

FROM THE FIELD

JAMES F. MORTON, JR., REPORTS HIS LECTURE WORK

The failure of any report from me to appear in the last issue of the REVIEW is due to the fact that my news letter, duly prepared and left by me at the editor's office in his absence, was in some way misplaced, and has never been found. I am sorry for this, since that letter was written under more favorable circumstances than the present, which must of necessity be somewhat hastily prepared and mainly confined to a bare resume of the facts of my propaganda wanderings thus far in the year 1917.

The work of this period has been practically confined to the western counties of New York. For various practical reasons, it was best to follow up leads already begun in different localities, although this unfortunately postponed until another season visits to certain important centers not yet reached. It is not the purpose or intention of the New York State League or of its field secretary to neglect any section, or to exhibit any degree of partiality; and I hope that friends of the Single Tax propaganda in every part of New York will feel that this work is theirs, and will of their own initiative enter into correspondence with me or with Mr. Doblin regarding future plans of activity, without waiting to be first approached. There are often special local reasons, with which it is impossible for any one not on the spot to be acquainted, for pushing the work in particular communities at special times of the year or in connection with particular occurrences. Should our friends inform us on these points, it would be a pleasure to arrange the schedule of lecture trips so as to conform to these local needs. Kindly remember that plans have often to be made months in advance, although not invariably so, and that the time to write is as soon as an idea suggests itself or an emergency either arises or can be foreseen near at hand or in the distance. Long distance jumps have to be avoided, as far as possible. Unless in a case of considerable urgency, it would not pay to interrupt a visit of a month to Buffalo, in the neighborhood of which a series

of meetings had been arranged, to give a single talk in Albany, or to break into a fortnight in Binghamton to spend a couple of days in Ogdensburg or Watertown; but by correspondence in advance all these places could readily be dovetailed together in a circuit trip or at worst in a season's schedule.

Just another word to some of our isolated friends. As my trips require a good deal of crisscrossing the State, I shall at one time or another come within convenient distance of practically every community. Part of the field work contemplated by the League is that of promoting solidarity among the friends of the cause, and bringing us all into a closer and more sympathetic touch with one another. To this end, I shall always find it perfectly within my line of duty to call on solitary Single Taxers or interested inquirers, become acquainted and show them what is being done and how the cause is progressing. So if you live in a small community, and see no way of getting up a meeting of any kind, don't feel diffident on that account, but let me hear from you. A good chat together, when I am within reach of your village, will do us both good; and you can help the movement by explaining your own difficulties and the problems of your own community. Just a line to me at 68 William Street, New York City, will bring you in contact, without committing you to any efforts beyond your ability or desires.

After the winter holiday season, I betook myself first to Chautauqua County, where the ground had been pretty well prepared by previous visits. Outside of Jamestown, my audiences in that region were women's clubs, men's clubs (chiefly connected with churches) and community clubs. The places visited were Silver Creek, Bemus Point, Portland, Sinclairville, Westfield, Dunkirk, Sherman and Ashville. In all these, strong interest was shown; and the Single Tax teaching was very cordially received. Openings for another season have already developed in other towns of the county. In Jamestown, the local helpers felt it best to concentrate this time on one large meeting. This was held in the Eagle Temple, and was one of a course given there as among the main events of the year. Several hundred were present, and

gave splendid attention, manifesting strong sympathy with the thought presented. At the Saturday Night Club, a group of leading professional men, including the mayor of the city and prominent representatives of the press, the bar and the principal industries of the city, were equally responsive. As a rule, controversial subjects introduced there are hotly debated; but the invitation to discuss the Single Tax, after the lecture met with a number of unqualified endorsements of the principle and its applications and with some close and pertinent questions, but with no opposition whatever. Invitations for other addresses in Jamestown next season are already in hand. Chautaugua County is decidedly on the map as a field for Single Tax activity; and its open advocates there are numerous and growing in strength and courage.

A brief return to New York, which was necessary on account of plans made long before, was especially marked by an address before the teachers and pupils of the Mason School of Tarrytown, which ranks among the largest and most important private schools of the State. I count every opportunity to appear before an educational institution, be it private school, business college, high school or university, as of exceptional importance, as it thus becomes possible to reach the coming generation and to stimulate its progressive tendencies; nor have I ever failed to observe encouraging results from such an appearance.

Returning to the western counties, I spoke before clubs in Yorkshire, Arcade, West Falls and East Aurora, with satisfactory results. It should be said that from this period and up to the time of writing, the handicap of bad weather has been present to a most unusual degree. Bitter cold, violent storms and excessively bad roads have persistently dogged the winter and spring campaigns, inevitably cutting down audiences in a majority of the places visited. But there was almost always a reasonably good showing, in spite of these handicaps; and those who did attend were as receptive as could be desired, many declaring themselves converts, and others wishing to investigate further.

A fortnight in Rochester proved to be a very busy time, involving fifteen lectures, several of them before clubs and granges of

neighboring villages. A live nucleus has now been developed of ardent and working Single Taxers; and the Rochester Single Tax Club promises to be one of our most efficient local organizations.

