

THE RENT OF THE LAND BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE

The HENRY GEORGE STANDARD

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SINGLE TAX IN CALIFORNIA

THE Henry George Standard takes this opportunity to commend heartily the action of the Los Angeles Single Tax League declaring in favor of a program solely for exempting improvements from taxation. The declaration was made in February "Tax Facts," official organ of the League.

The declaration for a mere exemption program by the League is a logical, not to say an honest one, in view of its attitude in previous campaigns and is consistent with its open efforts to defeat The Single Tax Amendment No. 29 at the recent November election. Since the Single Tax is the collection of all ground rent by government for public revenue, the League's action voluntarily reads itself out of The Single Tax Movement in California.

There can be no quarrel because an organization goes on record for that which it really favors and The Henry George Standard wishes the League every success in its chosen field, while at the same time naturally regretting its abandonment of Single Tax propaganda.

Tax Facts in its head lines states a Single Tax measure received 41.6 per cent of the vote polled in California in 1914. It hastens however to admit its error by stating in the text of its article, that the vote in 1914 was on a Home Rule and not a Single Tax measure. The Tax Facts article further states that a Single Tax Amendment in 1922 polled but 19.4 per cent of the total vote, and queries, rather joyfully it would appear: "What cut this vote to less than half in eight years?"

The facts in the case are sufficiently unfortunate, it would seem, to make exaggeration unnecessary, especially by those who claimed to be Single Taxers. Luke North's first Grand Adventure Amendment received 31.1 per cent of the total vote polled in 1916. The vote for Amendment 29 last November was 19.4 per cent of the total (11.7 per cent less, of the total) than the highest vote ever polled for a purely Single Tax Measure. How any Single Taxer can chortle over a decreased vote for his humanitarian principle, is difficult to understand, more especially in view of the fact that there is a bright side to the picture, a drop of 60,943 votes in the

total polled against Amendment 29 as compared with that cast against the Great Adventure Amendment in 1916.

The vote against the Great Adventure then was 576,533; while the opposition to Amendment 29, last November was but 515,590, a decrease of more than 10.5 per cent, notwithstanding the fact that in 1916 the Anti-Single Tax sentiment was unorganized, while in 1922 it was led by the powerful Anti-Single Tax League with a slush fund in excess of \$50,000 at its command.

Brief review of the history of the Single Tax movement in California since 1914 suggests readily the real cause of the decreased Single Tax vote and accounts as well for the falling off in the opposition vote since the Luke North campaign in 1916.

Beginning in 1916 there has been a continued and concerted attack, championed by certain so-called Single Taxers, living outside of California, to defeat every attempt to present the fundamental principle of The Single Tax (collection of all ground rent for public revenue) for consideration by the voters of California. In 1916 money contributed by these so-called Single Taxers was sent into California to defeat the Great Adventure Amendment. This money sent into the State to defeat Single Tax was contributed by an outside organization, now defunct, of which many of the present members of the executive committee of the Los Angeles Single Tax League, were then a part. As a matter of fact there has never been a Single Tax Amendment campaign in California, including that of 1922, in which "outside" money has not been used to defeat Single Tax.

Suddenly complaint is made by the Los Angeles Single Tax League, or rather its executive committee, against "outsiders" sending funds into California to HELP the Single Tax. At no time did the League or its officials, object to "outside" money—or even persons—so long as THESE "outsiders" expended their money and energies to DEFEAT the Single Tax.

Although the Los Angeles Single Tax in its official organ, complains that "outsiders" are butting into their preserve in California, many of the members of its executive committee are in reality "carpet-baggers" themselves several of them having come into California since 1916, after which the Single Tax vote began to fall off.

The presence in California of THESE "outsiders," coupled with direct campaigning against their own amendments by alleged Single Taxers suggests a possible explanation of the decreased Single Tax vote since 1916.

The California Great Adventure has in its possession documents signed by a high official of the Los Angeles Single Tax League which contain proof of the insincerity of the League's published statements since last spring. A statement sent out by the League in the early part of 1922, signed by its officers, declared the League would not favor a Single Tax Amendment being put on the ballot in 1922, because it was believed "educational methods" were better than political action. This declaration however omitted to state that the League, through its president, had already entered into an agreement with the then head of the California Great Adventure, to place on the California ballot in 1922 the identical amendment voted on in 1920 and that this agreement would remain in force until after election day in November 1922.

