

BACK TO THE LAND UNDER NEW LAND LAWS.

William Roysdon in the Champaign (Ill.) Daily Gazette.

Being interested with others in finding out why rich farm lands show less population than ten years ago, I thought the right person to ask was the one that had left the farm; so I asked the retired farmer why he had left the farm. He said he didn't want his children to wear themselves out on the farm the same as he had done. The old farmer has overlooked the fact that a tool that has worn out has accomplished all that it could do, while the tool that rusts out has accomplished nothing. Then I asked the renter who was loading his goods in the car to go West why he was leaving this rich farming country. He said he had been working a farm that hadn't cost the present landlord a cent but was informed the land was worth \$200 per acre and the rent must pay 5 per cent on the amount. In addition to giving the landlord 5 per cent on his \$200 land, he must do a certain amount of work on the farm without expense to the landlord. He said if he paid cash rent the chattel mortgage shark generally got a whack at him and if he paid grain rent he was looked upon with suspicion and as the landlord was constantly adding more land to his farm and becoming more arbitrary in his dealings with his tenants, he thought he would take a chance in the West, even if he lost. So it is evident that the large land owner is to some extent responsible for the decrease in population in this rich farming country. The history of Ireland proves this. The remedy will probably be found by changing our land laws and inheritance law. The law that permits a man to do business after he is dead doesn't smell good to me.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

AN ASSESSMENT SUGGESTION.

Baltimore, October 7, 1912.

One of your correspondents, Charles K. Hale, observes* that as any application of Singletax approaches perfection (the taking of total rental values in taxes), a new basis of assessment will have to be found. Why can't the basis of assessment be computed by capitalizing the tax, say, on a 6 per cent basis, the way ground rents are capitalized in Baltimore?

To illustrate: A \$60 ground rent sells usually for \$1,000—a basis of 6 per cent. Suppose next year a tax of \$30 were imposed, reducing the \$60 to \$30 net. This would reduce the capitalized value to \$500. Yet there would be no necessity for changing the basis of assessment to \$500. Nothing more would be necessary than to consider the net rent of \$30 and the tax of \$30 together as "rent" or "tax" and let the assessment remain at \$1,000. The tax and the rental are really twins. When you put money in title deeds you simply buy a taxing power.

The possibilities of inequality by our present assessment method of capitalizing rental is much

greater than by the plan I suggest. For instance: I own a lot for which I paid \$2,500. It was assessed for \$400 for six years after I bought it. In the meantime somebody else was paying my taxes. Now if the ground rent alone had been considered, and a percentage taken, this inequality would not be so probable.

Some of our counties here have two bases of assessment, the one for county purposes higher than for State purposes. This is productive of the greatest inequality. Baltimore returns for State purposes 80 per cent, some of the counties as low as 40 per cent.

This condition is prevalent everywhere. It was the cause of Lawson Purdy's suggestion that the State take a percentage of the money raised for local expenditures in each county, ignoring their basis of assessment entirely.

With nothing but land or ground rent values to consider, the problem of assessment would be materially simplified.

JOHN SALMON.



THE RECENT VISIT OF MR. FELS TO NORWAY.*

Chicago.

This year for the first time Mr. Fels went to Norway, where his presence and invigorating addresses at Christiania to large audiences, in the "Politechnical Society" on June 18th, and "Folkets Hus" (People's House) on June 20th, electrified those who heard him.

This momentous visit was not only desirable but very important. For in Norway the Singletax cause had strangely lagged, although it was a Norwegian, the much lamented Ullmann†, who a quarter of a century ago first introduced the Georgian philosophy into all the Scandinavian countries, and although the cause has made immense strides in Denmark and Sweden.

The predominating reason for this undoubted backwardness of the Georgian movement in Norway will, upon investigation, most probably be found in the nation's long political unrest—an unrest natural to the separation of Norway from Sweden, and natural, too, when a thoroughly democratic nation must make politic choice between republic and monarchy.

Now, however, when the old Viking spirit seems to have taken hold of the social and economic problems, this splendid race of sturdy, independent people may yet, to the honor and welfare of their country, forge to the front in the Georgian movement. This the prominence of the men lining up in support of the cause seems to insure. Among these supporters, besides N. Lieng, the editor of "Retfaerd," are found Arne Garborg, the famous poet; V. Valentinsen, member of the Storting (congress); S. Wielgolaski, Superior Court Attorney; Captain Trygve Kramer; O. Solnordal, lawyer; Kr. Kolkinn, importer; Prof. S. Michelet; and among school principals, teachers, civil engineers, literary men, etc., are found I. E. Miller, Larsen Berg, I. L. Elieson, Kr. Thorp Hansen, Thore Myrvang, P. M. Lauritzen and Ferd. Lyng.

C. M. KOEDT.

*See Public of September 13, 1912, page 873.

†See Public of June 9, 1911, page 544.

*See The Public of October 4, page 945.