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JOSEPH FELS FUND BULLETIN

BLIMYER BUILDING

Monthly Information for Contributors to THE FELS FUND and Single Taxers Generally

PUBLISHED BY THE FELS FUND COMMISSION

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THE NEXT CONFERENCE.

After correspondence with workers in different parts of the country the Commission has decided to call the next conference at Niagara Falls, N. Y., on August 19 to 21. Canadian Single Taxers have under consideration a conference at Niagara, Ontario, across the river, and this makes an international meeting among the possibilities.

CALIFORNIA.

California Single Taxers have definitely decided to support both propositions which are to be placed on the ballot. One initiated by the Home Rule in Taxation League provides for a measure in accordance with that name. The other initiated by the Los Angeles Single Tax League, provides for State-wide Single Tax. The following letter to the former organization from Congressman Nolan is of interest:

"I appreciate the fact that your League will have no easy task in securing the seventy-five thousand signatures necessary to place your amendment on the ballot; also, that this will cost considerable money. It is my earnest hope, however, that the labor movement of the State of California, through the State Federation of Labor, the State Building Trades Council, the local and central bodies, and affiliated unions, will respond generously with the moral and financial assistance in this campaign for what I consider the most important proposition that has been placed before the people of the State of California in many years, and one in which the workers generally of our city ought to show a decided interest. If the workers who are desirous of securing homes for themselves, either in the city or out upon the farm, could come to realize the tremendous importance of this amendment for Home Rule in Taxation, they would both individually and collectively bend all of their energies from now until the time when the final vote comes in November to a whirlwind campaign, not alone to secure signatures, but to carry this important amendment.

"You have the free and unrestricted use of my name as an indorsement to this important amendment, and may say to the organized workers of the State of California, of which I am a part, that I heartily indorse this amendment, and trust they will do their share of the work necessary to bring this movement to a successful completion."

That California needs the Single Tax badly is shown in the report, just issued, of the State Commission of Immigration and Housing. The Commission consists of Simon J. Lubin, capitalist; Most Reverend E. J. Hanna, Catholic Archbishop of San Francisco; Mrs. Frank Gibson, a wealthy

social worker; Dr. J. H. McBride, a retired physician, and Paul Scharrenberg, secretary of the State Federation of Labor.

The Commission's findings may be summarized as follows:

"California should comfortably support many times her present population, yet there have been times recently when it seemed as if California was unable to support even her present limited population.

"The explanation lies in the fact that land is obtainable only at excessive prices, or is withheld altogether from the market by those who refuse to sell in the hope that the future will bring a much higher price. To this higher price the owners will contribute nothing in enterprise, industry or investment. This forces up land prices artificially and unnaturally.

"By this means we foster unemployment, yet it is considered legitimate business to purchase land for the avowed purpose of preventing capital and labor from being employed upon it until enormous sums can be extracted for this privilege.

"The evidence seems to show that the men and women of California are tolerating a system that encourages rather than prevents holding and speculating in idle land.

"Possibly some legislation could be devised that would directly break up the large holdings. There are those who contend that a revision of our methods of taxation would serve that end. To transform the latent resources of the State, they say, we must shift the tax burden from improvements on land, such as houses, trees, etc., and from personal property, such as horses, cows, merchandise and other products of labor, to land values.

"Those who look to taxation as the remedy point to the fact that the California assessment rolls show that our tax laws enable the owners of idle, unimproved land to escape with only a nominal, and in many instances a positively ridiculous, low tax. For example, 22,061 acres of Central Pacific lands in Yuba County paid an average tax of 6 cents per acre; 69,008 acres assessed to the same concern in Tehama County paid 7½ cents per acre; 16,000 acres owned by the Agoure interests in Ventura County paid an average of 8½ cents per acre, 13,732 acres assessed to the Southern Pacific Land Company in Tulare County paid an average of 4½ cents per acre.

"So, though good citizens may question the advisability of adopting radical means to pry the land monopolists loose from their holdings, all must agree that the present method of taxation will not do it. However, whether the remedy is in taxation or in some other method, or in a combination of both, the Commission is not yet prepared to say."

The report shows that the Southern Pacific railroad owns in one county 664,830 acres, and in another 642,246 acres, few of which are profitably

used. Taxes on these and many other huge idle tracts are as low in many instances as 6 and 8 cents an acre.

The report is of particular value because it is written from the standpoint of the labor problem—of improving the condition of unskilled workmen and reducing unemployment.

Only one of the members, Paul Scharrenberg, is an avowed Single Taxer. But it is hard to see how the other members can fail to see the same truth that he does. The report offers fine campaign material.

