

JOSEPH FELS FUND BULLETIN

BLYMVER BUILDING

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

PUBLISHED BY JOSEPH FELS FUND COMMISSION

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KEEP THE WHEELS MOVING.

Remember that single tax work can only be kept going when given adequate financial support, and the Joseph Fels Fund has been established to secure it. Mrs. Fels and some others are giving their share. Are you giving yours? If not, now is the time to begin.

AN ELECTION SUMMARY.

A number of important referendum votes were taken at the elections of this year. Questions of taxation were voted on in Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Ohio and California. Massachusetts approved an amendment that will allow an income tax, and includes a tax on future unearned increment. New York rejected a reactionary proposal that seems to have been intended to block the efforts of the Lower Rents Society to secure untaxing of buildings in New York City. Maryland adopted an amendment allowing classification of property for taxation by the State and by counties. Ohio rejected a measure to exempt bonds from taxation and to continue taxation of other personal property as before. California snuffed under a reactionary tax amendment. Wherever a State-wide vote was taken on taxation matters it appears that reactionary proposals were rejected and progressive measures adopted. In matters other than taxation some progressive proposals were rejected, but no State rejected a measure of that kind which it had already tried, while all reactionary proposals were defeated.

These referendums are the really important features of an election. When the results are right on these questions, or when they show progress, it becomes a matter of little consequence as to results on contests for office.

PUEBLO'S MISFORTUNE.

By a majority of 213 Pueblo repealed the single tax amendment to the city charter on November 2. The vote was 3,255 for repeal and 3,042 against. Renewed experience with the old system will alone be enough to overcome so small a majority by the time that another vote on the matter may be taken. But in the meantime the city must suffer the result of its mistake.

The single tax amendment was adopted in 1913. It carried by a vote of 2,711 in favor to 2,171 against. The result this year shows an increase of

331 in the single tax vote in spite of defeat. The measure provided for 50 per cent exemption of improvements during 1915 and 99 per cent exemption for 1916 and thereafter. This provision for gradual reduction enabled a hostile assessor to so misapply the law as to discredit it. The Pueblo Single Tax League exposed many glaring cases of under-assessment of land and over-assessment of improvements, so arranged as to prejudice small home-owners against the law. This would have been changed had the law been allowed to remain in force until the 99 per cent exemption had gone into effect. Undoubtedly the opposition realized this. With improvements assessed at but 1 per cent, it would have been impossible, even for the most hostile assessor, to manipulate assessments as to deceive any one. It consequently appeared imperative to the opposition to move for repeal before the full exemption could be applied.

Accordingly, at the latest moment allowed, an initiative petition for repeal was filed. Of course, it was backed by money and the support of such interests as Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Yet, in spite of the tremendous exertions of these powerful forces, and in spite of widespread misunderstanding, which local single-taxers did not have time to correct, a repeal majority of 213 was all that could be mustered. Pueblo will repair this mistake in the near future.

AN INTERESTING REPORT.

A valuable report is that of Prof. Robert Murray Haig, of Columbia University, to Mayor Mitchel's Committee on Taxation. The report contains much information concerning the incidence of taxation in New York City. It also gives figures showing how different kinds of property in different parts of the city would be affected by cutting in half assessment of improvements and by reducing these assessments 99 per cent.

The fact that Prof. Haig is not a Single Taxer makes his figures all the better to quote, since he can not be charged with being influenced by preconceived notions. Whatever Mayor Mitchel's committee may do about the matter, the report seems to furnish a lot of material which can be profitably used by Single Taxers, even though Prof. Haig may not be aware of it.

SINGLE TAX IN NEW ZEALAND.

A RECORD OF PROGRESS.

1. What has been done in New Zealand in the way of propaganda?

The Auckland Anti-Poverty Society was started by Auckland single-taxers in 1887. It is now known as the New Zealand Land Values League, with a branch in each of the four big cities—Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

Sir George Grey—"New Zealand's Grand Old Man"—for some years held the post of President of the Anti-Poverty Society, with Mr. Edward Withy as Acting President. For years also the Hon. George Fowlds has acted as President of the league. In 1900 a monthly paper, *The Liberator*, was established, and 5,000 copies have been printed and distributed monthly ever since. This paper has undoubtedly done much to popularize our views and to co-ordinate the movement.

In 1910, chiefly owing to the generosity of Mr. Jos. Fels in subsidizing our income to the extent of pound for pound, a lecturer and organizer for the Land Values League was brought out from England and held that position until the outbreak of the war, addressing many meetings up and down the Dominion, organizing campaigns for rating on unimproved values, keeping up constant newspaper correspondence, and writing a "Land and Labor" column which appeared each week in four or five of the leading journals.

