

THE PRESENT PROGRAMME AND STATUS OF THE SINGLE TAX REFORM.

(Continued)

(For the Review.)

By **SCHUYLER ARNOLD**

This article, which will be printed serially in the REVIEW, is perhaps the most important contribution to the history of the movement so far made. It should have a wide circulation, for it will be invaluable for reference in the future. Its publication in book form on its completion, with other matter comprising a Single Tax Year Book, is in contemplation.—Editor SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

PROPOSALS IN THE VARIOUS STATES.

What has already been said gives a general idea of the status of the Single Tax movement throughout this country, but a word as to what is being done in a few of the States at present, and how they are doing it will be of interest.

The only States where any considerable Single Tax movement is being carried on, are Oregon, Missouri, Washington and Rhode Island, and even here, the Single Tax is being approached in a roundabout way. In Arkansas, California, Idaho, Colorado, Ohio and Arizona, progressive movements have started which are very encouraging to Single Taxers. The greatest progress has been made in Oregon, and a sketch of the fight there will illustrate, in a general way, what is being done in the other States mentioned.

The starter and backbone of the movement in Oregon is Mr. W. S. U'Ren. He came into Oregon in 1882 as an ardent and enthusiastic Single Taxer, and it was not long before he had quite a body of followers. However, he soon saw the uselessness of trying to accomplish very much by the formation of Single Tax societies, as was being done elsewhere, and decided that if anything was to be done it must be by entirely different methods. With this idea, U'Ren started by building up a following of progressive thinkers, and from the early '90's on he devoted his energies to the Initiative and Referendum, because in this he saw a long step toward increasing the possibility of a Single Tax if a majority of the people should desire it. No sooner had this been adopted in 1902 than U'Ren and his followers (The People's Power League) started in their winning fight for further reforms, such as the Recall, Direct Primaries, Presidential Preference, and the Corrupt Practices Act.

All this time they have kept the Single Tax in mind and have been slowly educating their followers. U'Ren had figured out that before the Single Tax proposal was sprung there should be a State wide campaign of

education, and this needed a great deal of money. It was just at this crisis that Mr. Joseph Fels appeared and contributed \$16,775 during the eighteen months preceding the general election of 1910 when, by a close majority, they adopted a home rule amendment by referendum.

In Missouri, as in Oregon, the Single Tax movement had become a live issue in current politics, and was voted on and defeated at a State wide Referendum in the general election of 1912. The leaders for the Single Tax movement here, as did the Oregonian leaders, early saw the value of the Referendum and Initiative as a means of getting the Single Tax, and they began their fight for direct legislation as early as 1897. Before this, the Anti-Poverty Society and the later Single Tax League of Missouri, had failed in their attempt to get any serious consideration from the State legislature.

No active headway was made in the movement until Dr. Preston Hill and S. L. Moser, of St. Louis, got behind it. They were first seriously handicapped by lack of funds until, in 1900, James Eads How, "the millionaire tramp," announced that he would give a \$300,000 inheritance to a "Public Fund and Welfare Association," and called on the people of St. Louis to meet and elect its members. Dr. Hill and Mr. Moser rounded up all the Single Tax advocates they could find and got control of the meeting, and Dr. Hill was elected president of the Association. They agreed to use the money in an effort to establish the Single Tax in Missouri, and they decided to renew their assaults on the legislature for the Initiative and Referendum. Their efforts were not unavailing, because the 1903 session of the legislature agreed to submit the Initiative and Referendum to the people at the election of the following November. Though their measure was defeated by 53,000 in a total vote of nearly 700,000, they were not disheartened.

With the remainder of the How fund and some small contributions, they kept up their campaign of education for the Initiative and Referendum until 1907, when the Democratic legislature again submitted it to the voters. This time it was adopted.

Dr. Hill and his associates did not immediately ask the people of the State for the Single Tax, as they wanted the voters first to try out the new and unfamiliar weapon on some other question. While this was being done, the Single Taxers were very busy perfecting a powerful State-wide organization and beginning a campaign of education such as was being carried on in Oregon. The funds for this were largely raised locally, only \$1,500 being awarded from the Fels fund.

The Missouri Single Tax organization, with Dr. Hill as president, was known as the Equitable Taxation League, and among its members were men from all walks of life. It has also "enlisted the co-operation of such organizations as the Grange and the Society of Equity, the State Teachers' Association, the principal labor organizations, and many of the influential business men's associations in St. Louis, Kansas City, Joplin, St. Joseph, Springfield and other cities."*

* "The Single Taxers," by Frank P. Stockbridge in *Everybody's Magazine*, April, 1912.

