Land Tax

by Jeptha Dickey Davis

1887

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Project
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A Graduation Thesis
by
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As taxation has been one of my special economic topics, and the question of land taxation as one of great importance at the present time of deep national consideration. We might properly say, taxation originated with the land tax and the story of Joseph and his brethren presents the first instance of the collection of public revenue. Pharaoh, in the years of plenty, gathered one-fifth of the grain in kind, or in modern phrase, he levied a tax on land of one-fifth per cent of the gross product. The Hebrews collected a tenth of the grain and the fruits of the tree and of the woods. In the German States a land tax has existed in some form or all of them, from the beginning of history and China has from a period beyond the beginning of history, maintained a tax at land payable even yet about one-half unkind. The rate for soil under cultivation varies from 50, one-fifth to 1/3 one third of the gross product, and all buildings pay a ground rent to the government. In Japan, Sango and Political History says, "The land tax even while fixed at 5 per cent was always reduced in lesser years."
Floods, pestilence, and drought; and the tax partly as relief, amount for ten years was 1,659,800l. in the fiscal year 1879-80 the whole amount of taxation was 5,556,000l., of which the land tax yielded 4,200,000l. or a little less than 70%. This shows that even in Japan the greatest tax is on land. The private land which enjoy no exemptions are classified as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>1,348,081</td>
<td>267,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building land</td>
<td>375,812</td>
<td>133,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>547,918</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadows</td>
<td>828,199</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,697,453</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,649,970,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tax derived from the above land was 4,200,000l. for national and 12,000,000l. for local purposes.

In France the land tax has been long from the establishment of the nation. The peasants rebelled against the produce and rent of the royal domain for the revenue. In 1830 the tax was so high on land sale about two years income.

