

The Philosophy of Freedom

An Open Forum for Single Taxers

TENETS OF THE SINGLE TAX.

We hold that the earth is the common heritage of all men. That apart from the earth men cannot live; and that whatever hinders their access to the earth, increases to them the difficulty of living. We assert that the very fact of birth gives to all men an equal and inalienable right to life, and because men can exist only upon and from the earth, their common heritage, it follows that all men have an equal and inalienable right to the use of the earth. And we hold that whatever human laws or institutions deny and hinder their equal exercise of this right, deny, in effect, that all men are entitled to an equal opportunity to live, and thus deny their equal right to life. We hold that private property in land, including all natural opportunities, by decreasing to a minority of men the ownership of the earth, and compelling the majority to give to these a part of the products of their labor for the mere privilege of using it, artificially increases to the multitudes the difficulty of living; infringes their equal right to the use of the earth; deprives them of their right to an equal opportunity to live; and thus denies that all men have an equal right to life. And we hold, therefore, that private property in land, under which the minority may wholly exclude the majority from the earth, is violative of natural rights, and is wrong; and that the human enactments which decree it, should be abolished.

We assert that, in production, whatever unnaturally increases the share of the product given as rent unduly lessens the part remaining for wages and interest. Expressly asserting the need for private possession of land, we declare that its private ownership is wholly injurious. That, by enabling some to monopolize and keep out of use the most valuable lands, it gives monopoly values to land unnaturally increases rent and the part of the produce exacted as rent, and by compelling labor to resort to lands of low productiveness, it lessens the returns of labor, decreases wages and hampers production.

We assert that land values are created solely by the presence of population and the thrift and progress of the community. That they arise with the coming of population, grow with its growth and shrink and even disappear with its decline. That as a community becomes more populous and needs greater revenues, its land values increase. And that, by the very law of its being, every community creates, concurrently, a need for revenues and a fund, land values, from which this want may be satisfied.

We hold that to the producer belongs the thing produced. That land values being produced not by any individual, but by the presence and thrift of the community, the same principle of justice which gives to the individual the product of his labor, ordains that this fund, land values, belongs to the community, and should be taken for the support of the government.

To do this, and to take away the substance of ownership in land, while securing the individual in the private possession thereof, we propose to levy an annual tax on the rental or using value of land, irrespective of improvements, equal to the entire amount thereof, and that the resulting revenue be apportioned among the federal, state and local governments; and that all other revenue taxes be abolished.

We hold that we would thus simplify and equalize taxation, cheapen its collection and do away with perjury in relation thereto. We assert that a tax on land values, unlike other taxes, cannot be shifted to the consumer. That the tax we propose would compel every holder of land to contribute annually to the common welfare, the full value of the special privilege thus enjoyed by him; would destroy speculation in land by making it unprofitable to hold land out of use, would give capital and labor access to vast quantities of land, including oil, coal, iron and other mineral deposits, and make impossible the monopolizing of the original sources of supply; would derive the revenues of government from the very fund which society itself creates; and since more than 90 per cent of all land values are in urban lands, franchises, and mineral deposits, it would take off of the farming and the wage-earning population the great burden of taxation, which, as the principal consumers, now falls ultimately upon them. We assert that by abolishing all revenue taxes upon improvements, capital, labor and the

products of labor, and giving access to lands now monopolized and idle, it would stimulate investment, promote industry and enterprise, raise wages and bring about general and more equal prosperity.

We are opposed to all forms of special privileges: we recognize the importance of the financial and other questions; and we expressly declare that government ownership of transportation lines and public utilities is needed as a complement to this tax; but we hold that every improvement in government, or other advance in material progress, simply increases the value of land, and, under private ownership of land, adds to the proportion received by the land owner and decreases the proportion of the laborer. And, declaring that man's relation to the earth is primary, we hold that the adoption of the single tax as a means to secure to all the people their equal right to its use is a prerequisite in order that they, and not a minority of them, may enjoy the material benefits to accrue from further advances in government and even in civilization itself.

E. T. WEEKS.

New Iberia, La.