The League's statement also omitted the fact that its officials had not come to the decision in favor of "education" until after they had quarreled with the then president of the California Great Adventure over the division of funds contributed to put a Single Tax Amendment on the California ballot in 1922. In passing, it is interesting to note that THESE funds were contributed by "outsiders" to whom the League and its officials have taken such a sudden dislike. Even as late as the spring of 1922, it is seen, the contributions of Single Taxers who did not live in California, were not regarded by the League as "carpet-baggers."

One clause of the agreement referred to above, provided that after certain designated expenses had been met, the Los Angeles Single Tax League was to receive one-half of the remaining funds contributed by "OUTSIDE" Single Taxers to put an amendment on the California ballot. Once more it is seen the money of "OUTSIDERS" coming into California, is much less obnoxious to officials of the Los Angeles League, than are the "OUTSIDERS" themselves.

Under the terms of the agreement nearly \$700 of the money contributed by Single Taxers outside of California, was taken by the "rational tax reformers" of the Los Angeles Single Tax League and used to defeat the purpose for which

it was contributed, as the League did all in its power to prevent votes being polled for The Single Tax Amendment No. 29. That this action of the League was sanctioned by its executive committee is emphasized by the fact that one of the speakers elected to address the League's "LOOKING AHEAD" dinner held in Los Angeles following the November election, boldly announced he had voted against Amendment No. 29. Although nearly every member of the League's executive committee was present, the speaker was not rebuked, in fact some of those present applauded the declaration. Another speaker at the dinner declared that together with Socialism the Single Tax is dead.

This review of the history of Single Tax movements in California during the last six years, suggests, to the mind of even the least analytical, some of the reasons WHY the Single Tax vote has fallen off. No query is made by these self-styled "champions" of the cause as to WHY the vote AGAINST the Single Tax Amendments also has dropped behind in the last three campaigns. Had they investigated they would have learned it was due solely to the active political campaigns conducted by The Great Adventure that the Anti-Single Tax vote was cut down from 576,533 in 1916 to 515,590 in 1922. EVERY PERSON NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSED TO THE SINGLE TAX IS A POTENTIAL SUPPORTER OF THE MOVEMENT IF HE BE BUT WISELY APPROACHED.

Should the above be unconvincing as to the real WHY the Single Tax vote in California has fallen off since 1916, there are a few other reasons contained in the documents referred to earlier in the article, that might throw further light on the subject.

KEEPING HISTORY STRAIGHT

By LONA INGHAM ROBINSON

"Why did a single tax measure poll 41.6% of California votes in 1914 and only 19.4% in 1922?" asks Stoughton Cooley recently in a Tax Facts editorial endorsed by the executive committee of the Los Angeles Single Tax League. He admits in another paragraph that the 1914 bill was for Home Rule in taxation; and a prominent Home Rule advocate in November, 1915, said: "I know hundreds of voters who are even OPPOSED to Single Tax, who would vote for a Home Rule bill." So probably the vote of 1916 on a Single Tax bill merely lost the votes of OPPONENTS of Single Tax, some 7,000.

Mr. Cooley, only a two-year dweller in California, now records: "The popularity of this movement grew by leaps and bounds . . . under that wise leadership it would have triumphed in a short time." Well, Colorado in 1914, already had Home Rule in taxation, and it has neither leaped nor bounded since the disastrous attempt of Pueblo to get municipal Single Tax some eight years ago.

"But," goes on Mr. Cooley, the control of the movement fell into the hands of extremists, theorists and doctrinaires who delighted in strange doctrines and in flouting conventionalities." We gladly share with Henry George the honor of all these epithets so often hurled at him, and admit our delight in his "strange doctrines" and in our campaigns to make them less strange, even though we do flout one of the oldest conventionalities in the world—land monopoly.

"These new leaders," he continues, "backed by money from outside the state, discarded the Home Rule measure," etc., but omits to add what was public knowledge at the time, that both Home Rule campaigns were not only "backed by money from outside," but were organized by "outsiders" who appointed the "wise leaders" and fixed their salaries—\$2400 a year.