The Los Angeles Single Tax League has issued the following call:

"Immediate action on the most vital issue ever brought before the people of any State or country.

"It takes the heavy tax burden from labor and labor products, from buildings, homes, small shops, business and manufacturing.

"It means that no one be permitted to hold more land than he can put to productive use.

"It means the abolition of poverty and will give to each individual an opportunity to get the full measure of the wealth he creates.

"It means the competition of employers for employes instead of workers bidding against each other for jobs.

"It will shift the burden from labor and industry and place it upon privilege and monopoly, where it belongs.

"The measure is a people's bill, written in plain English, with no purpose to confuse or hide its real intent—a FREE EARTH and FREE MAN.

"If you have not already signed this initiative petition, call at 619 American Bank Building, Second and Spring streets, get a copy and have your neighbors sign it. Phone, Main 4286."

A BIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH FELS.

It is gratifying to announce the forthcoming publication of the authoritative biography, "Joseph Fels: His Life-Work," by Mary Fels. It will prove an important acquisition to the growing shelf of enduring literature of value to the Single Tax propaganda. Its broad, human appeal will secure for it a sympathetic reception by many who are not now interested in our movement, but who, through this story of a man who abandoned money-getting to attack the conditions that permitted him to acquire wealth while others starved, may turn to a study of the potent doctrine that worked this change.

Due space is given to Mr. Fels' personality and career, but the book deals principally with his activities in connection with the Single Tax, vacant land cultivation, intensive agriculture, educational and other experiments in England and America. That his interests were world-wide is attested by his support—he gave himself and his purse—of the Single Tax in every part of the globe.

Mr. Fels traveled so widely that he was known personally to more followers of Henry George than any other member of the clan. Known necessarily, however, only in an offhand way, except to the comparatively few. For his thousands of admirers who met or read of him, this book will answer a thousand questions and bridge the gap between half-knowledge and a true appreciation

founded on vital understanding of the man and the influences which made him.

Having made money in his Fels-Naptha business in this country, and succeeded in establishing his firm's products in the markets of Great Britain, he joined George Lansbury and other radical leaders in England in the Small Holdings, Cultivation of Vacant Lots, and similar movements. His interest in these cost him a mint of money, but was worth it. Out of their failure grew conviction and propaganda fire, optimism and content, and a consecration to the work of showing the whole world that "social complexity is simply the child of social ill" which can and will be adjusted by following natural economic laws.

While "Joseph Fels: His Life-Work" gives an adequate picture of the personality, it is a sketch of the movements which influenced and were influenced by Mr. Fels, especially of the propaganda for the Henry George ideas.

Its circulation amongst intelligent men and women not in the movement, whether of a philanthropic cast of mind or not, will inevitably turn the attention of many of them to the Gateway reform.

The chapters in the book are as follows: The Making of a Business Man. Social and Personal Life. The Situation in England; Farm Colonies: London. Hollesley Bay and Maryland. Why Small Holdings Fail. Political Interests. Home Colonization. Monopoly and the Leisured Class. The Single Tax. The Contest with the Leisured Class. Personal Propaganda. The Fels Fund Commission. Educational Experiments and Suffrage. Later Activities. Personal.

The book contains two portraits of Mr. Fels and is printed and bound in such a way as to justify a higher price, but in order to bring it within easy reach, its price has been fixed at \$1.00. Orders may be sent to The Joseph Fels Fund Commission.

WORLD-WIDE PROGRESS.

Houston's example is teaching the citizens in the rural districts close by, how to deal with the land monopolists. S. B. Boone and J. D. Cook, farmers and school trustees of Alief, Harris County, 15 miles from Houston, appeared before the County Commissioners on May 15 to ask that assessments of land in their school district be increased from \$15 to \$25 an acre. Much of the land in the district, they said, is owned by non-residents who "are in the east, while we are here creating the values. Yet they are unwilling to pay their share of the taxes." These two trustees are going about matters in the right way.

Land speculators in Cleveland's business center were given a rude jolt when County Auditor John A. Zangerle announced on May 19 that their assessments would be increased from \$96,400,000 to \$153,736,000.

South Dakota Republicans nominated Peter Norbeck for Governor on May 23, by an overwhelming vote. Mr. Norbeck's position on the tax question was explained by him as follows:

"Under the present system of taxation, the burden of taxes falls most heavily upon the man who improves his property; improvements on real property should not be discouraged by excessive taxation. The home builder should be encouraged."

Iowa Democrats nominated for Governor on June 6, E. T. Meredith, editor of *Successful Farming*, published at Des Moines. Mr. Meredith's position on taxation is sound and his paper is a strong educational force among the farmers of the Mississippi valley.