The St. Louis Meeting

Editor Independent: Replying to your request to "enroll," etc., the spirit moves me to say that I have been an observer, if not an active participant, in all the moves for reform since 1870.

As a member of the farmers' convention at Decatur, Ill., Dec., 1873, I assisted at the birth of the greenback party in that state. As secretary of the first greenback state convention in Illinois, June, 1874, I helped to nominate the first ticket of greenbackers ever nominated for state offices in any state. As editor of *The Appeal* at Bloomington, Ill., in 1875 and 1876, I assisted in the campaign of 1876. As a member of the greenback national committee, with John G. Drew of New Jersey as a special committee, I wrote, in Burd's hotel in Chicago, Dec. 14 and 15, 1875, the call for the national greenback convention, that met in Indianapolis, May, 1876, which nominated Peter Cooper; and finished my Illinois work as the secretary of the Illinois state committee until the close of the campaign of 1880. Since then I have been more of an observer than a worker.

With this as an introduction, permit me to suggest that the political situation for 1904 is nearly a parallel to that which existed in 1860. Then the whig party went to pieces and the democrats held two convention and put up two tickets, thus giving the republicans a "clear" field. Today the republican party is in an "explosive" condition, while the democratic leaders are hopelessly divided.

Now, what is the thing for the populists to do? That is the question. In my opinion, it is to issue an early call, embodying broad principles of American statesmanship from the standpoint of the producers of wealth, and invite them and all others who may be dissatisfied with what may be offered them by the republican and democratic conventions, to meet in Kansas City about July 26, 1904, to assist in nominating a ticket that shall represent the plain people of the country, upon a live and truly American platform.

THOMAS WOLFE.

Kansas City, Mo.

Keep the Old Name

Editor Independent: I am somewhat surprised to read in the *Vineland Independent*, of January 8, 1904, the idea of even mentioning in the columns of his paper the thought of changing the people's party name. He speaks of the reform forces getting together at St. Louis for the avowed purpose of getting under the legal name of the people's party or else adopting another name. To change the name of people's party to another name would put a silence on every voter in the party ranks. It would take years to ever poll as many votes as the party will poll next November under the people's party name. The principles advocated by the people's party have become associated with its name and can never and should never be severed.

Making such a change would disgust the voters and would lose the new name party thousands of votes, besides opposition papers would claim their share of the people's party vote the same as the new name party. Should such action be taken at the

St. Louis convention it would be equivalent to passing the party over to the undertaker. Such ideas entertained for one moment would be a thousand times worse than the turning down of Tom Watson for vice president and enstalling Grover Cleveland's bed-mate. It tends to annihilate a party.

If the parties at St. Louis cannot unite on the people's party name they just might as well quit business. We have had too much tinkering with the party already and we can see the effect without putting on our glasses. The party name is to well established in every nook and corner to abolish. It takes some time to establish principles with a party name.

The delegates of the people's party have set April 12, 1904, for our state convention. It is a straight people's party ticket from top to bottom and no fusion. The same is also true of the country here. We have carried our county here in Smith for 12 years with the exception of last year when we had fusion. Yours for success in maintaining the people's party name at St. Louis, February 22, 1904.

E. T. THOMPSON.

Smith Center, Kas.

Call for Meeting of National Committee.

Lincoln, Neb., Jan. 12, 1904.—To the Members of the National Committee of the People's Party of the United States, Greeting: The call hereinafter is made in compliance with a resolution passed by said committee at Denver, Colo., July 29, 1903, that the committee shall be called to meet at St. Louis, Mo., on February 22, 1904, for the purpose of fixing time and place of holding the national convention of the people's party, which convention, when convened, shall place in nomination members of its own party as candidates for president and vice president of the United States, and transact such other business as may come before it.

As vice chairman of the national committee of the people's party, I was empowered by a resolution passed by the national committee of the people's party at Kansas City, in regular session of the same, to call meetings and to transact any other business of the committee that the chairman by virtue of his office would be empowered to perform.

Therefore I do hereby call on all committeemen of the people's party to convene at St. Louis, Feb. 22, 1904, for the purpose aforesaid. And in addition to the committee, would respectfully invite all members of the party who can conveniently attend such meeting to do so.

