

The Philosophy of Freedom

An Open Forum for Single Taxers

HOW THE SINGLE TAX ON LAND VALUES WILL BENEFIT FARMERS.

Editor Independent: I think there is a good deal of truth in what you say in reference to Mr. Doblin's remarks in your issue of January 7, and I want to emphasize on the government's use of that income from land values, as the great and lasting benefit to the farmers especially. Our greatest land values are in our large cities and many mining properties as well as uncultivated acres in large sections in many states.

Take, for instance, the Cripple Creek mining property in Colorado, only 4 miles by 6 miles in area, yet it has produced since its discovery in 1891, \$150,000,000, and for several years its output has been \$2,000,000 per month; and according to a recent report (January 9) its dividends for 1903—a bad year because of the strike—was \$1,706,962.69, let us say \$2,000,000.

Now all this \$2,000,000 is land value, after paying wages, wear and tear of machinery, superintendency, etc. Let us allow that they have \$500,000 worth of machinery—capital—and we will give them 10 per cent for the use of that. And the single tax would take for the state of Colorado, for federal as well as local use, \$1,350,000 a year.

For it is civilization's use of gold for ornament, medical and financial purposes, that creates that price or value to that great bounty of nature. And when we take it for our communal purposes, and with it build and run a railroad, a telephone or telegraph system, how quickly our present corporations will commerce to serve instead of rob the people and the farmers! And if all the mineral wealth of Colorado alone, much of it untaxed and unused, was treated as though put to its full use, what an enormous fund would pour into the public coffers; enough to put an electric light and motor in every farmer's home and barn to run the washing machine or churn for his wife and daughter, as well as a telephone for the home, all paid for with those same dividends now paid to eastern capitalists, whose damnable greed is crushing down labor to a point where it restricts their enjoyment of farm products to a meagre allowance.

Here in Michigan the Calumet & Hecla, a few hundred acres area in the copper country, has paid dividends of \$5,000,000 for several years. This represents the difference—(because labor and wear and care of machinery has been paid before this dividend is declared)—between this land and land that has no value. Again, it represents in its price the demand for copper consequent upon the discovery of electricity and its many purposes and powers. So when by the single tax we—the people—take it for our own public uses we will stop that infamous confiscation of human rights that for centuries has wrought such an amount of war and hell on this earth.

Now, imagine if you please, Tom Bawden elected governor of Michigan on a single tax ticket, and at once taxes the land values of the Calumet & Hecla \$4,500,000 per year (allowing \$500,000 for actual interest on actual capital) and then announce the building of a railroad with that money, from Detroit to Grand Rapids to run at 1 cent a mile for passengers and equally low rates for freight. How quickly the G. T. R., M. C. R. R. and P. & M. lines would be at Governor Bawden's feet to pray him not to build that railroad; that they would carry the people for 1 cent a mile, etc. In other words, they would serve instead of rob the farmers and merchants. And thus compelled to be useful citizens, the \$4,500,000 each year could be put to use making asphalt roads for the farmer all through the country, lighted with arc lights just like the cities with a phone for the farmer's house; an electric light and power for a motor for his barn for threshing or churning; and all paid for with what is now paid out to a few parasitic capitalists in Wall street.

How this would ruin the stock market and cause the sure decline of Wall street and the money power one can realize when we think of the same tax being levied on the iron, coal, granite, zinc, cement, timber lands, etc., most of which is unused, held idle and taxed as wild and worthless land. For this millions of dollars now swallowed by Wall street in speculation would then be thrown on the market, and capitalists would bid against each other for the use of labor; money would become cheap and labor—manhood—dear. And wouldn't

that cheap money enable many a farmer to pay off his mortgage or buy machinery?

ONE MORE INSTANCE.

Los Angeles, Cal., May 16.—A few men now hold, unused, fully nineteen-twentieths of the arable land of California, while millions of people are suffering for the want of that land. In the Miller and Lux estate alone (which comprises 14,539,200 acres) there is enough land held out of use to support a population of 5,000,000, or nearly four times the present population of the state. Fifteen men own nearly all the valuable land in Colusa, Glenn, Tehama and Butte counties. From the Boggs ranch to that owned by Rawlins, comprising 74 miles of exceeding fertile land, we find only one small village, one church and three school houses. Competent judges state that this land could easily support a city of 50,000 population and a rural population of 200,000. More than 16,000,000 acres of California land are held out of use by only eight persons and estates. Besides this, the greater part of the millions of acres given to the railroads in this state are still unused.—Ralph Hoyt in Johnstown Democrat.

Suppose a single tax governor and legislature in California was to impose a tax of \$2 per acre on those 16,000,000 acres. Wouldn't it cause those landlords to hustle to pay \$32,000,000 a year? Wouldn't they be compelled to employ labor to put it to use to raise that revenue? Wouldn't they give up large tracts of it to the state? And wouldn't California (one of the best agricultural states in the Union) then be able to offer that good land to hundreds of farmers' sons for nothing? Paying merely \$2 per year per acre for schools, roads, courts, etc., not land! For land is the free gift of God to all. Why should a man be compelled to buy God's gift from his brother?

And if farmers carrying a mortgage could thus get good farms for nothing, how long would they stay with the mortgage around their neck? Wouldn't it mean a lot of mortgagees who would be glad to get any kind of money (silver or greenbacks) as long as it was legal tender, for the farms they did not want and could not use? And how such a use of the land and the land values by an awakened conscience and an aroused intelligence would knock all kinds of trusts to smithereens can be seen in a few moments, by any farmer who knows the difference between threshing sugar beets and pumpkins. I will be pleased to answer any further questions on this matter at a future time if requested by your readers.

TOM BAWDEN,

Editor "Our Commonwealth."

Detroit, Mich.

(That little editorial note to Mr. Doblin's communication had the intended effect. Mr. Bawden is certainly at home in explaining what the farmer could reasonably expect to receive in lieu of that rise in land value—which is now about all he gets out of years of toil. But—

There are still a few little preliminaries. Suppose Mr. Bawden were elected this year as governor of Michigan—and I know of no man I would rather see elected governor of that state. And suppose he should have a legislature fully in accord with his views. And suppose the necessary laws should be enacted to carry into effect the single tax—as to Michigan. Could Tom Bawden tax the Calumet & Hecla \$4,500,000 a year? I don't believe he could do it. That is, I don't believe he could ever collect it.

There is a United States supreme court to reckon with, and we, out here in Nebraska, have some idea how that court decides matters affecting the interests of the big fellows. We had a maximum freight rate law—have it yet—but it is hung up, like a scarecrow in a cornfield, by a federal court decision which no man clearly understands, except that the railroads don't have to obey the law!

I raise objections to the single tax in order to get single taxers to come back to earth once in a while. It's easy to picture an imaginary heaven—and Tom Bawden is surely an artist; but the great difficulty is to get there. Maybe Tom can tell us that, too.—Associate Editor.)

To protect your orchard from rabbits, Mr. J. A. Gage, the well-known nurseryman at Beatrice, Neb., advises the use of tarred building paper. He has had excellent success using it in the Gage County Nurseries of which he is the proprietor. It is cheap and

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Money Talks

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