

Legislative Advances

A bill has been introduced in the Massachusetts legislature providing for a tax on the economic rent of forest lands of the State. Mr. Lincoln Crowell of Sandwich and Mr. Richards appeared at a hearing of this bill before the committee on taxation. Messrs. Crowell and Richards were the only ones who appeared in favor of it and no one opposed it.

The Committee did not treat the bill simply as a bit of freak legislation. Possibly because Richards had recently appeared before them in opposition to a sales tax bill and they were therefore acquainted with him and recognized him as being sane.

The committee asked some pertinent questions and evinced interest in the bill. An incident that amused Mr. Crowell was when a legislator asked the meaning of economic rent, our tax commissioner, who by word and deed has never indicated any knowledge of Georgist philosophy, told the representative that he would have to read "Progress and Poverty" before he could understand the meaning of economic rent or the purpose of the bill.

Knowing Richards was from the Harvard enclave the committee questioned him concerning the success of the venture and appeared interested in the favorable report he was able to give them.

Part of the bill reads as follows:

The lease shall provide for payment to the town or city of the value in or on the ground of any non-renewable natural resource situated in or on the reserved land which is removed therefrom by the lessee or the agent of the lessee, within a year of the time of its removal. It shall provide, also, that so long as the classified reserved land is used exclusively for growing trees, its economic rent shall be the economic rent of the land for that purpose and that in the event of dispute regarding the amount of such economic rent, its amount shall be determined by the State Forester by means of the mathematical formulæ of forest valuation and the decision of the State Forester in that event shall be final.

It is rare indeed that the term "economic rent" appears in any proposed legislation as it does in the House Bill 420 of the Massachusetts legislature.

MINNESOTA

A bill introduced in the Minnesota legislature provides as follows:

Section 1. All real and personal property subject to a general property tax, and not subject to any gross earnings or other lieu tax is hereby classified for purposes of taxation as follows:

Class I. All real estate exclusive of buildings or other improvements thereon. In assessing any tract or lot of real estate in which iron ore is known to exist, the assessable value of the ore, exclusive of the land in which it is located, and the assessable value of the land exclusive of the ore, shall be determined and set down separately, and the aggregate of the two shall be assessed against the tract or lot, and be considered within Class I as a unit.

Class II. All buildings and improvements on real estate and attached to and begin part of such real estate.

Class III. All other property within Section 1 and not included within Class I and Class II.

Section 2. For the years 1936 and 1937, all property included within Class I shall be valued and assessed at 60 per cent of the full and true value thereof, and for the years 1938 and 1939, all property included within Class I shall be valued and assessed at 80 per cent of the full and true value thereof, and for the year 1940 and thereafter, all property included within Class I shall be valued and assessed at 90 per cent of the full and true value thereof.

Section 3. All property included within Class II and Class III shall be assessed for the years 1936 and 1937 at 25 per cent of the full and true value thereof, and for the years 1938 and 1939, all property included within Class II and Class III shall be assessed at 15 per cent of the full and true value thereof, and for the year 1940 and there-

after, all property included within Class II and Class III shall be assessed at 10 per cent of the full and true value thereof.

A FEDERAL MOVE

A bill recently introduced into the house by Representative Moritz, calls for a tax of one per cent on the privilege of land holding of a certain value. This is the old Keller bill which Judge Jackson H. Ralston prepared years ago, but with some important changes recently made in the preamble. These put the constitutionality of the proposition beyond any doubt.

From a national standpoint this bill may form a rallying-point

Coshocton Tribune Proposes

What we propose is that all taxes be abolished, except one tax on the value of land, irrespective of the value of the improvement in or on the land.

This would not be a tax on real estate, because real estate includes improvements—buildings, fences, irrigation, ditches and so on. Thus, a man who buys a lot for \$500 and builds a \$25,000 home on it would be taxed just the same, under this plan, after he builds the house as he was before.

Nor is this plan a tax on land. There are thousands of acres of land in the United States which actually have no value at all, and would not be taxed. Most farm land has very little actual value, when improvements are deducted, and the taxes on most farmers would be less than under the present property taxes.

The plan involves the imposition of no new tax, since we already tax land values in taxing real estate. To carry it out, it would be necessary only to abolish all taxes except the tax on real estate, and to abolish all of that which now falls on buildings or improvements, leaving only that part of it which falls on the value of the bare land, increasing that so as to take as nearly as possible the whole of economic rent, or what is sometimes called the "unearned increment of land values."—Coshocton, (O.) *Daily Tribune*.

Miscellany

WISDOM FROM HORACE GREELEY

Eighty-five years ago today, Mr. Greeley was asked to speak before the journeymen printers of New York.

Referring to the depression then existing, Mr. Greeley lamented "that in this thriving commercial emporium of the New World, this trophy and pride of Christian civilization, there are at this day not less than 40,000 human beings anxious to earn the bread of honest industry but vainly seeking, and painfully, despairingly awaiting opportunity for so doing." Then he goes on to inquire.

"What can be the reason of this? Why is it that these 40,000 stronghanded, willing workers stand here thus fixed, enchained, in loathed, despairing idleness? Why are they compelled to wear out our pavements in hurrying hither and thither in anxious, heart-sick quest of something to do—with downcast looks and trembling voice, beseeching some fellow man to give them leave to labor for their bread?"

"I trust," Mr. Greeley says, "no one here gives any heed to the mumbling of self-styled political economists about overproduction and kindred phrases with which counsel is darkened. Overproduction of what? Where? Can there be overproduction of food when so many even in our midst, are suffering the pangs of famine? Overproduction of clothing and fabrics, while our streets swarm with men, women and children who are not half clad and who shiver through the night beneath the clothing they have worn by day? Overproduction of dwellings, when not half the families of our city have ade-