With George L. Record as a candidate for the New Jersey Republican nomination for Governor, and Charles O'Connor Hennessy as a candidate for the Democratic, it looked as though a situation were possible that would make it hard for voters with up-to-date ideas to lose, no matter who might be elected. But unfortunately a break-down in health has forced Mr. Hennessy to withdraw. The Republican party of New Jersey still has a chance to pick out a candidate worth voting for. That candidate is George L. Record.

Nova Scotia has taken a long step forward. A bill just passed the legislature abolishes personal property taxes. Furthermore, land and improvements are to be assessed separately and next year the tax rate on improvements will be reduced 25 per cent. That is a good beginning for Eastern Canada. The credit for this victory belongs to a woman, Mrs. E. M. Murray, of Halifax.

President Gonzalez of Costa Rica, in a letter to the Argentine Single Tax League, says that the time has come to consider "the course most ample and rational for a system of taxation and at present this recommendation (the Single Tax) excites our sincere enthusiasm."

The city of Jujuy, Argentine, has adopted the land value tax for local purposes.

The City Council of Sydney, Australia, voted on April 13 to impose all local taxation on land values. Sydney has a population of over 700,000, and is so far the largest city in the world to apply the system.

A general valuation of all land in Denmark has been ordered by the National Parliament.

OPENING PUEBLO'S EYES.

Full of good stuff is the *Pueblo Single Tax Bulletin*, issued by the *Pueblo, Colorado, Single Tax League*. It keeps the voters posted on what they have lost through the fraudulent election that robbed them of local Single Tax. Some extracts follow:

"Home Owners in Pueblo are paying higher taxes than they did last year. The *Pueblo Single Tax League* told the voters of this city that higher taxes on homes would follow a return to the old system of taxation. We told you the truth.

"Supporters of the old system promised lower taxes on homes—especially small homes. Your tax bills prove that the big vacant lot speculators did not tell you the truth. Their promises are not being fulfilled.

"The revenue this year is practically the same as last, except the public utility taxes and therefore there is no necessity of higher taxes on homes.

"The tax eaters are trying to put over two bluffs—one that taxes on homes are higher because of increased State taxes. The other that high taxes result from loss of the liquor revenue.

"Both bluffs are subjects for laughter because increase in the State levy is less than three-fourths of one mill, and because the liquor revenue is not replaced from any source save to the extent of \$984, as noted.

"The increase in the State taxes amounts to one dollar in every thirty-nine dollars of your tax bill. A tax bill of \$10.00 is raised to \$10.26 by this extra State tax.

"Does this increase in State taxes explain the tax bill of Sarah E. Chapman, 229 W. Twelfth street? Of her bill of \$409.01, \$10.49 is due to the increase in State taxes. Under Single Tax her bill would be \$322.09. Does \$10.49 make clear the difference between \$409.01 and \$322.09, or is \$86.92 required?

Mrs. Chapman's property is valued, for lot, \$3,040; for improvement, \$11,000; for personalty, \$570. Total, \$14,610.

"Does the increase in State taxes explain the tax bill of Anna L. Brown, 3 Pitkin Place? Her bill is \$186.23. The State increase is \$4.78. Under Single Tax her bill would be \$123.89, a saving of \$62.34.

"Her assessment is for lot, \$560; for building, \$4,900; for personalty, \$1,200.

"Before the election last fall we advised Mrs. Brown that her tax for this year under Single Tax would be for the city \$17.48, and for the whole bill, \$114.86. Her actual city tax, if Single Tax had been retained, would be \$18.79, and her total tax \$123.89. We advised her that the old system would place her city taxes at \$76.56, and her total tax at \$173.94. Her city tax is \$82.00, and her whole bill is \$186.23.

"In other words we told her that she would save \$50.05 by Single Tax. The figures show that she would have saved \$62.34.

"In nearly every case the benefit of Single Tax to home owners would be greater than we claimed."

While small home owners are paying more, land speculators pay less. The *Pueblo Realty Company*, for instance, a Rockefeller concern, pays nearly \$7,000 less on more than 1,400 empty lots than it would have paid had the Single Tax law remained in force. A number of other examples are given and the following comment offered:

"Instead of tamely submitting to these intentional and injurious discriminations, *Pueblo* home owners have the power to establish an honest system of taxation. A change of a trifle over

100 in the vote of last fall would have eliminated the possibility of serious results from these unfair impositions of tax burdens."

NEWS NOTES.

