

# JOSEPH FELS FUND BULLETIN

BLYMYER BUILDING

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

PUBLISHED BY JOSEPH FELS FUND COMMISSION

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## COMING EVENTS.

The shadow of coming events is seen in such occurrences as the proceedings of the New Jersey Progressive Convention, in the spread of the Houston plan of assessment, in the steadily increasing list of prominent men and influential papers endorsing the Single Tax, and in a general disposition to seriously consider our arguments.

This does not signify by any means that the Single Tax will now come without further effort of the old guard or the new guard. It only means that the work of years has re-made future progress easier. But unless efforts are put forth to increase progress, the easiest of conditions will be of little use. So don't lay back and content yourself with the assurance that no more work is needed. Our opponents are not so lax. They may be depended upon to take advantage of anything like apathy within our ranks and endeavor to retrieve the ground they have lost.

## ONE HELPS WEALTH PRODUCTION, THE OTHER WEALTH GRABBING.

The (San Francisco) Star, August 16.—The agricultural department of the University of California is doing excellent work in preparing young men—and older men—to produce wealth from the soil in the most intelligent and efficient manner. That is good work for the men and good work for the State. Professor Carl Plehn, of the economics department of the University, is doing excellent work for the corporations and the landlords by opposing a change in the tax laws that would take the huge burden of taxation off the men who produce wealth from the soil. Thus is a proper "balance" maintained.

## GOOD FOR ROOSEVELT

"We believe that municipalities should have complete self government as regards all the affairs that are exclusively their own, including the important matter of taxation, and that the burden of municipal taxation should be so shifted as to put the weight of land taxation upon the unearned rise in value of the land itself rather than upon the improvement, the buildings; the effort being to prevent the undue rise of rent."

Extract from article on Progressive Party in Century Magazine, October, 1913, by Theodore Roosevelt.

## RECEIPTS FOR SEPTEMBER.

Why did not your State make a better showing? Are you sure you could not have helped it do so? If you have neglected to do anything that you might have done to that extent, have you not helped the enemy?

State	No. of September Contributors	Amount for September	Total Since December 1
New York	12	\$76.66	\$3,872.07
California	32	191.97	2,176.38
Illinois	17	78.86	1,881.92
New Jersey	5	1,089.75	1,454.60
Pennsylvania	2	7.00	1,315.59
Ohio	12	91.50	1,211.20
Massachusetts	7	18.90	924.45
Colorado	106	426.25	855.05
Washington	1	5.00	450.25
Missouri	...	...	425.95
Texas	2	18.50	299.50
Rhode Island	1	40.80	296.30
District of Columbia	...	...	294.80
Michigan	6	24.00	277.40
Indiana	1	50.00	268.74
Louisiana	1	20.00	235.10
Delaware	6	34.64	220.14
Kentucky	1	2.00	214.75
Minnesota	3	7.90	186.60
Oregon	2	8.50	184.90
Foreign	...	...	144.00
Wisconsin	...	...	125.75
Maryland	2	4.50	104.51
Florida	...	...	102.00
Nebraska	1	1.00	91.00
South Dakota	1	1.00	75.40
Tennessee	...	...	74.40
Iowa	...	...	67.85
Alabama	2	2.75	66.86
Kansas	...	...	52.84
Montana	1	1.00	42.50
Maine	...	...	35.10
Virginia	1	7.00	33.10
Connecticut	...	...	32.50
West Virginia	1	1.00	30.00
New Hampshire	...	...	27.00
North Dakota	...	...	23.25
Arizona	1	3.00	22.00
Arkansas	2	11.00	20.00
New Mexico	...	...	14.50
Idaho	...	...	12.25
Oklahoma	...	...	9.50
Georgia	...	...	6.00
North Carolina	1	3.00	4.00
Mississippi	...	...	3.00
Nevada	...	...	2.00
South Carolina	...	...	2.00
Vermont	...	...	1.00
Total	230	\$2,227.48	\$18,270.00

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### THE PUEBLO CAMPAIGN.

Kansas City, Mo., September 19.

I have just returned from a trip to Colorado, where I went to study conditions with reference to the Single Tax. They appear to me the most favorable of any State in the Union. The heavy vote is in the cities and towns. Next in importance comes the miner's vote, then that of the irrigation farmer. As women vote there the strength of the city and miner vote is nearly doubled. Denver and Grand Junction appear to be Single Tax strongholds. Under a recent amendment to the State Constitution a Home Rule provision giving the cities power to levy taxes for local purposes was enacted. This makes it possible to start with the cities and towns, and as their vote is in the majority, to pass it over the entire State. As the State, county and school taxes are very heavy the good effects of the change will be readily seen when it has been made. I spent a week at Pueblo. Like the fable of the "camel and the tent," Pueblo appears to be the head of the camel, and if it should succeed in poking its head into the tent this fall the whole Single Tax camel will have entered the State tent in a year or two and the other systems of taxation will have been crowded out.