"But enough old friends remained with the movement," goes on the editor, "to carry the vote to 260,332 in 1916." This should read: When the Home Rule group, though still "backed by outsiders" in 1916, failed to secure enough signatures to get on the ballot (while the Luke North campaign was getting 135,000) the Home Rule leaders not only did NOT "remain with the movement" but fought it throughout the whole campaign. For one instance: They sent to the Niagara Falls Single Tax Conference a set of most virulent resolutions, signed by a committee of five, urging the conference not to aid nor abet the Great Adventure campaign in any way. Although at the conference the resolutions fell flat, their sponsors took them to the Los Angeles Times and got them printed with the statement that they had been adopted. Just one more instance.

In April, 1917, a convention was held in Atlantic City; in preparation, the managers collected funds and paid Luke North's expenses to come east and tell how he contrived to roll up in 1916 the biggest vote ever polled for Single Tax. The former Home Rule group, now under another name, sent emissaries to Atlantic City to discredit the current Single Tax amendment and one especially to malign Luke North. He set out two weeks in advance and personally urged Single Taxers in Chicago and New York not to contribute to the Great Adventure Campaign; that Luke North was not responsible financially and the like. On the way back he trailed Luke North through several cities, a malignant and falsifying speaker at the various Single Tax meetings called to hear the Great Adventure leader.

But in 1918, with all these ungracious activities, AGAIN this "rational" element failed to get their bill on the ballot, and again turned all their efforts to opposing every move of the Single Tax campaigners. Their hostility, coupled with that of the Anti-Single Taxers and the hysteria of the war year, amply account for the falling off of votes in 1918 to which Mr. Cooley and the Anti-Single Tax League love to refer.

After Luke North's death, soon after election, eastern friends sent a man out to head the Great Adventure campaign for 1920. He was one of the signers to an agreement with the former Home Rule faction to co-operate with them on an exemption amendment. Unfortunately he yielded to the importunities of our former adversaries and gave them our valuable lists of contributors gathered in the two campaigns which these importuners had so bitterly fought. The same group THEN so eager to get a clutch on "outside money," now reproach us for having had it!

The 1920 campaign, both divisions co-operating, failed by 63,638 votes of Luke North's biggest vote. Their two-campaign opposition to Single Tax now proved a boomerang to these late recruits, so, though under a signed agreement to continue the same bill into the campaign of 1922, early in that year they sent out to their now greatly augmented lists, a circular announcing (for various factitious reasons) that there would be no campaign in California that year! The appointed head of the Great Adventure went into Oregon and the National Great Adventure League sent out a man with finances to extemporize a Single Tax campaign—in four months! Mr. Cooley, agent of the Los Angeles League, immediately did all possible to close every likely avenue of propaganda or signature getting. He caused even the corridors of the Labor Temple to be closed against solicitors for names. I, myself, was turned out of these corridors which never before had been closed to Single Tax workers. I was told by the custodian that "the regular Single Taxers did not want a campaign this year." Regular indeed! They had engaged in only one campaign since 1914, and now, with a bill of their own already agreed upon for 1922, they closed up shop! But true to their traditional tactics, they must fight whatever Single Tax bill got on the ballot! They themselves, alienated Union Labor officials against the Single Tax campaign, and now accuse US of having "alienated organized labor." THEY openly tried to keep down the Single Tax vote of 1922, and now accuse US for the loss of votes. But why does the editor omit these things from Tax Facts? Is it because our friends whose names he has, are, as he says, "too far from the scene to understand the local situation?"

Now the division between Single Taxers in California is not merely local and accidental; it is general and organic. It is the world-wide gulf between those who would establish the new (economic justice) and those who fear it will come too quickly. Help is needed only to usher in the new. Millions are always ready to help hang on to the old, and make a good job.

The "rationalists" constantly fear that Henry George's chief tenets will be breathed aloud. But the cat has been let too far out of the bag to conceal her now. If you try, the Antis shout her on the house-tops and accuse you of trickery and concealment of the truth.

"But in 1910 Vancouver adopted a very much modified form of Single Tax. (Exemption of improvements from taxation.)

"Many see the evil of the present system, but are afraid to try the remedy (Single Tax). It is morally right, they say, but it is impractical. It would disturb business conditions. But WE should hesitate to believe that God has made the right impossible to put into practice, IF IT IS RIGHT IT IS PRACTICAL—if not, the Creator has given us a problem to solve which has no solution." (William C. De Mille, 1920.)