The Rhode Island Tax Reform Association, of which ex-Governor Lucius F. C. Garvin, of Lonsdale, is president, has a long list of able speakers from which organizations desiring talks on matters of public interest may be supplied.

Sales of Louis Wallis' latest work, "The Struggle for Justice," have been so great as to call for a new edition. Five thousand copies have been ordered in Pittsburgh alone.

THE PRESS BUREAU AND THE UNIVERSITIES.

The University of Illinois Library.

Phineas L. Windsor, Librarian.

F. K. W. Drury, Assistant Librarian.

Urbana, Ill., May 4, 1916.

Mr. Daniel Kiefer, Chairman, The Joseph Fels Fund of America, Cincinnati, Ohio:

My Dear Sir—I have received your letter of May 3, enclosing one copy each of your Press Bureau articles, Nos. 902 and 914. In the letter you ask what use we make of these articles. We keep a file of them which is classified on our shelves with similar literature and which is available for use by any of the students or professors who are going thoroughly into the subject of taxation. In general we are not in the habit of displaying such material in our reading rooms conspicuously, but rather of gathering it into some convenient place for more serious study. The library receives a very large number of rather timely publications on this and other questions, and find that when we have such a large amount of it, there is a very decided value to the collection for purposes of serious study.

Very truly yours,

P. L. WINDSOR.

Library of Princeton University.

Princeton, N. J., May 3, 1916.

Dear Sir—The Library of Princeton University desires to complete, as far as is possible, its set of leaflets issued by the American Economic League of Cincinnati, Ohio, and requests that, if you are able, you will favor us with what is lacking in our set.

Very truly yours,

C. MARTINS.

The Library already has the following:

Numbers as recorded on sheets 1 and 2 enclosed.

The Library lacks 119 numbers, as recorded on sheets 1 and 2 enclosed.

THE SPREADING LIGHT.

I attended the Biennial of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in New York, and devoted the three minutes granted me at a Conference of the Industrial and Social Department to showing how the Land Value Tax would solve

the housing problem of the District of Columbia, and how the closing of certain alleys under present system of taxation would only drive the inhabitants of such alleys into other congested districts to more than likely even higher rents.

I spent Friday last at Ellis Island, where Mr. Howe gave a good Single Tax talk to something like 400 men and women visitors. His talk was heartily applauded. Dr. Hussey, of Orange, was distributing Single Tax literature.

A great many of the speakers on social conditions seemed to see very clearly that the monopolization of land was at the bottom of all social ills. Some, I feel sure, did see how to restore just conditions. I am going to send you names and addresses of those I feel you should communicate with.

JESSIE L. LANE.

WHILE THEY LAST.

Ready to mail under Congressman Warren Worth Bailey's frank, and no charge for the pamphlet, speeches by Mr. Bailey, quoting a chapter from Ring's "Problem of the Unemployed," and the chapter entitled, "The American Farmer," from Henry George's "Social Problems."

You who are desirous of reaching the farmers with unanswerable arguments, should send for as many of this pamphlet, or send us the names of those whom you would like have receive a copy of it. Address, The Joseph Fels Fund Commission, 76-79 Blymyer Building, Cincinnati, Ohio.

A CONTRAST.

THE RIGHT VIEW.

I have long felt that the Joseph Fels Fund aims at the root of our social ills and that most charitable movements do not. However, there was a special impulse that is making me send now, this week, instead of putting it off longer, and that was a strong appeal from the pulpit last Sunday for war sufferers. God knows their plight is awful; I doubt if those who give the last penny they can spare feel more sorry for them than do Single Taxers. But it seems to me that many will give to relieve present suffering, while comparatively few will give to an unspectacular effort to prevent its recurrence. Hence my check today.

ELLEN A. FREEMAN.

Troy, N. Y., May 30.

CONFUSES RESTITUTION WITH ROBBERY.

Jacksonville, Texas,

May 12.

I can not approve, much less send money, to promote a scheme that has for its object robbery by any method whatever. When I get ready to endorse the methods of the James brothers and Cole Younger of by-gone days I can half-way endorse yours, though the handits' methods were the more honorable of the two. Just say to your dupes that they can, by honest labor acquire all the land they want here in Texas. This is the way it was done by the honest land owners of the United States. Go to work, brother and you will feel better.

J. A. TEMPLETON.

NEW ENGLAND'S EFFECTIVE WORKERS.

From the Massachusetts Single Tax League comes a remittance for 16 new and 206 renewed subscriptions. From the Rhode Island Tax Reform Association comes a remittance to send The Bulletin to 165 ministers of Providence, which, by the way, is not the first time that organization has sent a classified list. These New England organizations know how to do effective work.