Here, as in Oregon, they are attempting to overcome the opposition of the farmers by trying to make them realize "the fact that it is not *land*, but *land values* that are to be taxed under the new system, and that the farmers own less than 40%, and probably less than 25%, of the land values in the State.† The proposal of the Equitable Taxation League differed from that of the People's Power League in that they did not propose to take taxes off personalty and improvements at once "but to reduce these assessments gradually—25% every two years—until the Single Tax on land values becomes an actuality in 1920."† To make this plan possible a constitutional amendment was submitted to the popular vote in November, 1912, but was defeated.

The only other State in which the Single Tax movement has actually become a political issue is Rhode Island. Here ex-Governor Dr. L. F. C. Garvin has been impressing the Single Tax doctrines on the people for thirty years. While a State senator he succeeded in getting a separate assessment law passed, but he has not had such good fortune with the local option measure that he has been urging. Since 1910 the Fels Commission have been helping by adopting an educational campaign similar to U'Ren's in Clackamus County.

John Z. White, a veteran Single Tax worker, demonstrated the effect of the Single Tax by an analysis of the tax roll of the city of Woonsocket, and after nearly a year of arduous work he produced an excellent pamphlet showing that a majority of the tax payers would benefit by the adoption of land value taxation. The advocates are hopeful of getting some action in the near future through the pressure of public sentiment and they are greatly aided by the fact that no constitutional amendment is required for its adoption. However, the movement has not yet passed the educational stage.

Next to these States in Single Tax activities are the cities of Everett and Seattle in Washington. The cities of this State have the right to adopt the Commission form of government, under a charter plan that includes the Initiative, Referendum and Recall. Besides this right, the Grandy Act, passed in 1911, entitles all cities of first class to tax only land values for city purposes if they amend their charters.

On November 7, 1911, Everett, by a 98 majority, amended its charter to provide for the exemption of improvements from local taxes. This amendment, which does not exempt personal property, exempted only 25% of the value of improvements for the following year and took four years to reach a full exemption. Even after this popular demand had been made, the City Commission omitted the Single Tax from the new charter, but did agree to submit it as a separate proposition when the new charter should be voted upon.

Four months after Everett adopted its amendment, Seattle defeated the Erickson amendment. This proposed to exempt all personal property and improvements after July 1, 1912.

† "The Single Taxers," by Frank P. Stockbridge, in *Everybody's Magazine*, April, 1912.

Herbert S. Bigelow, President of the Constitutional Convention, which is the culmination of the long Ohio fight for the "I. and R." begun under the leadership of Tom. L. Johnson, is, since the death of Mr. Johnson, the acknowledged leader of the Ohio Single Taxers. They are planning an active Single Tax campaign if the Initiative and Referendum are adopted. The Fels Fund has also aided this fight by contributing several thousand dollars.

Dr. Hill, spoken of before in connection with the Missouri situation, was the starter of the "I. and R." agitation which began a number of years ago in Arizona. The movement for direct legislation in Colorado was also instigated by Single Tax advocates as "a way out." It was not until after eight years of campaigning, led by Senator Bucklin, John B. McGauran, John H. Gabriel, J. R. Herrman, and other ardent Single Taxers, that they succeeded in getting the Initiative and Referendum into their constitution, although it has cumbersome and expensive features inserted by the bosses and the boss-controlled newspapers, that make its operation difficult." Again, in California there was a strong Single Tax sentiment back of the "I. and R." campaign.

The status of the Single Taxers in this country is well expressed by Mr. F. P. Stockbridge when he says, "It is hardly beyond the fact to say that wherever the movement for the restoration of the government to the people has been accomplished, the objective of the Single Tax has been one of the inspiring forces behind the movement, if not the main one."*

(*To be Continued*).

WHAT IS THE SINGLE TAX?

(*For the Review*.)

By **PH. H. CORNICK.**

The so-called Single Tax on land values is a means to an end—a simple and practicable political expedient whereby land may be made common property without resort to judicial expropriation or force of arms; and whereby alone the common heritage of the human race may thereafter be equably administered.

In an incomplete form, it was first advocated as a fiscal measure by a group of political economists in France, just prior to the outbreak of the French revolution. It was similarly advocated by certain American statesmen in the early part of the nineteenth century, and sprang up sporadically in various parts of the world, sometimes as a result of the works of its earlier French proponents, sometimes independently.

In 1879, however, Henry George, an American political economist, published a work entitled "Progress and Poverty," in which he clearly demon-

* "The Single Taxers," by Frank P. Stockbridge, in *Everybody's Magazine*, April, 1912.