

NEWS—DOMESTIC

WISCONSIN

There are four Single Tax members of the legislature, to wit; Edward Nordman, J. W. Conner, Walter A. Duffy, and P. A. Hemmy, all from Northern Wisconsin. Mr. Nordman is the leader and is serving his third term in the legislature. He became a Single Taxer in the usual way, by reading Progress and Poverty in his youth some twenty-five years ago. He has been an active working Single Taxer ever since, and was elected to the legislature upon his own frank Single Tax platform, and as a Democrat. The other members of the legislature above named may be said, in a general way, to be converts and followers of Mr. Nordman.

The situation in Northern Wisconsin is quite favorable to the cultivation of Single Tax sentiment without much study of the fundamental philosophy. Very large sections in that part of the State consist of wild land, some swamp, some pine "slashings," from which the valuable timber has been removed, and some stretches of sandy soil covered with a light growth of timber of little value. Large sections of this land are owned by lumber companies and non-resident land speculators. Their first effort is to work it off upon settlers whom they induce to remove to the land under land contracts providing for small payments on long time. The land is not very valuable, ranging in price from \$5.00 to \$30.00 an acre. Some of the settlers eke out a rather poor living, improve the land, and establish homes. Others spend a few years in improving the land, but finally fail and move away. The land falls back to the original seller, benefitted by a few years of the settler's labor and improvement, and is then sold to a fresh settler at an enhanced price.

The result is that the scattering settlers are increasing the value of the wild land of the non-resident owners, at the same time the settlers erect schoolhouses, build roads, and of course levy taxes. As might be expected, they assess the unimproved land of the non-residents about as high as the improved land of the settlers. In one section the improved

land is assessed at \$1.00 per acre more than the wild land, while the average cost of clearing the land is some \$25.00 to \$30.00 per acre. This system is, of course, in violation of the law which provides that all property shall be assessed at true value. The result is much friction and litigation between the settlers and the non-resident owners. It is very easy under such circumstances to make Single Taxers; and the settlers soon learn to discriminate strongly in assessments against the non-residents who have no vote in the election of officers nor in the levying of taxes. It is easy to convince one of these settlers that he should not be assessed for his improvements, and unimproved land should be assessed at as high a rate as improved farms.

Mr. Nordman introduces bills and amendments to the constitution from time to time, not so much with the hope of securing the relief which he seeks for Northern Wisconsin, as for educational purposes in the legislature and through the newspapers. At the same time he is making some progress in securing consideration of his views and succeeded in securing the passage of a resolution for an amendment to the constitution which, however, was defeated by the subsequent legislature. A proposed amendment in this State must be adopted by two successive legislatures before being submitted to popular vote.

CALIFORNIA

The Los Angeles, Calif., Single Tax League, has accompanied the copy of the resolution printed in our Bi-Monthly News Letter with the following, which is properly designated a "cameo;" Mr. David Woodhead is responsible for it.

1. There is a vital and fundamental difference between that portion of the National wealth represented by land values and by other forms of wealth.

(2) The price of land is simply the amount of wealth which can be demanded from capital and labor for the opportunity to produce wealth upon it; and land value exists only where a civilized, intelligent, wealth-producing population exists. It is purely the product of the community and is not produced by the individual.