I wish space and time permitted an adequate account of the work in Binghamton. Here, too, the Single Taxers are organized, and indeed to some purpose. Several old-timers, with a sprinkling of the newer element, are carrying on an energetic all-the-year-around Single Tax campaign, and are getting decided results. It is an honor to be a Single Taxer in Binghamton. The subject is vigorously discussed in the daily papers of that city, much to the discomfiture of the few opponents of the movement, who occasionally seek to refute its bedrock principle. In eight days in Binghamton, I delivered nine addresses to audiences of the most varied types.

After another return to headquarters, in connection with which I attended a dinner of the Land Party, and addressed a church club in Brooklyn, my work carried me again westward, where I made Buffalo my headquarters for the Spring campaign. I found great difficulties in the city itself, owing to the pre-occupation of its people with war problems and their disinclination to consider even vital domestic issues. As a subsidiary embarrassment, the city was just recovering from a Billy Sunday campaign, and was not in an attitude of mind favorable to a realization of the importance of problems of social justice. The ever indefatigable Tom Work nearly wore himself out with efficient labors, which under normal conditions would have borne very large fruits, and even under the before-mentioned handicaps were by no means wasted, as several excellent engagements bore witness. The greater part of my activity, however, consisted in lectures arranged in towns surrounding Buffalo or a little distance away. Newfane, Middleport, Alden, Lancaster, Ransomville, Corfu, Somerset, Lewiston, Leicester, North Tonawanda, Castile, Brockport and Perry, are the places thus far reached with one or two more to come, as I write before the close of the spring trip. The results in each of these localities were highly gratifying. In most of these communities the Single

Tax comes as a new idea, about which complete ignorance hitherto prevailed; and the common sense and justice of it make an instant impression on the majority. Some of our best work must be done in the smaller towns; and I wish it might be possible to reach every one in the State. Could this be achieved, I have no hesitancy in declaring that a referendum held at any time on the Single Tax or on any measure leading toward it would be assured of victory. How far will the reader of these lines help to make this a possibility?

The critical conditions prevailing in the country, with the interruption to the normal progress of events due to a state of war, create new problems to be faced. It is no time, however, to relax propaganda activities. Rather are there many aspects of the present situation which cannot be dealt with rightly except from the standpoint of fundamental democracy. In such times as this, the enemies of progress are ever on the alert to establish precedents which will be hard to overthrow on the return to peace, and to strengthen their position with relation to the rest of us. To drop our propaganda activities at this time, would be to play into their hands, and to make later resumption difficult, by losing many threads of connection. Now, if ever, we must rather redouble our efforts, minimize personal difficulties and disputes, and pull together with our utmost energy. Loyalty to country is in no way better proved than by loyalty to principle, by the unswerving use of our respective abilities and opportunities toward the perfecting of the economic and social institutions of our land. The most fundamental work in this direction is that of the warfare against land monopoly, with its long train of subsidiary special privileges and consequent evils.

The war revenue bill, which will undoubtedly be law long before these lines appear, is a painful illustration of the inability of our legislators to see straight along economic lines. In its present shape, with small hope of much improvement, the measure deliberately lays additional burdens on industry, which can have no other effect than to limit production, raise the already almost unbearable cost of living, deplete the vitality of the

people, and thus kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Special privilege will escape, as it usually does, the load nominally laid on it being readily shifted to the common people, since the source of privilege is untouched. The landiord class is the one special pet, not called on to bear even a nominal burden, but placed in the position of continuing its parasitic profit-taking at the expense of the labors and sacrifices of all the other classes. Sneaked into the bill, with much danger that it will actually pass, is the perennial attempt to kill the liberty of the press by raising second-class postage rates, which will destroy most of the independent publications. This infamous scheme has been repeatedly tried and always exposed and defeated in normal times; and now the enemies of our liberties are confident of at last attaining their nefarious ends by taking advantage of the present situation, when their real aim is likely to escape observation. Meanwhile, the land speculators stand pat, and smile at the simplicity of the people, who burden themselves in order to keep up their tribute to the aristocracy of privilege. So shameless have they become by being indulged so long that they see in the present situation a chance to make extra profits, when all other classes are sacrificing their usual profits. The kind of patriotism to be expected from the land hog has been well evinced by the Rockaway Point episode, where the crowd controlling land needed for government fortifications have the consummate greed and impudence to demand two million dollars for property which they themselves have always valued at only \$700,000. The Single Taxers will see that this is not forgotten, if nobody else finds it convenient to offend the delicate ears of these "gentlemen" by exposing their performances. The lesson of it all is eternal vigilance and incessant activity. Let us take off our coats, and work harder than ever, sowing abundant seed now, and looking for the harvest in the saner days to come.—JAMES F. MORTON, JR.

AN item of news from the New York City realty world is of interest. It announces that the substantial old dwelling at 39 Fifth Ave. and a brick stable around the corner have been razed to reduce the taxes on the property.