It is to be hoped that at this meeting a full recognition of the efforts made at Denver last July will be indorsed by a united people's party of the nation. And that the influences for reform as found in the people's party may be no longer throttled by misunderstandings, for it is the only party that can and will uncover wrong doing and corruption wherever found.

We hope that this meeting will be well attended and be fruitful of great good. Reform papers please copy.

J. H. EDMISTEN,

Vice Chairman National Committee

People's Party.

J. A. EDGERTON, Secretary.

CALL FOR MEETING OF NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

Memphis, Tenn., Dec. 10, 1903.—The national executive committee of the people's party of the United States, in session at Memphis, Tenn., this 10th day of December, 1903, begs leave to congratulate the earnest reform voters of the United States on the rapid spread of those great principles of human government enunciated in the Omaha platform of 1892, and for which our organization has steadfastly contended, since the beginning.

The political history of the past few years has only served to strengthen our position, and to draw the attention of patriotic voters to the principles involved in our political creed, until it is today a generally accepted theory that government ownership of monopolies is better than monopoly ownership of government, although through the manipulation of political machines by the monopolies now controlling the public utilities of the country, there has been but little legislation looking to public ownership.

The political history of the past few years has taught several invaluable lessons to those who would reform existing abuses, the most important of which is that fusion or cooperation with either of the old parties is a failure, destined to spread confusion among reformers and to destroy our organization. It has also taught that a divided reform movement can accomplish but little. While in the past honest differences of opinion have divided our ranks, and lent

consolation to our enemies and the despoilers of the people, we recommend as the future policy of our party that reformers of all factions bury their minor differences and unite on the essential principles that will restore to the people the power to conduct the government free from the dictation of an oligarchy of the "idle holders of idle capital."

To this end we hereby call the national central committee of the allied people's party to meet at the New St. James hotel, in St. Louis, Mo., February 22, at 10 o'clock a. m., to fix a time and place for a national convention to nominate candidates for president and vice president of the United States, and we invite the committees of other reform parties to meet at the same time and place, looking to a practical union of the reform forces of the country in the approaching national campaign. We especially invite the representatives of organized labor, as it is the policy of the people's party to support the worthy efforts of organized labor in its struggles against organized capital, and believing that the final relief of labor rests solely in an intelligent and well directed ballot, we urge the co-operation of the labor forces in our conventions and at the polls.

We indorse the action of the recent Denver conference in looking to reunion of the people's party on the old lines, and extend our hands in fraternal greeting to our co-laborers of the great northwest who have in the past been misled by false promises, only to now be offered as a sacrifice to Mammon.

There is widespread dissatisfaction in the republican party; the democratic party has abandoned the west and is now engaged in concluding an alliance with the capitalistic forces of the east. The way is now clear for the patriotic men and women of all parties to unite on those essential principles of human liberty, and to this end we pledge our earnest endeavors.

JO A. PARKER, Chairman.

Louisville, Ky.

(Reform papers please copy.)

Who Shall Lead?

Editor Independent: I would like to be able financially to take every reform paper like *The Independent*. Mr. Editor, I am surprised to see some of our pops talking of such men as Bryan, Allen and Towne for our leaders. Now, we have plenty of good and true men who have not been found wanting when put on the balance and there is no place among the Old Guard for men who have betrayed our trust.

This is no time to be trying to resurrect dead men for leaders, but let us put our shoulders to the wheel and work together to spread the glad news that the people's party still lives, and leaders will come forth in good time to steer the old ship safely into the harbor; and no trimmers or tricksters any more forever for, as we live in Missouri and must be shown.

I would like to take every one of the Old Guard by the hand for one good hearty shake.

When I read the names of the Old Guard and see the old boys that are still there, following the banner of justice to all, I am ready to put on a new harness for fear the old ones will not be sufficient to hold when the battle is on.

I want to say to the Old Guard: "God bless you all," and when I have fulfilled my mission in this world I want on my monument that I was always a reformer.

I. J. TEAGARDEN.

Hamilton, Mo.

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