

PRESIDENT TAFT ON CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

President Taft in his speech at the opening of the Conservation Congress in St. Paul on September 5th outlined his plan for the conservation of natural resources. He proposes that the government shall retain the natural resources which it now owns and shall permit them to be utilized on a leasing system which shall fix a flat annual rental during the life of the lease which shall be from twenty to forty years and an additional sum which shall be a percentage of the market value of the product. His words in reference to the coal lands are illustrative of his whole scheme, and are in part as follows:

HOW BEST TO DISPOSE OF COAL LANDS.

Authorities of the Geological Survey estimate that in the United States to-day there is a supply of about 3,000 billions of tons of coal, and that of this, 1,000 billions are in the public domain. Of course, the other 2,000 billions are within private ownership and under no more control as to the use or the prices at which the coal may be sold than any other private property. If the Government leases the coal lands and acts as any landlord would, and imposes conditions in its leases like those which are now imposed by the owners in fee of coal mines in the various coal regions of the East, then it would retain over the disposition of the coal deposits a choice as to the assignee of the lease, a power of resuming possession at the end of the term of the lease, or of readjusting terms of fixed periods of the lease, which might easily be framed to enable it to exercise a limited but effective control in the disposition and sale of the coal to the public.

It has been urged that the leasing system has never been adopted in this country, and that its adoption would largely interfere with the investment of capital and the proper development and opening up of the coal resources. I venture to differ entirely from this view. My investigations show that many owners of mining property of this country do not mine it themselves, and do not invest their money

in the plants necessary for the mining; but they lease their properties for a term of years varying from twenty to thirty and forty years, under conditions requiring the erection of a proper plant and the investment of a certain amount of money in the development of the mines, and fixing a rental and a royalty, sometimes an absolute figure and sometimes one proportioned to the market value of the coal. Under this latter method the owner of the mine shares in the prosperity of his lessees when coal is high and the profits good, and also shares to some extent in their disappointment when the price of coal falls.

I have looked with some care into a report made at the instance of President Roosevelt upon the disposition of coal lands in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand. These are peculiarly mining countries, and their experience ought to be most valuable. In all these countries the method for the disposition and opening of coal mines originally owned by the Government is by granting leasehold, and not by granting an absolute title. The terms of the leases run all the way from twenty to fifty years, while the amount of land which may be leased to any individual there is from 320 acres to 2,000 acres. It appears that a full examination was made and the opinions of all the leading experts on the subject were solicited and given, and that with one accord they approved in all respects the leasing system. Its success is abundantly shown. It is possible that at first considerable latitude will have to be given to the Executive in drafting these forms of lease, but as soon as experiment shall show which is the most workable and practicable, its use should be provided for specifically by statute.

In the opportunity to readjust the terms upon which the coal shall be held by the tenant, either at the end of each lease or at periods during the term, the Government may secure the benefit of sharing in the increased price of coal and the additional profit made by the tenant. By imposing conditions in respect to the character of work to be done in the mines, the Government may control the mines and the treatment of employes with reference to safety.

By denying the right to transfer the lease except by the written permission of the Government authorities, it may withhold the needed consent when it is proposed to transfer the leasehold to persons interested in establishing a monopoly of coal production in any State or neighborhood. As one-third of all the coal supply is held by the Government, it seems wise that it should retain such control over the mining and the sale as the relation of lessor to lessee furnishes. The change from the absolute grant to the leasing system will involve a good deal of trouble in the outset, and the training of experts in the matter of making proper leases; but the change will be a good one and can be made. The change is in the interest of conservation, and I am glad to approve it.

In closing President Taft gave some words of advice that might be profitably followed by most of the so-called "conservationists". He said:

I beg of you, therefore, in your deliberations and in your informal discussions, when men come forward to suggest evils that the promotion of conservation is to remedy, that you invite them to point out the specific evils and the specific remedies; that you invite them to come down to details in order that their discussions may flow into channels that shall be useful rather than into periods that shall be eloquent and entertaining, without shedding real light on the subject. The people should be shown exactly what is needed in order that they make their representatives in Congress and the State Legislature do their intelligent bidding.

In an excellent notice of "Land and Liberty" by Alex W. Johnston, A. M. of Sydney, Aus., whose frequent contributions to the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW* have made him well known to our readers, the *Chicago News* comments as follows: "The Henry George theory of the Single Tax is accepted in all its simplicity."

The *Boston Common*, of Sept 24th contains an article by John Macmillan entitled "Shifting the Tax Burden," which is an account of Vancouver's experiment.

WAGES IN THE SHOE INDUSTRY.

Replying to an interview in the Cincinnati *Times-Star* with Ernest Krohn, shoe manufacturer, that English manufacturers pay their employes so much less than American manufacturers that a tariff is necessary for the protection of the American workingmen, Mr. Daniel Kiefer replies in the same journal as follows:

"If shoe workers were paid by the day instead of by the piece the labor cost of a pair of shoes would be determined by figuring the time actually spent by each worker on that pair. This would be the real basis for comparing difference in labor cost here with that abroad. When weekly earnings of American workers are compared with weekly earnings of foreign workers and the difference presented as an argument in tariff discussion, while nothing is said about the value of the product, a fair and intelligent conclusion is impossible. That is the reason why protectionists always keep silent regarding the value of the product of American labor when comparing American wages with foreign."

THE METHODIST CONFERENCE FOR THE SINGLE TAX.

The recent Methodist Conference at Toronto adopted the report of the General Committee on Sociological Questions of which the following is a part:

"Your Committee have considered the memorials on the land question submitted to it. Believing that 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' and that under the providence of God the State is the trustee whose duty it is to enact the conditions under which these divine gifts should be used for the benefit of all, we therefore condemn the handing over of large tracts of land to individuals and corporations without attaching conditions which would prevent their being held for special speculative purposes only. Whenever vested rights are not interfered with we recommend legislation which will prevent any individual or corporation from profiting hereafter from the unearned increment in the value of land. We note