

SINGLE TAXERS' BANQUET

Massachusetts Members Hear of the Recent Work in Delaware.

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON SPEAKS

He Explains the Wants of Henry George's Followers—Praises Mayor Quincy—Reports on Delaware.

BOSTON, Feb. 22.—The Massachusetts Single Tax League held its annual banquet in the American House this afternoon. About 250 members and guests were present. William Lloyd Garrison presided. At his right sat Mayor Josiah Quincy. The special object of the gathering on this day was to hear reports from those on the ground of the single-tax campaign now being conducted in Delaware, with the hope of carrying that State at the next election, and securing the passage of a law providing for a single tax on land. Mr. Garrison opened the after-dinner speaking. He said:

We, who call ourselves single taxers, believe that the ideal republic is no "glittering generality," but an attainable possibility. Ours is a simple and just demand. We ask that what is palpably wrong in law shall be made right upon the clearest demonstration. We point to the central wrong when we indicate evil taxation, whereby power is given to the few to profit by the injury of the many; to the unequaled burdens of legal exaction, the interference with the natural distribution of wealth, and, above all, the monopoly of land. We present a simple remedy for a plain disease.

We have no panacea for the social evils, but the natural one. If a wrong tax diverts the earnings of the people into private pockets instead of the Government Treasury, we say: "Kill the tax." To do this is unpopular, because abolishing a tax takes away a privilege from somebody, and nobody ever yet lost a privilege without protesting against the violation of the property rights. An odium, therefore, attaches to the disturbers of established custom. That odium we of the single tax belief are glad to bear. We offer to our critics and opponents a sure way of stopping our agitation. It is to give us a fair chance to apply our remedy. If the remedy is as foolish and chimerical as they declare, we shall be speedily covered with confusion. If ill results follow, no explanations, no excuses, no theories will avail. All we ask is rope enough to hang ourselves. The attitude of those in the opposition implies that they have not the courage of their convictions. We avow the courage of ours.

Our principles are pervasive, and to perceive their greatest advance, one must look for it not alone in the growing ranks of the single tax movement, but in the sentiments of the country at large. They are epidemic and crop cut constantly. Notable instances are the enlightened inaugural address of ex-Mayor Sargent of New-Haven; the action of Mayor Pingree of Detroit; the remarkable report issued from the Illinois State Department of Labor, and more recently in the inaugural address of Josiah Quincy, Mayor of Boston. Mr. Quincy has outlined a reform which will be of more benefit to the city than would be a widening of all its narrow streets or an improvement in its buildings. In that charmingly written story by the father of our guest, Josiah Phillips Quincy, entitled "The Peckster Professorship," there is an illustrating and reflective reflection which I am fond of quoting:

"The precise number of thousands represented by lands of the late Ephram Peckster, the curious in such matters may easily ascertain; while, as for his personal possessions, it is safe to say that the estimate of the rural assessor (when multiplied by about thirty) cannot be far out of the way."

From this the evolution of the son's proposition to concentrate taxes on real estate and public franchises is most natural. I cannot help regretting, however, that as the personal property tax is eliminated from the plan, the same untenable principle of personal property taxation should be applied to legacies, adding another terror to death. Death and taxes should dissolve partnership in this enlightened era. Our present system of taxation is not only inequitable, but vicious. It is a weapon of oppression and persecution. It is a device to limit business prosperity, to banish good citizens, to interfere with the natural distribution of wealth in our midst. It accounts in a large measure for excessive poverty, for bad sanitary conditions, for crowded tenement houses, unhealthy workshops, and low public morals. It is also responsible, in a large degree, for excessive and congested fortunes, for unhealthy standards of living, and for profligate expenditures.

It facilitates machine politics and deadens public spirit. It is a reproach to the civilization of the community. Mr. Quincy has but to point out the channels in which our aid can best be utilized and he may depend upon it that for any service we may possibly be able to render no reward of office will be asked or any remuneration which it is in his power to bestow.

Mr. Garrison introduced Mayor Quincy, who expressed his pleasure at being present and his interest in the question of taxation. H. V. Hetzel of Philadelphia was the next speaker. He said:

The "Delaware campaign" of the single taxers for the capture of the Diamond State is the most unique and remarkable political manifestation that has ever occurred in American history. To practically test the theory so ably presented and thoroughly maintained by Henry George, the enthusiastic men and women active in its propaganda determined to make an effort for its establishment in the State of Delaware, believing that it beyond all other States presented the most favorable conditions. Its population numbers less than two hundred thousand, the voters being not more than forty thousand, more than one-third of whom are in the City of Wilmington; no Constitutional prohibition as to methods of taxation; an intelligent people, unincumbered by any issue except the old political parties of almost equal voting power, and within easy reach of Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, and New-York, whose able speakers for the movement are at quick call.

The campaign has now gone on for eight months. Wilmington's large opera house is crowded every Sunday night by eager listeners to the "new crusade." The first meeting was addressed by Henry George, who persisted in talking politics in spite of the threat to arrest by the authorities. All the notable speakers of the single-tax movement have appeared, or will appear, in succession during the campaign. Every ward in Wilmington has a single-tax club, all of the larger towns have similar organizations, and every outlying town or village has been visited by local managers who reside in the towns, and, with the aid of horse and wagon, often on foot, go from one place to another holding meetings, organizing clubs or paving the way for the speakers sent out from the headquarters at Wilmington, where a permanent Secretary directs the propaganda. Tons of literature are being distributed, and 7,000 copies of Justice sent to Delawareans every week. The results thus far have been highly gratifying to those engaged in the movement. Reports come in continually of the accession to the ranks of men of prominence and ability in the State. This especially is true of Wilmington and its neighborhood.

There has been no effort made for independent political action. Vote for the man that will in-dorse the single tax, regardless of his political affinity, is thus far the advice to the voters.

The Rev. Joseph E. Taylor of Lewes, Del., and Dr. B. F. Longstreet of Dover, Del., also spoke on the single-tax theory and the Delaware campaign.