2. What concrete results have been appealed?

In 1878, under the Premiership of Sir George Grey, the Hon. John Ballance imposed a land tax of a half-penny in the pound, but the privileged classes rallied desperately, ousted Sir George Grey from office and repealed the land tax the following year, before it had time to make itself felt. Eleven years of Toryism and a general property tax followed. But at the close of 1890 the first election under "one man, one vote," took place; the Tories were routed, a Ballance-Grey Ministry took their place, the property tax was repealed, and a land tax of one penny in the pound, with the exemption up to £500, was imposed in its stead. Under this measure improvements were only exempt from taxation up to £30,000, but in 1893 the tax on improvements was abolished. In 1895, in 1900, and again in 1907, substantial reductions were made in our customs tariff. It is estimated that in 1913 the saving to the people, resulting from the tariff reductions in 1900 and 1907, totaled upwards of £750,000, and that, allowing only 50 per cent for wholesalers' and retailers' profits on the taxes, etc., would mean a total relief of over one million sterling per year. In addition to the ordinary land tax of one penny in the pound, a graduated land tax is also levied where the unimproved value of land held by a single individual exceeds £5,000. This tax ranges up to 5 5-6d in the pound for land with an unimproved value in excess of £200,000. The graduated tax is increased by 50 per cent in the case of absentees, but the additional absentee tax does not apply to companies.

In 1896 a measure—the Rating on Unimproved Values Act—was passed, enabling the ratepayers in cities, boroughs, counties, etc., by initiative petition and referendum vote, to exempt improvements

from taxation, and to rate land values only, except in respect of water rates, lighting rates, sewerage rates and hospital and charitable aid rates. But in 1911 the Act was extended to apply to all local rates.

The rating of unimproved values has now been adopted by 61 boroughs (including the cities of Wellington and Christchurch), 34 counties, and 40 lesser authorities (town boards, road boards, etc.), making 135 in all. Twenty-nine of these levy the whole of their rates on the unimproved value alone.

The national land tax yields £767,451 a year (including the graduated and absentee taxes, £258,135), or 12.97 per cent of our total tax revenue of £5,918,034. It is estimated that, roughly, one-third of our local tax revenue of £1,968,767 is derived from unimproved land values.

3. What results are in sight for the future?

In spite of the war, one local authority after another is being compelled, by the initiative and referendum, to adopt rating on unimproved values, and wherever it is carried since 1911 it applies to all rates.

The prospect of a war tax, and the increasingly high cost of living, keep the question of taxation ever before the eyes of the people. Both sections of the Labor Party demand a further reduction of the customs tax on necessities of life, and a corresponding increase on the land tax; the United Labor party demanding an increase of one penny in the pound, and the Federation of Labor an increase of two pence in the pound on the ordinary land tax.—*The Liberator*, Auckland, New Zealand.

ALMOST A SINGLE TAX STORY.

A story that Single Taxers will enjoy is "Destiny," by Carl Mattison Chapin, in the November issue of *The American* magazine. The author makes one bad mistake, which leads him to an unreasonable end, and spoils the moral. This is to be regretted. With the error corrected, "Destiny" would have made a splendid single tax story, and a valuable addition to the literature of the movement.

MORE FIRE TRAGEDIES DUE IN NEW YORK.

Another factory fire in New York on November 6 has resulted in burning to death a number of working girls. There is widespread indignation and horror, of course. There will probably be an investigation. The owners of the building have already been arrested. But nothing effective will be done to prevent other horrors of the same kind—if New York City's landed interests have their way.

What workers need most to assure safety in working conditions is economic freedom. That gained, they will make their own terms about conditions of employment, and may be trusted to look after safety in a much better way than any government inspector can look for them. Economic freedom may seem far off, but measures that will bring it nearer are live issues in the politics of New York City. The Lower Rents Society is pressing for a referendum on a measure that will result in a very slight advance toward better conditions. They want a vote taken on untaxing of buildings for local pur-

poses. If adopted, that will to some extent encourage the erection of more and better buildings. The tax on buildings checks building operations. The Lower Rents Society would remove it. Light taxation of land values encourages withholding of land from use. The Lower Rents Society would have such taxes made heavier. That would not only encourage more and better building, but would increase demand for laborers and tend to put laborers in a better position to insist on safe conditions in their place of employment.

