

Farmers Would Like "Single-Tax"

As Tom L. Johnson had just finished speaking at a political meeting in Independence, Ohio, an elderly gentleman arose and said:

"Mr. Chairman, I have a suspicion, from what I have read in the papers, that mayor Johnson desires to place all taxes on land. Will Mr. Johnson please tell us about that?"

Someone then called out: "Tell us about the Single-Tax."

Replying to the elderly man the Mayor answered: "Most emphatically, No!" He paused and then said: "But if you mean that I desire to place all taxes on land *values*, I answer most decidedly, Yes! If you want to hear about the Single-Tax, I will stay with you a little while longer and let my tent meeting in the city wait, while I say to you that if it were not for this idea, called single tax I would not be here to-night. This is the reason I am what I am, and that I am making the fight which we are now in.

"A tax on land would be an unjust and iniquitous system of taxation, but a tax on land *values* would be the most just and blessed system that the world has ever known. It would be of more service to humanity than any other legislation ever known.

"Farmers are great owners of land, but not of land values. We have land in our cities that sells at the rate of \$5,000,000 per acre—any of you farmers got land as valuable as that? In New York City there is land that sells for \$15,000,000 per-acre"—got any land in this neighborhood at that price?

"To answer my friend's question, I will tell of a little talk I had one day with Congressman Pierson of Tuscarawas County, when we were in Washington together.

"Pierson was a farmer, and he said to me one day: 'Tom I cannot go your single tax, as it would be a hardship on the farmers, and they already have more than their share of the burden of taxation.'

"I said: 'Look here, Pierson, if I thought the single tax would increase the farmers' burden, I would not stand for it one minute. In fact, if I did not know it would be the greatest blessing to the farmers, and the working men in the city, I never would advocate it again. I can show you that the single tax will lighten the farmers' burden as compared with the present method. Let me ask you some questions—to see if we can't get at the facts of the matter.'

"How much, Mr. Pierson, of the present tax burden do you think the farmer bears?"

"Well,' he answered, 'the farmers constitute over half the population of the United States, and I should say that they pay at least 60 per cent of all taxes.'

"Very well, let's call it 50 per cent to be safe.'

"No, no,' said Mr. Pierson, 'that is too low; they pay more than 60 per cent, rather than less.'

"All right, but to be safe, let's call it 50 per cent. Now, Mr. Pierson, I want you to tell me how much of the value of land the farmers of the United States have? Please take into consideration all the valuable coal lands, the iron, silver, gold, copper and other valuable mines—the water power privileges, the railroads and their terminals, including street railroads, telephones and telegraphs, for these are built on the most valuable lands; all the gas and electric lighting rights of way, built on land of great value; all the city lots, some of which are worth more than a county of farming land. I want you to take all these into consideration and then tell me how much of the land value the farmers of the United States have.'

"Mr. Pierson said: 'Well, I should say less than 5 per cent. I said: call it 10 per cent, to be safe.'

"Oh, no, no; that's entirely too high; that's double.'

"Well, we will call it 10 per cent, anyway. Now don't you see that if all the taxes were raised by a single tax on land values, since the farmers have only 10 per cent of those values (you say 5), their taxes would be reduced to only one-fifth of what they now are?—that instead of paying one-half the taxes as now, they would under that plan pay but one-tenth.'

"I declare, Tom, I never looked at it in that light, and I guess you have got me.'

"So I say to you farmers here tonight, that this single-tax, of which I am proud to be an advocate, would be to the overburdened farmers and workingmen the greatest boon, the greatest blessing, the greatest Godsend that any country ever knew. I wish you good night."

(*)Some New York City land is now worth \$40,000,000 per acre.

For the solution of the Labor Question, and other Social Problems read the books written by Henry George, which may be obtained from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 11 Park Place, New York City.