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JOSEPH FELS FUND BULLETIN

BLYMYER BUILDING

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

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NOW IS THE TIME.

The last few weeks of a political campaign are those wherein work counts most. Many voters can not be interested in an issue until the time to definitely decide thereon is almost at hand. Monopoly's partisans generally wait until election is only three or four weeks off, and then deluge the voters with half-truths and down-right falsehoods, knowing that time to correct the misinformation is short and that opponents are handicapped by lack of funds. It is necessary that our workers be prepared this time to meet these tactics. In order to get about promptly and nail these eleventh hour lies as fast as they are put out, funds are needed. Those who have been putting off their contribution to the Fund must realize that now is the time to send it in, if it is to be of any use in helping to win a victory this fall. So do not delay the good work any longer.

CALIFORNIA'S ENCOURAGING SHOWING.

California primaries show no slackening of the trend toward progressivism. The strength of this is clearly shown in the vote for Congressman William Kent. Kent's name was not printed on any ballot. To vote for him a voter had to write his name on the ticket. More than 11,000 did this whose votes were counted. Many more did so whose votes on some pretext or other were thrown out. In spite of this Kent got the Progressive party nomination, with the Democratic nomination, at the time of this writing, still in doubt. He received about twenty-five per cent. of the Republican vote in addition.

Kent made practically no campaign. He stayed in Washington attending to his duties, leaving his reactionary opponents to do all the shouting.

Congressman Nolan, another one of California's single taxers, received both Progressive and Republican nominations.

California plutocracy is on the run. It must be kept going. The big battle is to be fought in November, and more important than the contest over any office is the one on the constitutional amendment for Home Rule in Taxation. California's monopolistic interests will feel quite

content if they succeed in defeating that, even though every candidate supported by them should fail of election.

SPREADING THE LIGHT.

The following letter, sent to Mayors of California cities, is self explanatory:

CALIFORNIA LEAGUE FOR HOME RULE
IN TAXATION.

San Francisco, Cal.

Dear Sir—From Mr. Daniel Kiefer, of Cincinnati, you will soon receive a copy of Tom L. Johnson's "My Story," with the compliments of Mary Fels, widow of the late Joseph Fels. About a year ago, in acknowledging the receipt of a copy of the book from Joseph Fels, Mayor Ben Campbell, of Houston, Texas, said:

"No man can read Mr. Johnson's book without being impressed with the sincerity and earnestness of the man, and without having a higher and more exalted idea of the efforts and labors put forward by such men for the advancement of the people. It will give all who read it a clearer insight into duties that will be expected of them if they are really to serve the people."

"The work of Mr. Johnson for the upbuilding and improvement of the masses is not yet fully appreciated. The great misfortune is that there are not more spirits like his to help the underdog in the fierce struggle now being waged in every direction, and more especially in our crowded cities."

"The time will come when every municipality that is in the hands of the people will adopt and carry out all of Mr. Johnson's ideas of municipal ownership and government. I would not be without his book in my library for any reasonable consideration."

Hoping that you will read and enjoy "My Story," I remain,

Very truly yours,
CLARENCE E. TOWN,
Secretary.

MISSOURI'S IMPENDING CHOICE.

For the single tax cause the next best thing to a state or locality with the system actually in operation, is a state on which the old predatory general property tax is so firmly fixed that the people are powerless to change it.

The place wherein the single tax is in operation will be so much more prosperous than places not so progressive that no misstatement of opponents will prevail against it. Monopolistic opponents of the single tax are well aware of this and for that reason strenuously oppose applica-

RENEWALS.

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tion of the principle even in places where apparently they have no interest.

The state that will be tied to the general property tax so firmly that it can not get away, will serve as a horrible example—and that is the next best thing for the cause—to an example of progress. Its people will be easy and helpless prey to monopolistic plunderers. It will be a state wherein poverty will spread and wealth concentrate, and as freer communities begin to do away with the evils which this state can not escape, these freer places will attract population from it, leaving the poor old horrible example to die of dry rot, unless its people rebel and forcibly remove the restrictions monopoly has imposed. **Such a horrible example will do much to convince the people of other states of the evil of the general property tax, and of the great importance of leaving the people free in the matter of taxation. Such a horrible example the single tax movement may get this fall.** Selfish and short-sighted predatory interests dominating the legislature of Missouri procured submission of a constitutional amendment to prevent use of the initiative and referendum for any purpose objectionable to them. They specifically mentioned its use for the single tax, for classification of property for taxation and for home rule in taxation, as prohibited subjects. This specific mention, however, was merely to blind the people to the fact that it practically forbids its use for all purposes, except for such things as no one would be interested in opposing.

