

OLD AGE PENSIONS AGAIN

EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW:

I note in your September issue an ably-written communication from Mr. E. W. Doty of Cleveland, objecting to the REVIEWS' support of old age pensions. I wish to express myself as heartily in accord with the REVIEW's position. I dissent entirely from Mr. Doty's point of view, which seems to me distressingly harsh and narrow.

Your correspondent contends that under Single Tax regime no one will need a pension. Perhaps not, after Single Tax has produced its full beneficent result. Meanwhile the transition stage is likely to be a long one, and pensions in the near future assuredly will be needed and needed badly.

Mr. Doty seems rather shocked at the proposal to give people something they have not worked for. The objection is unduly theoretic and formal. Never—not even under Single Tax—let us say it boldly, will the laborer secure precisely what he earns. We shall never see that mechanical, that arithmetical kind of justice upon which your correspondent seems to base his criticism. The question is practical, utilitarian. Is it beneficial to the whole community, to the young and to the old, that old age be dignified and safe-guarded? If so, let us have pensions; otherwise, let us not.

Your critic fears that pensions will prove corrupting. He cites as an instance the federal soldiers' pension, which to be sure is an unspeakable iniquity. But perhaps it may be shortly reformed and purified; stranger things have occurred in twentieth century politics than the purging of our pension rolls. However that may be, I do not believe that the German pensions for superannuated teachers corrupt anybody; on the contrary they have an ennobling influence upon the community.

Mr. Doty (following Henry George) makes a positive suggestion in lieu of old age pensions. He proposes per capita division of the surplus public revenue; or, to quote more accurately, he asserts that

per capita division is "not a pension scheme." We will not call it a scheme, but I certainly think it a pension plan or system. Per capita division includes non-producers in abundance; the sick and the aged, the infant and the imbecile (presumably) are to receive their equal share of the surplus. Does not this "take from those who produce and give to those who do not;" does it not thus accord with and satisfy Mr. Doty's own definition of a pension? And what is a "producer," after all? No one really knows.

In conclusion, let me add, reminiscent of the conference, that I trust we shall continue to have "forty-seven varieties" of Singletax; and that one among the forty-seven will be Single Tax and Old-Age-Pensions—MALCOLM C. BURKE.

OREGON

Final returns on Peoples Land and Loan Single Tax law at this writing (Nov. 14) are not in. The latest is that the vote is approximately forty thousand Yes and one hundred seventy thousand No. These proportions will not be changed much by the official returns.

Louis F. Post said last year that twenty thousand votes for such a radical measure would be doing well, and thirty-five thousand would be a victory. But most of us are disappointed. I expected sixty to seventy-five thousand for the bill.

We had no money and were unable to make any campaign beyond an argument in the State pamphlet and a few speeches in Portland and vicinity by a few of the Labor Leaders and Single Taxers.

Our only active newspaper support was the *Oregon Labor Press* and the *Benton County Courier*. The *Portland Daily News*, (Scripp League Paper) was sympathetic. The *Oregonian* was very fair and liberal in publishing letters. I do not know another great paper that is so fair in the publication of opponents' letters. Of course, the *Oregonian* opposed the bill both in its editorial and news columns, and very ably.

It is yet too early for final judgment on