

165 South Elliott Pl., Brooklyn, N.Y.,
March 20, 1891.

Dear Sir:

I beg leave to ask your consideration of the following reasons in favor of the adoption of the Single Tax:

In a widely-scattered community business is done at a disadvantage. The merchant is unable to build up a large trade, and furthermore his customers suffer on account of the high prices he is obliged to charge in order to make up for scarcity of business. In a crowded city, on the other hand, the merchant can have a store conveniently reached by thousands of customers. He can transact a large volume of business, sell at much lower prices than he could afford to in a sparsely settled community, and at the same time he can clear larger daily profits. Again, the reduced prices are of course a considerable benefit to the city resident.

Both merchant and customer, therefore, profit by the simple circumstance that population is dense. But before the merchant can build his store, or the resident erect his dwelling, in the expectation of enjoying these benefits, they must first procure suitable locations. In paying for such locations, it is clear that they do not pay for the land itself (since if it were only so much land that the merchant wanted, he could go into the country anywhere and buy for \$10 enough land for his store to stand upon); but what they do in fact pay for is the privilege of enjoying these benefits that accrue from density of population. Buying or renting a location upon which to erect a store or dwelling, is just the same thing as procuring a license to do business or a license to dwell in that neighborhood. The men that own the land on which the population is dense, demand that payment be made solely to themselves for these benefits that are created by density of population.

As population goes on increasing, the more valuable becomes this power of the land-owner to exact tribute from wealth-producers in return for granting them a license to produce wealth. Speculators therefore find it profitable to acquire land, and then wait, like so many dogs-in-the-manger. We virtually offer a premium to those who have the shrewdness to cut off our source of future supplies, by doing which they put themselves in position to extort tribute from those who set out to produce any wealth.

The idea of the Single Tax is to abolish all existing forms of taxation, except the land tax; and furthermore to so alter the land tax (increasing it in cities and decreasing or abolishing it in rural districts) that the public will be the sole recipient of payments for those benefits that are created by density of population;--the money thus received to be devoted to meeting the cost of government.

It is hardly necessary to allude to the good results that would follow from exempting all products of labor from taxation, and destroying all artificial barriers to commerce.

Respectfully yours

B. L. Stickney