

there is no reason why confidence in the general sanity and fair-mindedness of the people, which is the essence of democracy, should fail with respect to judges.

When fairly looked at it seems that this fear of impulsive action is mainly a left-over product of oppressive and repressive government.

It ignores every-day proofs of the natural conservatism of really self-governing people. It tends to hide the real danger to democracy of giving irresponsible power to any class of men.

A "Judge Jeffreys" impressively shows that judicial office does not sanctify the incumbent, and that democracy cannot safely make judges responsible to any power other than the people. Surely a good judge has no special reason to fear the people, or to demand insurance against their possible mistakes.

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W. G. STEWART.

AN OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR WILSON.

I want to express my appreciation of the advanced position you have taken with reference to legislation that will extend the power of the people. You seem never to have come under the influence of the fear of mob rule and ill advised decisions which animate the disciples of Hamilton.

Without considering the right of the people to rule their own affairs, it is plain that they constitute the most conservative force in the nation. From the very nature of the situation, in the aggregate they approach questions without motives of narrow personal selfishness; and when this factor is eliminated it is characteristic of human nature to act from principles of justice.

In the course of events in England, in New Zealand, in Oregon and elsewhere, when the people have a chance to express themselves authoritatively by means of the ballot, it is amazing to observe their conservatism. As a rule a measure that is not fully understood is lost, and the people seem willing to suffer the evils that they have unless it can be shown unmistakably that remedial measures will come up to the specifications of their proponents.

If this be true, then both principle and expediency call for an adjustment of our institutions that will give all power to the people. Even their mistakes will be valuable educationally, especially since such mistakes will not be motivated by personal selfishness.

I feel sure, for instance, that if the judiciary were subject to recall, no majority would ever recall a judge unless his course was plainly and unmis-

takably contrary to the spirit and genius of our people. And any judge who permitted his decisions to be biased by fear of the recall would be at least no worse than the hordes of present day judges who are influenced either by the wishes of their political creators or by those more subtle influences of habit and association which are crudely expressed by the word Caste.

The judiciary is the last refuge of privilege and aristocracy. The Recall is a sure means for eliminating them from the common life.

Of course all this is for the future, but as one of your political followers, I think I voice the sentiment of large numbers when I express the hope that your vision of democracy may have no Hamiltonian alloy, and also when I express the belief that the day has passed when a leader of the people can fail to see that what is basic in principle must be expedient.

GEORGE A. BRIGGS.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

THE SINGLETAX IN VANCOUVER.

Vancouver, B. C., June 21, 1911.

Twenty-five years ago the site of Vancouver was a dense forest, although a small village had sprung up along the banks of Burrard Inlet. It is estimated, however, that at that time the entire population in the neighborhood did not exceed a thousand persons. On a Sunday afternoon in June, 1886, this village was almost destroyed by fire, only a few houses somewhat isolated escaping. But the territory of what will be Greater Vancouver in the near future, has today a population of 140,000 to 150,000 and is growing at a rapid pace.

Vancouver has become famous for totally exempting buildings and other improvements from taxation, and from consequently levying taxes on land values alone is called a Singletax city. Since the experiment began, land values have jumped tremendously and many fortunes have been made out of speculation in building sites. Every step towards the reduction of taxation on buildings has given added impetus to the value of land. Some correspondents of The Public have consequently expressed apprehension that low rates of land value taxation and undervaluations would result disastrously to Vancouver through further speculation in land values followed by a crash; and that as the city is represented as a Singletax municipality this disaster might give a back-set to the Singletax movement unless it were generally understood that the disaster was due not to the Singletax but to not enough of the Singletax.

These fears caused the publisher of The Single Tax Review of New York to commission me to make a thorough investigation, so that the Review could place before its readers definite information to guide them in forming conclusions. I came here with many misgivings, and my first fortnight of investigation

had a tendency to intensify them; but I have visited other Pacific Coast cities since, investigating their tax systems to make a comparison with Vancouver, and with better opportunity for investigation here upon my return I have dismissed my fears. No danger would come to the Singletax movement if there should be a complete collapse in Vancouver's prosperity tomorrow.

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Although Vancouver is absorbing a very small proportion of her increasing land values, she has made a tremendous advance in appreciating the Singletax. A comparison with Seattle will explain.