The situation at Pueblo is unique and anomalous. A young single taxer, George J. Knapp by name, without means and without fame enough to reach as far as nearby Denver, quit his job several months ago and started a campaign to take advantage of a city election to be held November 4th of this year. Single-handed and alone he has secured the necessary 2,000 signatures to the petitions. He has copied over 10,000 tax assessments and has computed the changes under the Single Tax, and has sent out over 2,000 statements of them to taxpayers. Being without money and help he appealed to Kansas City and Denver. The Single Taxers here sent up one of their best speakers, Mr. J. W. McCleery, and Denver responded by sending down Mr. J. R. Hermann, their old campaigner.

As nearly as I could judge about 3,000 votes now can be depended upon, but it is necessary to get at least 3,500 more—with only 45 days in which to get them. Quick financial assistance is will be gratefully received—A. A. Whipple, The Public (Chicago).

**The Pueblo campaign is some of the work helped by the Commission.**

### ALL EYES ON PUEBLO.

Millions of people are anxiously watching Pueblo to see if her people will use the power given them by the Home Rule Amendment adopted last fall to throw off the offensive obsolete system of taxation and adopt the Single Tax Amendment to the charter and get down to a sane and honest system of taxation, for Pueblo is the first city in this country that can adopt Single Tax without strings attached to the change.

Manufacturers are ready to come to Pueblo the moment Pueblo enters upon the Single Tax plan, and the writer knows and has talked with a promoter of factories who declares that he can bring

a dozen enterprises within two years after the Single Tax plan is in operation. And this man makes good, for we know of one young city in which he has planted nineteen industries. Shall we try for more factories, or just keep on squatting on the hope that something will turn up.

One of Pueblo's leading boosters says we can not grow any more, because there is nothing to back us up.

Then let us put the Single Tax plan back of us and make Pueblo grow.

If Pueblo will adopt Single Tax you will see 150,000 people here in 1920. This is no idle talk. The foundation is laid for a big city. Now for the filling in of industries. The business houses will follow the factories.

Houston, Texas, has only partially adopted the Single Tax plan, but it is working fine and has put Houston within a year into the first place in population and business, and she is growing faster than any city in this country in proportion to population.

Every person who has given the Single Tax plan consideration is struck with the reasonableness of the scheme, and there is but little doubt it will carry in Pueblo when offered to the voters, as it will be in November.

Let the millions watching Pueblo see that we are alive and the most progressive city in these grand United States.—Pueblo (Colo.) Opinion.

### DENVER TRADE UNIONS FALL IN LINE.

The Denver Trades and Labor Assembly unanimously voted on September 28 to work for adoption of Single Tax. On the following day the Carpenters' Union, the largest union in Denver, voted to follow the lead of other organizations and join the movement also. Organized labor in Colorado has come to realize that the real enemy of labor is land monopoly.

### VICTORY IN NEW JERSEY PROGRESSIVE CONVENTION.

The Progressive party of New Jersey at its State convention on September 30, declared unequivocally for the Single Tax. This is the first declaration of the kind by a great party in New Jersey. The following are quotations from its platform on the subject:

We stand for local self-government or home rule in all municipal affairs, including the matter of taxation and including the power to change, alter or amend its municipal charter upon the vote of the people of the municipality. We believe it is time to attack directly the problem of high and increasing cost of living and to do something definite to prevent the accumulation of enormous fortunes in the hands of a few and the consequent hardship and poverty among the workers of the State. This problem has got to be solved in part by national laws and in part by State laws. There are two forms of privilege by which a few people are enabled to levy toll upon the earnings of the many without rendering any service which can be reached by State laws. The first privilege is the exaction of excessive rates for trolley, gas, electric light and water service by the public utility corporations of the State. These corporations have issued millions of dollars of watered stock, representing no investment of capital or other service, and their charges are sufficient to earn a rate upon this

watered capitalization. This is a clear moral wrong. To cure this evil either each municipality should be authorized to take over and operate any public utility upon just compensation upon the vote of its people or the Public Utility Commission should be required to establish rates limited to a reasonable rate upon the value of the physical property devoted to the public use.