But New York's landed interests will not permit a referendum on even so mild a change. They have so far prevented docile legislatures from adopting the necessary legislation. As a result of their opposition, congestion of population continues; tuberculosis is constantly being bred and spread in the slums, and thousands of babies die every summer for lack of fresh air. As another result, fire traps are being used for factories, and occasionally there is a Triangle or a Diamond tragedy.

If the workers of New York City don't want so many of their babies to die prematurely or so many of their daughters to be burned in fire traps, they must overthrow the monopolistic institutions, whose beneficiaries block all reform.

When the Lower Rents Society starts with its next campaign, let the workers take note that in opposing its efforts, New York's landed interests will be preparing the way for more such slaughters of workers as the one that is for the moment exciting such horror.

KEIR HARDIE'S GREATEST WORK.

Not the least of the many services which the late Keir Hardie performed for humanity was his arousing to activity of Joseph Fels. In the American Magazine of October, 1910, Lincoln Steffens reported Mr. Fels' account of that occurrence as follows:

"I've been a Single Taxer ever since I read George's books. I've seen the cat for years. But I didn't do much till I was converted. And, strange to say, I was converted by a Socialist. Single Taxers and Socialists don't agree. Too often they fight. But it was Keir Hardie who converted me to the Single Tax, or, as I prefer to call it, Christianity. I came home on a ship with him once and I noticed that he never thought of himself. We were together all the time, all those long days at sea, and we talked about England, America, politics, business—everything; and I talked and I thought of myself. But Hardie didn't talk of himself and I could see that he never thought of Keir Hardie. He was for men. Well, that did for me. I saw that I was nothing and that I was doing nothing compared with a man like that. He saw and I saw, but he worked. He did things, and I saw that that made him a man, a happy man and a servant of mankind. So I decided to go to work, forget myself and get things done."

Joseph Fels work goes on, although physically he is no longer with us. And to Keir Hardie belongs the credit of having set the great work in motion. Let that credit be remembered.

LABOR AND THE WAR.

The following letter was sent by Mrs. Fels to every member of the recent Trade Union Congress of Great Britain:

"On the occasion of your Annual Trade Union Congress some time ago, my husband, Joseph Fels, addressed a letter to each delegate enclosing a copy of "Progress and Poverty," by Henry George, and strongly urged all trade unionists to give the policy laid down by that great teacher their best consideration and support.

"For many years past I have worked with my husband in his endeavors to awaken the peoples of the world on the subject of land values and their taxation. I have been with him in his campaigns in our own country, in Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Italy, and many other countries, in all of which we found the same evil results following the growth of land monopoly. Now he is gone from us, I am striving to carry on his work, which he has left in my charge, and I want to secure your active co-operation.

"I can not on this occasion come to see you personally, though I hope very soon to visit your country again and meet many of you and renew our former friendships. In the meantime your empire is passing through a terrible and trying crisis, and all kinds of schemes are proposed to raise money to defray the cost of the war. I read of proposals to tax wages; to still further tax food and other necessities of life—all of which must result in increasing the cost of living. I read also the terrible story that 100,000 babies under 1 year of age, and another 100,000 children between the ages of 1 and 15 years, die annually in your country, and that these children die from preventable causes. I understand, too, that it is proposed that soldiers and sailors who are fighting and risking their health and lives for their country are to be trained for emigration when the war is over.

"I beg you, at this congress of yours, to tell the government that this slaughter of children must cease, and that the men who come back from the war shall be found room to live in the land to save which they have risked life itself. The most effective method for securing this is for the Parliament of Britain to at once carry out the principle of taxation of land values, advocated by the Right Hon. D. Lloyd George when Chancellor of the Exchequer. The mineral and other natural resources of Great Britain are the property of the whole people; those who need to use such resources should pay the nation, and the nation alone, for the right to get either coal or other minerals, instead of paying private landlords. The value which population gives to the land of your great cities—indeed, to all land—is a social value, and should be secured and used for public purposes.

"I therefore beg of you to insist that, before any further taxes are placed on labor and industry, your government shall, by means of taxation, secure, without reservation, all social and natural values for the service of the community.

"The effect of a tax on unused land will be to force it into use, and thus prevent the emigration of your people; and a tax on all land values will secure the means for paying the cost of the war without still further impoverishing your wives, mothers and children; and, further, by this means you will be effectively safeguarding the life of the nation.

"I believe land hunger is the cause of all wars, racial and industrial. While you are fighting Germany, my country is fighting monopolies and trusts. Land monopoly is at the root of it all. When the peoples of the world determine that each nation shall really own its land, the red ruin of war will cease.