In Seattle the intersection of Madison Street with Second Avenue is the very center of the retail trade of that city, and the demand for retail business shops makes this point command the highest rents. The quarter block south of Madison Street on the west side of Second Avenue is covered with one story shacks that would discredit a country village of 300 inhabitants. The tenants pay a rental of over \$40,000 a year. On the assessment rolls these shacks are valued at \$7,360, and the land on which they are situated at \$237,820. The tax levy is 33.9 mills on the dollar, making a tax of \$8,311.60. Directly opposite on Second Avenue is a magnificent office building which tends to inspire confidence in the future of the city even to the stranger passing by. According to the assessor's books this site, although of equal area with the site of the shacks, is not as valuable by \$17,100. It is assessed at \$220,720. The improvements are assessed at \$225,540, making the aggregate value for taxation \$446,260, which augments the public revenues to the extent of \$15,128.00—almost twice as much as comes from the shack property on the opposite side of Second Avenue.

Contrast that contrast with the point where land values are most stable and highest in Vancouver. The two principal business thoroughfares in Vancouver are Granville Street extending north and south, and Hastings street extending east and west. At the intersection of these two streets land values reach their highest pitch. The block at the northwest corner belongs to the Dominion of Canada and is exempt from taxation. It is the site of the Post Office building. Diagonally across is one of the most substantial structures in the city, the Bank of Commerce building, fronting 60 feet on Hastings Street and extending back on Granville Street 120 feet. This site is valued on the assessment roll at \$157,500. The building is assessed at \$228,000.*

It occupies the first two lots next to Granville Street, and eight feet of the third lot. Two years ago the rest of the third lot and the adjoining fourth lot—the two having a frontage of 44 feet—were occupied by the Leland Hotel, a three story antiquated frame structure valued on the assessment rolls at \$4,400. The four corresponding lots on Pender Street (the

southern boundary of the square of which Hastings is the northern) at the Granville corner were then covered with one-story shacks facing on Granville Street, similar to those of Seattle. They are on the assessment rolls at a valuation of \$8,000. Three weeks ago I visited the tenants as I did those in the Seattle shacks when making inquiries there, and learned from them that the aggregate rentals they were paying amounted to more in one month than the assessed value of the buildings. But building is now in progress there. Permits have been issued from the building inspector's office for one of the finest office buildings yet erected in Vancouver: a steel-reinforced concrete fire-proof structure faced with brick and terra-cotta on Granville and Pender Streets, to cost \$400,000. The Bank of Commerce site, the most desirable in the city, pays into the city treasury \$3,150 and the building is exempt. The site of the shacks that have just been razed was assessed at \$193,750, and the owner was compelled to pay into the city treasury \$3,875.00 last year. He had to build.

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The charter of the City of Vancouver limits the rate to be levied in any year to 13-1/3 mills on the dollar, except what is required for payment of interest on outstanding debentures, and the amount required for a sinking fund therefor, and for school purposes. Since 1906 the net rate levied has been twenty mills. Provincial legislation will be necessary before the rate can be increased very much. That could be circumvented by an issue of short term debentures, but they are difficult to dispose of and command a high rate of interest. However, there will be little opposition to legislation when the time comes for increasing the rate above what the charter now allows, so satisfactory has the experiment been thus far.

As an indication of how land values are increasing on the assessment rolls of Vancouver, the block bounded by Granville, Hastings, Seymour and Cordova, opposite the block already described, was assessed in 1909 at a valuation of \$482,050, in 1910 at \$620,550, and in 1911 at \$775,700. This is the second most valuable block in the City, and I haven't the least doubt that any lot in it would readily sell at double the assessed value notwithstanding they are encumbered with unsuitable buildings.

L. S. DICKEY.

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See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending like bloodhounds from the slip,
Woe, want and murder o'er a land!
Ev'n in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pampered Luxury, Flattery by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud Property, extended wide,
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glittering show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefined,
Placed for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below.

—Robert Burns.

*The Mayor and Council of Vancouver are elected annually in January. Within a very short time after election the Council is organized, and the assessment rolls, prepared by the Assessment Commissioner and his assistants, are submitted for revision. Under the charter of Vancouver it is optional with the Council to rate or exempt improvements. It is the duty of the Assessment Commissioner, therefore, to have improvements assessed and placed on the roll submitted. Any Council has the power to change the policy of the previous Council by exempting improvements or taxing them as the case may be.