

Tax Reform News.

Tenant farmers of Texas are circulating the following petition, which is said to have already received 40,000 signatures:

To Hon. O. B. Colquitt, Governor of Texas:

We, the undersigned citizens of _____ County, Texas, hereby join with the Renters' Union of America in a petition to you to call a special session of the legislature to submit to a vote of the people an amendment to the State Constitution, providing for a tax equal to its full rental value on all land held for speculation or exploitation—excepting homestead reservations only—all to the end that use and occupancy shall become the sole title to land in the State of Texas.

Texas has 167,000,000 acres of land; 27,000,000 acres are improved; three-fourths of these improved acres are either rented or mortgaged. Out of the balance there are over one hundred million acres suitable for cultivation—all held up by speculators, and the people are suffering from the scarcity of products, and high cost of living and ever increasing land prices and rentals. So we have three-fourths of the State locked up in the hands of the speculators, while tenantry has increased 129 per cent in the last twenty years.

Mexico is now bathed in blood because the lands of the nation are in the hands of the few, until 7,500 families control the land upon which 15,000,000 people dwell. We are approaching that stage in Texas, but believe our people have enough education and enlightenment to prevent bloodshed on this side of the Rio Grande. Instead of a State of rebellious tenants, we should have a State of patriotic home owners. This situation can only be grappled with and Texas turned loose for home builders by such a constitutional amendment.

The headquarters of the Texas Tenant Farmers' Union are at Hallettsville.

A letter accepting Singletax endorsement of his candidacy for Governor of Pennsylvania was sent to the Philadelphia Singletax Society on February 1, by Michael J. Ryan, city solicitor of Philadelphia, and president of the American Section of the Irish National League. Mr. Ryan is a candidate for the Democratic nomination at the direct primaries to be held in June. In his letter he says:

I hope to deserve your continued confidence. Men like you who struggle for the triumph of truth and "who share her wretched crust, ere her cause brings fame and profit and 'tis prosperous to be just", have a joy in life denied unto others whom the world may regard as more practical and your disinterested commendation is therefore to be all the more highly prized. I have seen in my own day Michael Davitt's cry of the "Land for the People" proclaimed as "Anathema," and yet it is now conservative if not Orthodox. The great doctrines given wider currency and more attractive form through the splendid diction, superb eloquence, and dauntless courage and self-sacrifice of Henry George are sweeping triumphantly over the earth; and the intellect of mankind,

as evidenced particularly by the declarations of Asquith, Lloyd George and Churchill in Great Britain, is fast giving them adhesion.

Railroad Abuses.

A protest against a proposed advance in grain rates was lodged by farmers and grain dealers of Illinois on February 3 with the State Public Utilities Commission at Springfield. Attorneys for the protestors declared that until a physical valuation of the railroads had been made, the increase should not be allowed.

An increase in Pullman rates, beginning on March 1, was announced February 5, subject to approval of the Interstate Commerce Commission. The new tariff applies only to compartments and drawing rooms. There will be fifty per cent increase in fare for compartments and nearly one hundred per cent for drawing rooms.

An investigation of free rail services given to large industrial plants will be investigated by the Interstate Commerce Commission, according to an announcement made on February 3 by Commissioner Harlan. On February 4 a protest against the proposed five per cent advance in freight rates was lodged with the commission by Iowa merchants and manufacturers. These declared that the increase would mean 14 cents advance on each ton of soft coal imported from eastern States. [See current volume, page 129.]

The resolution of Senator Norris of Nebraska was adopted by the Senate on February 7, calling for an investigation of the New Haven railroad affairs. The information called for is:

What became of the funds of the New Haven invested in various enterprises and corporations mentioned in the recent report of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Whether the person or persons authorizing investment of those funds and the persons receiving the benefit are liable to punishment under existing laws.

Whether under existing law these funds can be recovered in behalf of stockholders of said company.

What legislation, if any, is necessary to prevent the recurrence of similar transactions?

Federal Judge Smith McPherson on February 7 signed the decree allowing the railroads of Missouri to appeal from his order dissolving the injunction against the attorney general of the State, who has brought suit for return of excess fares collected by the roads involved. [See current volume, page 129.]