

LABOR'S RELATION TO LAND.

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When I read the heading and the first paragraph of John McClatchie's article in the June issue of The Typographical Journal on "Fallacies of the Single Tax" I concluded the writer thereof must be a member of the People's Anti-Single Tax League recently formed in California and composed of land speculators and monopolists and other enemies of progressive ideas, one of the bunch being a person holding a responsible position in the business office of the Los Angeles Times. But I found on further perusal that the article was written by a socialist — variety not stated — who doesn't seem to be class conscious, else he would not have launched forth his alleged arguments against a principle that when applied will go a longer distance in the direction of solving the labor problem along the lines of justice and freedom than any other proposition, whether it be the theory known as socialism and based on tyranny, restriction, despotism and compulsion, or that of philosophic anarchy with all its impractical nonsense.

Mr. McClatchie asserts that the people do not suffer from land monopoly, but from the monopoly of capital. Does he know that capital comes from I? Because of private property in land wealth -equitably distributed and in consequence there to be a monopoly of capital. Wherever that condition is found there will be discovered at its base land monopoly, probably assisted by a special privilege in franchise, tariff, patents or money. Three-fourths of the capitalized value of the steel is represented in land monopoly and not in or buildings. If all the capital in the country was destroyed tomorrow it would be necessary for labor to apply itself to natural resources in order to reproduce what had been swept away. But it would be at the terms of the land owner.

It is true that in farming the landlord takes the lion's share, if he owns his own farm, but that is due to the fact that he is landlord, laborer and capitalist. But his greatest interest is as a laborer. Few farmers could quit their occupation and live on ground

rent. But the tenant farmer doesn't get the lion's share, and this class is increasing so fast that it is a calamity. Some heart-rending testimony about this matter was published by the federal commission on industrial relations, of which Frank P. Walsh was chairman.

Mr. McClatchie believes that speculators in vacant land would still hold it idle, even if it was taxed at its full value, and wait until the necessities of the community compelled persons to buy out the speculators at enormously enhanced prices. If that could be done, why do the landed interests oppose the single tax? And by the same token, if the land value tax can be shifted, why do the gents who live on the unearned increment of land oppose the Henry George doctrine?

Land is the source of our living, the source of all wealth, the one indispensable factor to which labor must be applied in order to produce more wealth, capital, assisting in the process of production. The unemployed problem hasn't been solved by the taxation of land values, because the single tax hasn't yet been applied to its full extent, but where a partial application has been made the demand for labor has increased and wages have gone higher.

In one paragraph of the article under discussion it is asserted that ground rent would be eliminated because of the forcing of idle land into use, and there would be no revenue for the support of government. If that is to be the case why did the writer of the article in a previous paragraph state that land owners would pay the tax and eventually soak prospective purchasers?

The income tax is better than the present system, but it is inquisitorial and can be evaded. Furthermore, some of it must be levied on earned incomes. That is unjust, so long as a source of revenue is available that would not touch the earnings of any man, but would take the earnings of population, which is represented in the rental value of land. Death duties or inheritance taxes are better than taxes on labor products. But why wait till a man is dead before taxing his unearned wealth? Put in force the single tax, abolish all laws that sanction a privilege or foster a monopoly and an equitable distribution of wealth will result. The community-created value of land will be sufficient to defray the expenses of government — national, state and local — and there will be no need to levy fines on men for producing wealth while living, or confiscating their earnings when they die. There is no need to nationalize

land. It is only necessary to nationalize ground rent.

Mr. McClatchie should read the last chapter of Karl Marx's "Das Capital" and commit to memory this statement: "We have seen that the expropriation of the people from the soil has been the means of building up the capitalistic mode of production." In that same chapter are some illuminating object lessons to show that when labor has free or fair access to land the ownership of machinery does not give the capitalist any power over labor to dictate the rate of wages, working hours or other conditions of employment.