As far as the interest of the single tax cause in states outside of Missouri is concerned the adoption of this amendment would be a good thing—for reasons already mentioned. But it would be such a misfortune for Missouri that its people are entitled to at least a warning. After that, if they will insist on harkening to the monopolistic crowd that is trying to pull the amendment over, the consequences will be upon their own heads.

The proposed amendment provides that all petitions, whatever their subject may be, must be filed with county clerks four months before election. The county clerks may, if they see fit, hold these petitions thirty days, by which time election day will be only three months off. Then they must lay these petitions before the county courts and these courts must at least three months before election—that is almost as soon as submitted to them—find all signatures therein genuine and if so found, certify them to the Secretary of State. The true intent of this impossible provision was made clear by Senator Owen of Oklahoma, in a speech in the Senate on August 20. Senator Owen said:

"Now, watch carefully! All petitions must be in the hands of county clerks four months before the election. That means in 1914, say, on July 3, with the election on November 3. But the clerk may hold these petitions for thirty days before turning them over to the county court. He can hold them till August 1 to 3, all petitions filed from July 1 to 3. Now, August 3 is the date on which all petitions must be in the hands of the Secretary of State at Jefferson City—that is 'three months before the election'—after being examined and certified by the

county courts. It would be a physical impossibility for the county court to do all this for all petitions filed late in June or early in July, and the history of similar petitions filed in States all over the Union shows that a goodly portion of such petitions are filed shortly before or on the final date set. And even if the people should file their petitions earlier, the power of the county clerk to hold them thirty days would still be a menace and could cause thousands of names to fail to reach the Secretary of State in time.

"The county court could easily refuse to certify a petition to the Secretary of State on the grounds that it had not had time to examine the genuineness of the signatures.

"It is perfectly clear then, that any petition opposed by a smaller number only of county clerks or county courts would have no possible chance to get through, and these officials would all act within their constitutional rights and could not be touched.

"But more dangerous still is the unprecedented power given the courts to reject at will not only single tax petitions but all other petitions of the people. The text says petitions shall be certified by the county courts 'if the signatures thereto shall be found to be genuine signatures of voters of such counties.' This is the first instance where it has been provided not only that genuine signatures must first actually be obtained, but that they are then of no avail until proved genuine signatures of voters before a judicial officer—the first time signatures authorized to be procured by law are presumed to be false until found genuine by the courts.

"That this provision would absolutely kill every petition passed upon by an unfriendly court can not be denied. The language is plain; the effect is clear. The examination by the court and the passing upon the signatures by the court, and its finding them to be genuine, is one of the prerequisite steps of a valid petition. Further, the amendment could not be aided by judicial construction because it is a fundamental condition on which a law can be initiated or referred."

The people of Missouri have their warning. They were fooled by the predatory interests in 1912 into rejecting a measure that would have reduced taxes of working farmers and other wealth producers. If they are further willing to make their state a horrible example it is their own funeral. The single tax cause will gain either way.

NEBRASKA PROGRESSING.

Laurie J. Quinby, of Omaha, author of that excellent single tax story, "When Sunshine Comes to Omaha," won the Democratic nomination for State Senator at the primary on August 18. Mr. Quinby made a vigorous single tax campaign and received the highest vote in Omaha of any of the candidates. There is little doubt of his election in November.

Nebraska will vote this fall on a constitutional amendment to give the legislature greater latitude in framing of tax laws. Under the election laws of the state the amendment was voted on at the primaries and received the endorsement of both Democratic and Republican parties. For this reason it must now, under the law, be placed in both party columns and every straight vote for a party ticket will count as in its favor unless otherwise marked by the voter.

PROGRESS IN OHIO.

The state convention of the **Ohio Progressive party** put the following plank in its platform: "We pledge our party to the support of county home rule in taxation."

The **Republican convention** declared: "We pledge ourselves to home rule in the valuation and assessment of all property for taxation."

The **Democratic convention** made no declaration concerning taxation, but its platform of two years ago, on which Governor Cox was elected, declared for home rule in taxation.

The meaning of the Progressive party pledge is unequivocal. That of the Republican party is little less so. It is true that it only speaks of valuation and assessment and does not mention taxation. But Tax Commissioner Pastoriza, of Houston, Texas, has satisfactorily demonstrated what home rule in valuation and assessment can do to relieve industry and make a city prosperous.

