend all their energy to produce either bread or fortunes, they have no time for either honorable rivalry or for proper self development..

The gentleman directed his remarks againt State Socialism. The question as stated this evening does not imply State Socialism. For my part I am not a State Socialist; I am a Social Democrat. State Socialism, like the present state, is founded upon territory, or property, in which case the state is a machine which is used to protect the interests of the propertied classes as against the laboring classes. Whereas, Social Democracy would make all productive capital common property, and give each member of society his pro rata of the total product and an equal voice in its control. (Applause.)

If all society had access to all capital and every member of the community were supplied with food and clothing and every requisite of life, in return for his labor, it would no more destroy man's aspirations or rivalry than it does those of the school boy or the artist or the sculptor or the inventor or any other aspirant in the field of art or science. But by doing away with the hum-drum routine of business life it would afford greater opportunities and incentives than the race has ever known before. (Long continued Applause.)

Mr. Maguire:—The gentleman has made a brilliant argument in support of his, and against Carl Marx's, theory of socialism, which has for many years been accepted as the gospel of socialism. He is a Schaffle Socialist and not one according to Carl Marx. Let us dispose of Carl Marx first and then we will deal with Dr. Schaffle. Schaffle says at page fifty two of his "Quintessence of Socialism" that "Marx's theory represents an impracticable program which leads down to chaos."

The gentleman says that under our system combinations and trusts entrench themselves behind legislation.

A voice:—So they do.

Maguire:—A gentleman here says so they do. How do they do it? Solely by reason of the economic ignorance of the people whose legislation they control. It is begging the question to say that the existing system must be overturned and not merely its vices eradicated because trusts control legislation. I assert, and it is the experience of mankind, that whenever popular sovereignty has

been established the people have it in their power to shape their destinies, and no combinations of capital ever stood in their way. It is all a matter of intellectual development; and that development is going on now, which will put an end to oppression here. And our friends, the Socialists, are helping us, but they are denying the efficacy of the cause which they are helping to promote.

My opponent says combinations drive out individuals. Of course they do, when they are more efficient than individuals in production. (Laughter.) Now you laugh, because you have a different understanding of that than I have. If labor is more efficient in combination to the accomplishment of an end, why should not labor combine. Combination and subdivision of labor are the results of the progress of our time. Co-operative enterprise, voluntary co-operative enterprise, in the production and distribution of wealth is in perfect accord with the highest development of individuality.

Now do not say this is socialism because I will cite Dr. Schaffle against you, who says combinations of this kind are not socialism.

Machinery, says the gentleman, cannot be competed with. Why should men attempt to compete with machines which have done away with so much slavish labor? Why should they? They do so now or starve because natural opportunities are closed against them. Machines are to diminish the hours of toil. Now it is true that the inventions of machinery have not diminished the hours of labor, have not lightened the labor, nor in any way lessened the intensity of the struggle for existence, but have intensified it. They have done so because of the ownership and control of that source from which all our wants are supplied and if left to all would make these machines a blessing to mankind.

The gentleman cries out against the threshing machine which has diminished labor in the production of wheat, and the landlord takes the advantage of the cheapening. It throws numbers of men out of work because the opportunities to labor are closed against them, and they wander away in search of labor and are obliged to underbid those who are working for a bare subsistence and take as wages a yet smaller portion of what they produce. But the remedy is not in the socialization of industries but in the opening of those resources by which they could produce wealth for themselves.

Now as to the ownership of these machines: Their owners are not, as a rule, monopolists. The owner of the thresher depends upon the farmer. He goes to the farmer and offers to do the farmer's work at a lower rate than the farmer can do it himself.

The gentleman says the land would not be free under the single tax system

because they would have to pay a tax for it. Under the single tax system the land would not be taxed but land values. It is in the industry and virtue of every community in which ground rent appears. It is not a burdensome tax; and when the gentleman says a man would not be able to pay it, he suggests to us that it would be well for him to read "Progress and Poverty" again. No land under the single tax system which would not yield a certain margin over certain other land would have to pay a tax. There are farms now which would not have to pay a tax, because they are farms which do not yield a fair margin for taxation. The single tax would simply take away that superior value which attaches to land by reason of its location with regard to the community. It is an equalizer, taking away undue advantages from those who have taken up positions to which the community attributes great value.

