

Congressional Record. 48:13196. August 29, 1912.

Mr. Bulkley said:

Mr. Speaker : In view of the general interest now being manifested in the subject of taxation throughout the country, I desire to take advantage of the privilege of extending my remarks by submitting for the Record an extract from a speech by a former Member of this House, the late Hon. Tom L. Johnson, at a gathering of farmers near Akron, Ohio, August 29, 1905, when he was the Democratic candidate for governor of Ohio.

After speaking on the issues in state and county for some half hour Mr. Johnson, as was his custom, called for questions. A venerable gentleman, with long white whiskers, arose and said: "Mr. Speaker, I have a suspicion from what I have read in the papers, that you desire to place all taxes on land. Is this correct?" Some one else in the audience then called out: "Tell us about the Single Tax." Replying to the elderly man Mr. Johnson said: "Most emphatically, no." He paused for a moment, then continuing, said:

"But if you mean that I have a desire to place all taxes on land values, I answer most decidedly, 'Yes.' If you want to hear about the Single Tax, I will stay with you and let my tent meeting in the city wait, while I say that if it were not for this idea, called Single Tax, I would not be here tonight. This is the reason that I am what I am and making the fight which we are now in. A tax on land would be an unjust and iniquitous system, but a tax on land values would be the best and fairest system that the world has ever known. Laws which would bring about the taxation of land values would be of more service to humanity than any legislation ever yet enacted. Farmers are large owners of land, but not of land values. We have land in our city that sells at the rate of \$5,000,000 per acre. Have any of your farmers lands as valuable as that? In New York city there is land that sells for \$15,000,000 per acre. Is there any land in this neighborhood at that price?

"To answer my friend's question I will relate a little talk I had one day

with Congressman Pierson, of Tuscarawas County, when we were in Washington together. Pierson was a farmer and said to me one day : 'Tom, I can not go your Single Tax; it would be a hardship on the farmers, and they already have more than their share of the burden of taxation.'

"I said: 'Look here, Pierson, if I thought the Single Tax would increase the farmers' burden I would not stand for it for one minute. In fact, if I did not know it would be the greatest blessing to the farmers and to the workingmen in the city as well, I never would advocate it again. I can show you that the Single Tax will lighten the farmers' burden as compared with the present method. Let me ask you some questions to see if we can get at the facts in the matter. How much, Mr. Pierson, of the present tax burden do you think the farmers bear?' 'Well,' he answered, 'the farmers constitute over half the population of the United States, and I should say that they pay at least 60 percent of all taxes.' 'Very well, let's call it 50 percent to be safe.' 'No, no,' said Pierson, 'that's too low. They pay more than 60 percent, rather than less.' 'All right; but to be safe, let's call it 50 percent.'

"Now, Mr. Pierson, I want you to tell me how much of the value of land the farmers have in the United States? Please take into consideration all the valuable coal lands, the iron, silver, gold, copper, and other valuable mines ; the water privileges, the railroads, and their rights of way and terminals, including street railroads, telephones, and telegraphs, for these are built on the most valuable lands; all the gas and electric lighting rights of way built on land of great value; all the city lots, some of which are worth more than a whole county of farming land. I want you to take all these into consideration and then tell me how much of these values in the United States the farmers have.'

"Mr. Pierson replied, 'Well, I should say less than 5 percent.' I said, 'Call it 10 percent to be safe.' 'Oh, no, no ; that's entirely too high; that's double.' 'Well, we will call it 10 percent, anyway. Now, don't you see that if the farmers are paying 50 per cent, that if all the taxes were raised by a Single Tax on land values the farmers, since

they have but 10 percent of these values — you say 5 percent— would pay less; that their taxes would be reduced five times? That instead of paying one-half, as now, they would under that plan pay but one-tenth?'

"I declare, Tom, I never looked at it in that light, and I guess you have got me.'

"So, I say to the farmers here tonight, that this Single Tax, of which I am proud to be an advocate, would be to the over-burdened farmers and workingmen the greatest boon, the greatest blessing, the greatest godsend that any country ever knew. I wish you good night."