DOINGS IN INDIANA.

At a conference at Bloomington, Indiana, called by the State University to consider a new constitution for the state, the farmers' representative, **Dave S. Dunlop**, of Greencastle, offered the following suggestion regarding taxation:

"The tax provisions in the constitution should allow wide latitude for experimentation. The tax subject is one of the most puzzling there is. At present the farmers and city laboring men of small means pay taxes out of all proportion because our small assets are all plainly visible, whereas bonds, stocks, money, etc., of the wealthy are listed only in proportion to the owner's own notion. Various States and smaller sections in States, are trying different schemes. One idea is to assess everything at full value, but at a fixed low rate, trusting that a low rate will result in more complete lists of assets being filed. Another is to decrease or omit all taxes except tax on land, regardless of improvements. At first glance this would seem to hit the farmer. But while he holds the largest area, he does not hold the most valuable area. One city lot would often buy many farms. Meanwhile their taxes on improvements being removed, many farmers would find their taxes on mere land values to be less than the total they now pay. I am not going to offer any solution of the tax question, but merely to call attention to the fact that the constitution should allow as much freedom for changes and experimentation as any locality in the State may desire. Indeed, in all its sections the constitution should give the greatest freedom possible, so that we and our successors will always be able to do any new thing we may desire."

Mr. Dunlop's suggestion is practical and sensible. If the other farmers of Indiana are as well informed on tax matters as he evidently is, the plutocratic agent, who tries to stuff them with the old falsehood about single tax hurting the farmer, will get laughed at for his pains.

COLORADO AFFAIRS.

Ben Salmon, Secretary of the Colorado State Single Tax League, received the Democratic nomination for State Representative in Denver at the primary on September 8. Mr. Salmon's campaign was on the single tax issue. His nomination was won in spite of machine opposition. Since the campaign is on in Denver for a Single Tax Amendment to the city charter, Salmon's victory shows the trend of popular sentiment.

WHERE TO GET REVENUE.

The following letter appeared in the Chicago Herald of August 31:

This is a psychological moment for the Prohibitionist to tell us temperance people by what means they are going to substitute revenues to take the place of the revenues now being derived from brewers, distillers and wineries. We notice by the press reports from Washington that the question is being debated in regard to the increase of taxation on liquor.

The prohibitionists from outward appearances are endeavoring to deny the government the revenues now being paid, and all such matters are of great interest to the business man—that is, the fellow that makes the wheels "go round," as the burden of taxes falls upon him.

We would like to ask the Prohibitionist through your paper to explain to us. We want facts not theories. Would you be kind enough to aid us in gaining this information? Yours very truly,

MANUFACTURERS AND DEALERS' ASSOCIATION,

R. E. BRUNS, President.

In publishing the letter the Herald requested that those desiring to furnish Mr. Bruns with the desired information address their communications directly to him. It is safe to say that of all the replies he received there was none that answered the question more clearly and logically than the following:

Chicago, Sept. 3, 1914.

Manufacturers and Dealers' Association, Mr. R. E. Bruns, President, 36 West Randolph Street, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir—Referring to your letter printed in the Chicago Herald, August 31, there exists a source of revenue greater than the liquor traffic and tariffs combined; one that, if used, will relieve the business man from the burden of taxes entirely. I refer to the annual value of sites, exclusive of improvements. We already take a portion of site values in taxation, so that you can not class this proposal with what you call "theories." Not one cent of such site values can be traced to the effort of land owners; it is all caused by the demand for land, and this demand is due to increase of population. A site rent tax would therefore seem the just and natural revenue. It is no longer an untried experiment; the benefits looked for by its advocates are abundantly seen in Houston, Tex., Vancouver, Pittsburg, Pa., New Zealand, and other places. We continue to turn over to private owners of land, millions of unearned dollars, thereby hampering labor and trade with the unjust burden, then grope about for a way to relieve the drinker of liquor from a tax of five times the cost of his beverage, or else take it from him. Are we blind, or do we wish to continue unjust privileges?

Yours truly,

C. F. HUNT,

530 Aldine Avenue.

WASHINGTON GETS LITERATURE.

In response to a request received from Mr. J. M. Hitt, State Librarian of Washington, an assortment of twenty-four pieces of literature was sent from the office of the Fels Fund Commission to one hundred and forty libraries in the State of Washington.