Profit to the employer, says the gentleman, is the cause of the employment of men. It is true. Why would men with opportunities free to them go into the employment of others to give profit to them? Does the gentleman not see that the reason that profit is all on one side is simply because, natural opportunities being closed, there is no such thing as freedom of contract among laborers? Does he not see that there is no such thing as real competition in labor, that the difficulty does not lie in the awful evils of competition; but in the fact that fair competition has been destroyed under the present system?

If men had nature's resources open to them, were engaged in production under the inspiration of freedom, ministering to their interests, it would require something more than they were getting in that freedom to induce them to abandon it and go into the employ of any man. Freedom is worth something; freedom is worth everything; and is surrendered only when some exigency involving danger to our lives or to the lives of those we love drives us to abandon it. And under free conditions I say no man would go into employment to give profit to another, but would go into employment to give profit to himself, still retaining his liberty. (Applause.)

Mr. Harriman:—The gentleman has argued the following points:

1. That I am not a Marx Socialist.

2. That the reason monopolists make the laws of a country is because of the ignorance of the people.

3. The effects of machinery upon labor. That machinery would be a blessing if the land were free.

4. That it would be easy to pay the economic rent.

5. That voluntary co-operation is a part of the solution, necessary to aid the single tax.

If they were able to take, for a term of years, the surplus product over and above the wages they have received, then they, also, would be able to combine and use that surplus to buy the machinery necessary for competition.

I asked the gentleman why men, with their wheel-barrows or horses and carts, do not compete with the Southern Pacific on the free strip of land between here and New York, viz. the highway, but he said nothing about it, neither will he refer to it in his next speech.

Again, I did not say that machines were a curse. Socialists never say such things. Why, if they were curses do you think we would try to load ourselves with more of them? I have been here this last half hour trying to impress you men and women with the fact, that unless you take these machines and operate them for yourselves, they will be the means of crushing you; but if you do take them, you can reduce your hours of labor accordingly. My opponent says free or voluntary co-operation will solve this question. I say no! If men unite to run a foundry here and another there, each foundry will compete with the other. Each will try to acquire the greater share of the social wealth. The foundries must compete with each other. They dare not co-operate, for that would be socialism. They dare not pool their interests, for that would be monopoly. Competition between factories is the point beyond which voluntary co-operation can not go. Beyond that is holy ground.

I did not say that one man went to work for another in order to give the other man a profit. What I did say was, that one man hires another in order to make a profit from him. That if he did not make a profit he would not hire him; and that is the essence of all competition. If you have voluntary co-operation you have only a combination which hopes to make a profit from the community. One co-operative enterprise will compete with another in precisely the same way and for the same reason that corporations compete today. Why? Because of the fundamental proposition that labor produces all value, that wages are drawn from the product of labor and not from capital, and that, therefore, when you employ labor you do so in order that you may take the surplus and pour it into your own pocket to swell your own capital. Co-operative enterprises which compete with each other do not, and can not depart from this principle. If the principle is the same, the same results must follow. You do not get away from monopoly with voluntary co-operation.

What we propose is a co-operative common-wealth. The gentleman may say that we want to compel you to co-operate. Do you not see that you are already compelled; that capital compels you; that unless you organize and control the machine others will organize and control you with the machine? Do

you not see that the machine is being placed in various industries, driving you from your positions as laborers, and that you are at their mercy everywhere?

What we want, is to induce men to take the type setting machines, the spindles and looms, the foundries and railroads, the threshers and factories of all descriptions, out of the hands of individuals, and run them in the interest of the commonwealth. We want society to catch the water which runs down the hillsides, turn it onto the dynamo, hitch it up to the factory, then touch the button and watch the wheels go round.

Do you think you would be more miserable were you to take your clutches from your brother's throat? Do you think the birds would cease to warble or the brooks to babble if you did not say to your brother, struggle or starve? Do you think the good things of this world are puddings made of blood drawn from your neighbor's veins? No, no! life is more than a slaughter house. The fountains of life flow with sweeter waters than this. Now as the new civilization presses upon us let us face about. For once in the world's history let mankind join hands. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder against the obstacles of nature, and not against each other. Let us shorten the hours of worry and work, and lengthen the hours of study in art. Let us make it possible for every one to exercise his choice as to the vocation he will follow. Let us raise the level of society, and hence of every individual, instead of wasting our liv in endless petty warfares.