"I trust you will give this letter your careful consideration, and, wishing your Congress every success, and your country a happy and speedy issue out of all present afflictions and trials, I remain, Sincerely and cordially yours,

MARY FELS.

"P. S.—May I hand you, in explanation of the general principle of land-value taxation, a leaflet written especially by my friend, Mr. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., for a recent annual report of the Federation of Trades Unions, and which met a very favorable reception?"

LOUIS WALLIS ON A LECTURE TOUR.

Louis Wallis, author of "A Sociological Study of the Bible," has started on a propaganda tour of Illinois. Mr. Wallis has a record as a convincing speaker. He has been particularly successful in securing engagements in churches and has spoken from many pulpits. In his tour nearly every place of importance in the state will be covered. He will also be ready to fill engagements outside of Illinois. For full particulars address Hugh Reid, 508 Schiller Building, Chicago.

A TESTIMONIAL.

The same sort of blindness and selfishness that fought at Harrisburg last winter to secure the repeal of Pittsburg's graded tax on buildings are now at work in New York to prevent that State from adopting the progressive principle that the Pittsburg plan embodies. It is a plan which puts the burden of taxation on unimproved land instead of on building. By making the tax on the land relatively twice as heavy as the tax on buildings, it stimulates improvements, but, of course, it displeases the landowner who holds idle land until its value has been multiplied many times by the labor and capital of others. It is a law which will always be unpopular with land unimprovers and speculators.

It is to be hoped the principle will be incorporated in the New York statutes. The question of whether the tax rate on buildings shall be halved, which has made its appearance very regularly before the Legislature at Albany, is to be taken up again next month. The New York Mayor's committee on taxation has announced a series of public hearings, and in the meanwhile Prof. Robert Murray Haig, of Columbia University, has prepared a report on the subject in which he endeavors to show that the system would be of doubtful benefit in New York City because it is "so different." The professor is obliged to concede, however, that the system in its most radical form—namely, the Single Tax—has worked well in Western Canada, where it has been in operation extensively for many years. (Pittsburg has had it for four years.) Prof. Haig makes the significant statement that the exemption of improvements stimulates building, but Dr. Haig states that its having that effect in Canada is no certain evidence that it will have that effect in New York City. With regard to a decrease in rents, there was little experience of value to offer in Western Canada as to the effect of this policy, although rents are lower now than they have been in previous years, owing to the fact that they had been exorbitant.—*Pittsburg Press*.

PUSHING THE WALSH REPORT.

It is good news that comes from Washington, telling of the birth of an organization to work for the recommendations in the Walsh report of the Commission on Industrial Relations. It is to be known as the Industrial Relations Committee.

That the work will be energetically pushed is clear from the fact that among the organizers are Frank P. Walsh, Amos Pinchot, Frederic C. Howe, Bishop Charles D. Williams and other progressive and public-spirited individuals.

The Single Tax is an important part of the recommendations in this report.

FROM A PUEBLO WORKER.

Pueblo, Colo., November 8, 1915.

While they cheated us out in the count, we have won a moral victory. We have educated the public here as to the right of Single Tax. We came within 200 of getting it, according to the juggled figures. The majority of the voters here are for us, despite the most venal campaign that was ever heard of. The enemy had all the newspapers and had the endorsement of the Commerce Club (which voted to put city taxes back on commerce and off vacant lots, which do not contribute a cent toward the maintenance of the club). They circulated about all the lies in the calendar and got the people scared.

Now we can at the next election win with hands down. You see, it takes a certain length of time to get the people thinking about these things.

I can not speak too highly about the work Mr. White did here. He managed the campaign with consummate skill. He is a wonder. Personally, I feel not at all discouraged. We made a good, clean fight. We have gained ground. These things take time, and we are in fine shape right now.

EDWIN B. HAVER.

TRUE NATIONAL DEFENSE.

While the war has set many to arguing about National defense, and the need of an army and navy, Single Taxers are working to get the only sure means of defending the country. The Single Tax will give the masses of the people some tangible thing worth defending. And it will make conditions so that any foreign nation which attacked us would lose far more than it could gain, even if successful from a military point of view. Could a big army or navy offer stronger defense than that? Just economic conditions constitute the only reliable guarantee of security and peace.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, ETC.

Of The Joseph Fels Fund Bulletin, published monthly at Cincinnati, Ohio, required by the Act of August 24, 1912:

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 Members of the Commission.

Known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders, holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.

DANIEL KIEFER.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th day of September, 1915.

CHAS. W. SPICER, Notary Public.

(Seal.) My commission expires January 27, 1918.