#### Land Value Tax Favored.

The second privilege to be reached by State laws is the land privilege. The value of the land is due to the presence, the growth, the enterprise of all the people. The existing taxing system puts a premium upon speculation in land, which is the holding of land out of use, with the expectation of receiving at some future time an increase in value. This operates to keep land, which is the opportunity of labor, out of use; to make congestion in cities, to crowd the labor market, to reduce wages, to raise rents and generally to restrict authority. The remedy is that all the products of labor, such as buildings and improvements, machinery, household furniture, merchandise, and other personal property, the fencing, ditching and clearing of farm lands, should ultimately be exempt from taxation, and the taxes heretofore raised from this source for municipal, county and State purposes should be raised by increasing the taxes upon the value of the land. This will encourage industry, make it easier to get a home or to establish and carry on a business, and force idle land into use, thus increasing the demand for labor. We favor applying this remedy gradually by a law allowing each municipality upon the vote of its own people to exempt buildings, improvements and personal property from taxation in whole or in part.

We recommend that the tax on buildings and improvements, household furniture, machinery and merchandise and the fencing, ditching and clearing of farm lands be reduced ten per cent a year, and a corresponding increase in the tax rate on land values, until the rate on such improvements is one-half the rate on the land.

Everett P. Colby was nominated at the direct primary over Edmund B. Osborne. Mr. Colby has said he is not a Single Taxer, but he accepts the platform declarations which, whether he knows it or not, makes him for all practical purposes a Single Taxer.

The result is clearly due to the vigorous campaign carried on by Edmund B. Osborne, with the assistance and support of an active band of workers. Mr. Osborne only desired the nomination that he might be helpful in getting his party committed to Single Tax. In this he has succeeded. A substantial victory is his.

#### WHAT THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY SHOULD DO.

Special privilege being wrong, we can not be satisfied with merely mitigating its effects. We can not be content with soothing syrups, pleasant as their effect may sometimes be, nor exhaust our energy on remedies which cannot cure. Our task is to abolish privilege. Unless we stand for this, we stand for nothing that is permanently worth while.

From address of Gifford Pinchot at farewell dinner to Colonel Roosevelt on October 3, in New York City.

#### CALIFORNIA LEAGUE FOR HOME RULE IN TAXATION WANTS YOUR SUPPORT.

All who realize that our present tax system is harmful and unjust—that it places a fine on industry, discourages building, and bears too heavily on legitimate business while fostering unproductive speculation—are earnestly requested to assist in educating the voters on the merits of the Home Rule in Taxation Amendment, which is the first step toward the adoption by each community of a fair and rational system of taxation.

If you are in favor of Home Rule in Taxation, you are invited to enroll as a member of the League, to contribute as liberally as you can, to visit headquarters and attend meetings, to organize meetings in your home or neighborhood, and otherwise actively assist in the work.

The League distributes literature, carries on a large correspondence, holds regular and special meetings, and furnishes speakers for large or small assemblies of inquirers, and—with your co-operation—will carry on a vigorous campaign till the election of November, 1914.

Lend your active support if you can, whatever financial support you are able and your vote and your interest anyway.

This is one of the big things that the Fels Fund is helping.

#### CALIFORNIA DOINGS.

Fall activities are beginning. The executive committee has now before it the eternal question, How best to employ its limited means to secure the largest results? A large attendance at the weekly executive committee meetings is the next desirable thing to a larger income. The personal help and influence of every member of the league is needed. On Tuesdays at noon you eat, don't you? Come and eat with us and talk things over.

And it will only cost you ten cents a year to boost the Fels Fund Bulletin, which ought to be circulating everywhere by the hundreds of thousands. It prints just the news every month that every single taxpayer wants.

Joseph Fels is duplicating every dollar contributed to Single Tax in America. Your dollar is worth two dollars to the league—and the league needs it to combat the Big Interests that are combining to kill the Home Rule Tax Amendment.—Tax Talk (Los Angeles, Cal.).

#### PIEDMONT DOES NOT WAIT FOR HOME RULE.

Houston, Texas, set a good example in assessing land values high and labor values low. Now Piedmont, California, has done the same. Mayor Hugh Craig one year ago raised land value assessments from a low figure to 83 per cent of selling value. Assessments on improvements were reduced to 14½ per cent, and on personal property to 2½ per cent. The big land speculators kicked of course, but Mayor Craig held his ground and the new system went in force. One year's experience has proved so satisfactory that this year the speculators have concluded it best to keep quiet. The small home owners, all of whom have, of course, benefited from the change, would not tolerate a return to the old system. Hence silent, though sullen acquiescence on the part of the wealthy speculators.

The total assessment of Piedmont is between five and six millions. The change in assessment has enabled the town to pay up an indebtedness

of \$11,000, and left a surplus of over \$9,000. A majority of the people are home owners, who realize that Mayor Craig's reforms are a good financial investment.