The French sold all of the negroes of the land tax in England. It has existed in all parts of England from the beginning.
of our public revenue. The largest
part of the tax imposed in India by
Great Britain is land tax. The gov-
ernment in India takes place of individual
land lords and the cultivators of the soil
rent their land from the government;
instead of private land revenue. This
system used in India brings out a
point as to whom should the land belong,
which may well be spoken of here. It is
stated by the political economists of to-day,
that the government should own all the
land and rent it out to each person
for a fixed sum, the basis of which I
shall speak of later. The person could
hold it as long as he desired, the rent
paid simply according to a land tax.
By so doing produces holding great tracts
of land and gaining the result of the
enfranchising or the market force of
this land, due to the labor of others, would
be done away with. It would for appear
that there is no real, but simply a
nominal distinction between a land tax
and rent of land has been appropriated
by the government; that the price paid
for the appropriated natural monopoly
is多多 received by the government.
and is termed a land tax. If however the price is paid to a private individual it is termed rent. A tax upon the
rent of land may be either imposed according to a certain canon, every district being valued at a certain rate, which
valuation is not afterwards to be altered, or it may be imposed in such a manner as to vary with every variation in the real
rent of the land and to rise and fall with the improvement or depreciation of its
valuation. The land tax of Great Britain is assessed upon each district according to a certain immovable canon. A tax
upon the rent of land which varies with every variation of the real or which rises and falls according to the
improvement or neglect of cultivation is recommended by the French economists as the most equitable of all taxes.
There upon the produce of land may be levied either in kind or according to certain valuation in money. A tax upon the produce
of land, which is levied in money, may be levied either according to a valuation, which varies with all the valuation of
the market, or according to fixed value. The produce of the farms will
penalties imposed as frugality, it provides a need for the care and thought of dividing time we are trying to create a fund which finds its only remuneration in public service. Again it takes the dollar saved to day here and over again. Every year these penalties are imposed on indebtedness and thrift and not all that get the present penalty but at that of the past also. Should we not lower this around and tax indebtedness and wastefulness and not over price industry. Again there is always an uncertainty in the valuation of such property. It is impossible to determine the valuation as evidenced by looking at it. Prof Cram find the Kears a house in Lawrence costing $200, cash down upon being finished which has never been assessed at $200, while another assessed at $200 in a valuation valuation of 3,500 was shown by the Bell to have cost $300. Now this is no unusual case and I dare say there is not a good sized town in the state of Kansas which has not liberal assessments. The same is true of buildings of all kinds and such improvements as fences, orchards, planted under drains.
and in fact all things which require the beauty and value of a place. Thus a land tax should be levied on the basis of unimproved land. Smith’s farm should be assessed at that amount per acre which unimproved land adjoining him will bring in a fair. Brown’s city lot should be entered as the rolls at the same amount as all unimproved lots next to him. Again we may properly pay land tax to discourage all land speculation. If it cost a man just as much to own a piece of land covered with weeds as with wheat with crops or with corn every one would have crops growing on their land and it would be a settled fact that men would not buy up large tracts of unimproved land to speculate on. They would not take up the land and wait for an advance on the price of property unless advance is always secured by hard tax and self-sacrifice of others. For an illustration of this we can well look at our own - - - - - - - -
nothing, while their wealth has
wrecked and quadrupled. This would
do away with the great cry of land
lack which has begun to echo on our
hears from the ground down country
of Ireland. Every peer of land doubts
would be free of improvement and a
great-increase of land owners who occupy
and cultivate and their own soil.
Each farm would have a good house,
good barns for the shelter of the increase
of cattle, orchards with all kinds of fruit
and in fact a great-increase in
personal property. These people would
be stimulated to obtain their property
and not be burdened by a tax exacted.
Another point in taking land is, that
it is always in sight and cannot be
hidden. Personal property in notes,
bonds, money and jewelry of all kinds
cannot and are hidden at every tax
are recorded. It would have that kind
affect on the people and not prompt
them to cheat the government and their
dues. Again land can be assessed without
sending out a crew of assessors to try
into every nook and corner of a person's
land. Nor be should ever be seen.
The books of the county would show how much each man owned and the value of unimproved land, so that everyone was aware of all persons owning therein. Taking the value of the unimproved land payable and knowing the number of acres each person could be able to sell how much the weight was taxed and all could be open and fair. Again a fair land tax would quicken production because persons would be relieved of a great burden, utility would feel and all manufacturing and commercial enterprises would be stimulated. Every farmer would increase his personal property, that brought him a return, if tax was placed on land. Also if the burden of accumulation was removed the desire to accumulate would become stronger. A land tax would be a direct tax, which is one of the most important steps to be taken in attempting to make a just and pure system of taxation. It is asserted by all of those acquainted with taxation, that a change from the indirect to the direct method would mean a lowering of the national levy by not less than 70,000,000 per annum.
This would make a raising of $78 per
year in the value. Taking the two
States Kansas and New York let us
see the amount of taxes that would
be levied upon each. The States
that I will use are not for this
gear but they will show the actual
working of a tax levied at the actual
value of improved land. Kansas
has about 10,000,000 acres of
valuable land; the actual average value of
improved land is about $3 per
acre. This would make an assessment at $30,000,000; adding to this our estimate
on the basis of improved value about
$5,000,000. making a total of $50,000,000.
New York has about 50,000,000 acres.
The average value of improved land
cannot be less than $500 per acre.
The assessment on New York then would
be $250,000,000; this would add
about $100,000,000 to the total assessment
of $70,000,000. Comparing the assessments
for each state: New York has a larger
number of people, thus the tax burden
is less for each person.
New York about 5,000,000. Of the tail of a large class are very poor. New York does not spend on an average, for each human as would claim it. The government spends more than twice that of Kansas. New York can do to day what we have done in the past out of the continued surplus by Kansas. Enough for state and national taxation, now lets see how it will work out in local taxation. Taking Douglas County, Kansas, I find that the total number of taxable acres of land is 293,143. The actual market value of unimproved land is not $1,900 per acre, generally placed at $3. This would make the assessed real estate inside of cities and towns 234,144. For the city of Lawrence there are 5,388 lots. The value on the basis of unimproved lot is not $5,000. For the various town and village plots, aside from Lawrence, are $839 lots, with an aggregate value of $75,000. Making the total assessed value of the county 3,370,144. This tells about a million dollars that four present notices in which we pretend to exclude all personal property and all improvements on real
estate, we can then see that it is only potential. In conclusion, we must say that a realistic system of taxation is utterly needed. Regulated and managed, a land tax could make the system pliable and would adjust payments more equitably. But far from our present system.

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