PUSHING AHEAD WITH THE WORK.

Mrs. Joseph Fels had an article in yesterday's "Daily News," urging the Government to provide work on the land for men displaced owing to the war. It is a matter for congratulation to us all to find Mrs. Fels taking her place as an advocate on behalf of the worker at this time of crisis and difficulty. Few people know

how closely she was identified with her late husband in every piece of social work he had in hand, and how large a part she played in all his social activities. Now that she is left to fight his fight on behalf of the landless and workless, all those who care for real things should be ready to support and help her.

The work of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society is unique, for without pauperization and without capital it has enabled thousands of men to supplement their scanty earnings, and in these days when so many men are on short time, it should be easy to persuade every owner or lessee of a piece of vacant land to lend such land in order that vegetables and other root crops might be raised. There is no question of experiment about this: it has been done, and is being done now.—*London Daily Herald*, August 20.

THE REMEDY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT AND HIGH PRICES.

By MRS. JOSEPH FELS.

In London Daily News and Leader, August 20.

I gladly avail myself of the opportunity to say something on the subject now engrossing so much public attention—the question of the cultivation of the soil. In the first place, I should like to direct attention to a story of the work of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society, founded here and in Philadelphia, U. S. A., by Joseph Fels. This society proved two things: (1) That there were any number of idle acres that could be cultivated for the growing of foodstuffs, and (2) that there were any number of men willing to associate their labor in this enterprise.

We are told that we are not to store goods nor create an artificial scarcity to the hurt of others; that this is an act of mean and selfish cowardice; that we are not to hold gold, but to let it circulate; that we should try to make things easier and not more difficult. This is all to the good and is sound advice; but I want to put in a plea for those who believe in opening up cultivable land for the growing of necessary foodstuffs. If it is bad to keep gold from circulation and bad to create an artificial scarcity of goods, how much more objectionable is it to maintain an artificial scarcity of the thousands of idle acres upon which labor might be usefully employed?

THE REWARD OF INDUSTRY.

It is quite clear that the co-operation of labor with these unutilized acres would be good for the land, good for labor, and good for the general well-being. Gaunt famine threatens our existing store of goods, but Nature we know is generous to the laborer who affectionately tills the soil. But there is something more to consider, and that is the independence of the man himself. There are all kinds of schemes afloat for helping the workers. I have nothing to say against such schemes in a time of stress, but my scheme means independence. It does not mean something for nothing; it means a reward to the laborer which is the direct outcome of his own exertions. If we can not by this method of

land cultivation provide all that is needed, we can at least help some to help themselves, thus adding to the prosperity of all concerned, incidentally teaching the laborer and the nation the possibilities of the land of which at present many are unaware.

I am sure there are any number of land-owners, including local bodies and public corporations, who will be open to this appeal to their patriotism. If the holding up of goods is criminal in a time of crisis, the holding up of land is even more wicked.

SPADE WORK.

I noticed in the papers the other day that a firm of seed merchants at Reading advised the public of the desirability of sowing and planting every spare piece of land with such food crops as may still be in time to be sown before the autumn. This is what I wish to be at. There is labor in abundance and sufficient capital should be available for this good purpose. What we want without delay is the opportunity to do the sowing and the planting.

In the 1912-13 report of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society it is stated that the total area of vacant building land in the County of London is officially estimated at 14,000 acres, and that the superintendent and his assistant had examined a large part of this land and gave their opinion that hundreds of acres of it were suitable for cultivation. We know from Government returns that our urban areas have within their boundaries about 3,000,000 acres of land assessed as agricultural. Much of this land not at present in use could, I am satisfied, be put to immediate use. If there is any sound patriotism in the country, steps should be taken to see that our ever-enduring national asset, the land, is made the most of.

WHAT PARLIAMENT COULD DO.

If Parliament can issue bank notes, take charge of railways, and have regard to the disposal of the produce now available, it is surely a matter of urgency that they should spend one day at least to consider these idle acres and their potential fruitfulness, these natural resources from which to take additional food supplies.

The nation's great and pressing need in this dark hour can not and should not be wantonly set aside by the caprice or the selfishness of those who legally hold and control the means of life. The claim of the people to work in freedom as best they may on God's earth for their own immediate wants should be heard throughout the land. Who will join now in voicing this claim to a much-needed measure of justice and fair play?

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"—Shawman.
"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.

THE PUBLIC, Ellsworth Bldg., CHICAGO