### WHY DON'T WE?

Tacoma (Wash.) Times, September 11.—Once again we are having the old story in city after city of portable sheds and half-day sessions because there are more kids to be schooled than there are school facilities to take care of them. And everywhere the excuse is the same—not enough money. There would be enough money if the communities were taking what they earn. Walk about town some day and count the vacant lots in speculation for a rise in values. Reflect that the rise, if it comes—and upon the average, in our growing cities, it's sure to come, for every new inhabitant adds to the pressure which forces land values up—will come without the owners of these vacant lots contributing to it. It will be made by the industry of all the people; by the community, just because it's up and doing. Yet who gets it? The community, which creates it? Not at all. By the drones, who let other folks drop it into their extended pockets. If the owner stood on the curb with hat in hand and begged a penny from each passer-by, the process would be the same, except that then the chap who didn't want to contribute needn't, whereas now he can't escape. Just a little of this publicly created wealth now drained into private pockets would, if taken by taxation, provide ample school facilities for all the boys and girls and permit the improvement of our schools until the children would receive better starts in life. Why don't we do it?

### THOUGHTFUL PAPERS JOINING THE PROCESSION.

#### Single Tax Progress.

Harper's Weekly, September 20.—To the disciples of Henry George it seems as if that pioneer's views were not being accepted as readily as they ought to be, but to most others it looks as if they were traveling fast. Like many other creative thoughts, the central idea of Mr. George is influencing the world profoundly, even where it is accepted only as one principle in taxation instead of as the only principle. Progress here and there is constantly observable. Sometimes it is in big changes, and sometimes it is in details such as, for instance, in the fact that Mr. Pastoriza, known in Houston, Texas, as a Single Taxer, was elected Tax Commissioner as a joke. He went a long way, however, toward putting his ideas into effect, and met with such a reception that the practice is starting in many parts of Texas. Mr. Pastoriza is a person of graphic ideas. He put up a sign on two dismal-looking vacant lots, stating that the lots cost him, in 1903, \$370 and that he means to hold them until the increase of population has made them worth \$5,000. "This profit I will get instead of the community who created it, and who would have received it in betterments had we the Single Tax. Read 'Progress and Poverty,' by Henry George." Houston has halved the tax on buildings, and seems as well

pleased with the result as Vancouver is with the establishment of similar taxation ideas there. The heavy taxation of unearned increment is a principle that is undeniably sound, and the slowness of its progress represents that conservatism of the human mind which makes it take a long time to move, even when motion is to its unmistakable advantage.

### THE CAUSE OF PANICS.

Collier's Weekly, August 16.—The vacant-lot industry is not only a very great obstacle to development, but speculation in unimproved land is an extremely dangerous business for any corporation to engage in. It is based on psychology, not production. It is accompanied by a species of insanity, the symptom of which in its collective or mob stage is the real estate boom. Most of the great financial crises of the past century have been preceded by such booms, and there are many reasons for believing that the booms have been the main cause of the panics. . . . But the acquisition of good lands for purposes of improvement is a different thing. . . . Communities are benefited or retarded by real estate operations just in proportion as lands are by them put to their highest use. And all policies relating to land, with reference to corporations of all sorts as well as individuals, should be adopted with that idea in view.

### PITTSBURGH'S GOOD EXAMPLE.

Saturday Evening Post, August 11.—The London Board of Trade's careful investigation showed that workingmen's rents in Pittsburgh were among the highest in the United States, ranging much above Chicago and Philadelphia, for example. Average land values per acre there are only a little less than in New York. But up to two years ago considerable vacant property in the Steel City was obligingly classified as "agricultural lands," and taxed as only about half the rate for land that had been put to use by erecting buildings on it. This legislative inducement to hold vacant lands for speculation while the working population was crowded into congested and very costly quarters was wiped out in 1911. This year Pittsburgh has gone that improvement one better by making the tax rate on land double the rate on buildings—the readjustment to be applied gradually. Vacant land, of course, brings the owner no revenue; but his taxes will be twice what he would have to pay on the same valuation embodied in a revenue-producing building. Hence there will be an inducement to bring all the land in the city into use by putting improvements on it, and that ought to have some effect in preventing a continuous rise in rents. The same expedient should be adopted in every city.

### DO YOU READ THE PUBLIC

If not, here's a good introductory offer—THREE SINGLE TAX BOOKLETS FREE with a 25c subscription.

"The Single Tax: What It Is."—George  
 "The Single Tax and the Farmer."—Shearman,  
 "The Single Tax and the Business Man."—Rusby.

All three booklets and The Public, the paper with the Single Tax point of view, 13 weeks for 25 cents.

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