When our homes are secured, when our comfort is not in danger, when old age knows no fear, when the family is safe from want, then will society leave these beastly jungles, as the butterfly its cocoon, and raise itself into a higher atmosphere of a better civilization.

Mr. Maguire:—I assert that in all ages human progress has been along the lines of individual development; that the collective and aggregated result of individual development has brought the race up to its present high standard. The gentleman, in his last remarks, says that it would be no hardship to be compelled to co-operate under the socialistic system, because you are now compelled to your tasks by existing conditions. We would free you from all compulsion which drives you to tasks, that are unsuitable to your tastes, without forcing you to co-operate. I would not have Thomas A. Edison drawn away from the work that pleases him, and set to work driving a street car, as might be determined, under the socialistic system, to be his duty. I would not have Shakespeare set to work keeping books, because it might be determined that that was his duty to society. I would not have men determine in any way, save by their own judgments, desires and tastes, what line of effort they would

engage in, or what line of intellectual development they would pursue.

I would not have men, either, have their tastes in dress, or in any of the other things which men and women consume, determined by society; and particularly women, would I dislike to confine in the matter of fashion to the State's determination of what kind of cloth it would produce and how it would spot it and arrange the parts. I would have the free demand of a free people calling for the satisfaction of their desires, and free producers satisfying their wants.

I would have the agencies of production and exchange made free, and let the rivalry of men generally serve the tastes and the desires and the wants of their fellow-men, and determine what should be the returns of their labor and how their energies should be employed.

If I were looking solely to the matter of bread and butter for the human race, to be produced and distributed most economically, and had no other purpose to serve, socialism would suit that end. It would remove friction and waste and bring all men to a dead level—

Mr. Harriman:—Of opportunity. (Laughter.)

Mr. Maguire:—Yes—of unenterprising equality. Deaden every impulse that drives men on to progress, and you make half the state shirkers of their duty and the other half warring growlers against the shirkers.

I did not say that voluntary co-operation was the remedy for existing conditions. I said that voluntary co-operation in some productions would give the advantages of combination and of subdivision of labor, which it is wise for men to avail themselves of, because production can then be carried on more successfully, and with a greater share to each producer, than by individual effort. I do not say, that that should be the system of production in all things, nor that it would solve the problem. Nothing can solve the present evil, save the removal of its cause. This cause is natural monopoly, which prevents free competition,

Free competiton with monopoly removed is the remedy. (Long continued applause.)

From Schaffle's "Quintessence of [illegible]sm."

"Let us therefore examine the consequences which a sober logical deduction from the main principle of socialism would entail.

In doing so, we find, undoubtedly, that it would bring with it changes of enormous significence and extent in the constitution of social demand. Owners of large incomes of all kinds would have disappeared, and hence the consumption of private luxuries womld be enormously cut down; whereas the system of public institutions would assume far more splendid proportions, and the provisions for the amusement and cultivation of the masses might attain a decidedly higher level.

On the other hand, there is nothing in the main principle of abolition of private ownership in the means of production which would necessitate the disappearance of free demand and free household arrangements, nor yet the destruction of family life and of the freedom of private social intercourse.

A complete and officially organized system of collective production could undoubtedly include at least as thorough a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly statistical registration of the free wants of individuals and of families, as under the present system these effect, each for themselves, by their demand upon the market; and the national production could thus both in respect of quantity and of quality adapt itself to this free demand. In this system we should not expect to find the extraordinary fluctuations of demand which are now of daily occurence, since the standard of consumption would vary very little throughout the community, the proletariat and the plutocracy having alike disappeared. Storage and warehousing arrangements would of course be necessary, to keep the balance between production and consumption, but these exist in the present system in the form of speculative trade-warehouses.

It would no doubt be in the power of the State to check entirely all demand for what seemed injurious by simply not producing it: the vegetarians, Balzer for instance, lean towards socialism for this reason. But to keep the whole commmnity free from adulterated and pernicious goods is no small advantage, and the task of guarding against the abuse of this power (for instance, by unreasonable temperance men) could safely be left to the strong and universally developed sense of individual freedom."

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