

Wisconsin

IN leaving New York State and coming into the freer atmosphere of Wisconsin to make my home, I at once noticed that the philosophy of Henry George and Herbert Spencer in regard to land, and the equal right of all men to the use of the earth, had found a lodgment in the minds of the people generally and was cropping out in political platforms and in other ways. Soon after I came here, about a year ago, there was formed the Wisconsin Farmer-Labor League which was a movement to weld the organized workers together with the organized farmers in a political movement to take the State out of the hands of special privilege and restore it to the people. For Wisconsin, notwithstanding all its progressive traditions, has been in the hands of a reactionary administration for six years, and this was only because of divisions in the ranks of the progressives which prevented them from concentrating their votes.

This Farmer-Labor League in its platform declared in favor of the complete revision of the tax system of the State, and demanded "taxes to force into use idle lands held for speculative purposes," and "a gradual exemption from taxation of farm improvements and city homes up to \$5,000."

Last June was held the State Convention of the Non-partisan League composed of farmer delegates elected by conventions held in 45 counties of the State to which organized labor had also been invited to send delegates, and it did so.

The League Convention in nearly the same language dealt with land taxation and the exemption of improvements and declared the water powers of the State to be the inalienable property of all the people.

The LaFollette progressive Republican platform adopted later also declared for an exemption of taxation on improvements. Between the progressive Republicans, the Non-partisan League, and organized labor there was formed a nearly perfect amalgamation, which brought about the nomination and election of John J. Blaine for Governor, George F. Comings for Lieutenant Governor, Elmer Hall for Secretary of State. Twenty-six members of the legislature were elected who had received the League endorsement, and many of those who did not receive League endorsement, (principally owing to the fact that the League was not organized in the territory from which they came) will nevertheless, we believe, support the League bills providing for taxation to force idle land into use and to exempt improvements.

Governor Blaine in his message to the legislature dealt first with taxation, the initiative, referendum and recall, and particularly emphasized the importance of taxation, "because," he said, "the power to tax carries with it the power to destroy." The Governor recommended decreases in property taxation, increases in the income and inheritance taxes, commented on the vast tracts of agricultural lands lying idle and unproductive and said that pioneers who make improvements, "find that the assessor comes along and

adds an increased valuation, and then the tax collector comes and collects an increased toll because of the industry and toil of the homebuilders. The result is that private parties hold vast tracts of these agricultural lands for speculative purposes, and it is the pioneer who gives the idle lands their value. A righteous policy demands that the industry of the pioneers should be recognized."

Then he recommends also a general exemption from taxation of real estate improvements to promote home ownership in general

The Tax Commissioner of the State is entirely in sympathy with the views of Governor Blaine and have several times in their reports gone even farther in their recommendations than has the Governor. In their report for 1916 this commission recommended the entire abandonment of personal property taxation.

Edward Nordman, State Director of Markets, has given out a statement recently commending the Ralston-Nolan bill. Mr. Nordman is a member of the Non-partisan League. He said:

"That bill would convert our federal tax system from an instrument of oppression into a machinery for the relief of the present distress in our economic condition.

"Industry must be relieved of a part of its burden of taxation, and monopolized natural resources must be taxed more heavily. The present system levies a heavy burden on the farmer and the consumer. It is an indirect taxation on consumption. It decreases the buying power of the consumer and reacts unfavorably on the farmers' market. It increases the cost of production for the farmer by taxing the supplies he buys."

He further points out that the bill would discourage vacant lot speculation and said it would *not* tax the farmers' industry or the products of his industry, his improvements, his thrift, or the honest earnings of his toil.

CHESTER C. PLATT.

The Single Tax Vote in Ohio and Pennsylvania

THE peak of the Single Tax vote in Pennsylvania was reached by Janette Reynolds for Auditor-General, her vote being 2,300.

The vote of the party in Ohio is interesting. Excepting the judiciary vote, the highest vote cast was that for Henry B. Strong for U. S. Senator, 2,647, Macauley next and Edwards next. Mr. Strong's vote over the other candidates was due to the vote in his home town, Cincinnati. Foote, our candidate for Governor, received 1,487. But the surprising vote is that cast for the Single Tax Party's judiciary candidates, and our information printed in last issue needs to be amended. George Cook, candidate for Judge of the Supreme Court, received 237,556 votes. Hersey, our other judiciary candidate, ran next to Cook, receiving 140,692. Jos. W. Gottlieb, our candidate for Chief Justice, received 129,681.

We have reason to congratulate ourselves on this vote,