

THE SINGLE TAX PROBLEM.

Another Bill Seeking This Change Introduced at Albany.

There has been considerable discussion recently about a proposed change in our tax laws, whereby the rate of taxation on buildings is to be reduced, while the tax rate on land is to be increased. A measure seeking to bring about this change has been introduced in the Legislature for several years. Last year it was known as the Salant-Schaap bill.

The late Mayor Gaynor had very decided views on the subject. In a letter written to the Secretary of the Farmers and Taxpayers' Association, on January 26th, 1912, he said:

"The purpose of it is to throw all real estate taxes on the bare ground, and exempt the buildings. This means the carrying out of the theory of the late Henry George; i. e., to have a single tax; i. e., only one tax; i. e., on the bare land only, all buildings and improvements to go free of taxes.

"If you will get Mr. George's book, 'Progress and Poverty,' you will find the whole theory stated. The result of such a law would be to practically confiscate the values of all land in the cities. The effect would be to absorb into the public treasury by means of taxes the entire ground rent, which may be fairly stated at somewhere from four to five per cent. of the value of the bare land.

"Of course, if all ground rents should be absorbed into the public treasury, there would be no sale value of land left. To speak plainly, this would destroy or confiscate all such land values. You have to decide whether this would be just. Such a system of taxation may be the best.

"But as society has been constituted from the beginning under a different one, and the people have invested their money in land values under that system, would it accord with justice for society to destroy their investments by a new system without compensating them for their loss? The subject is a big one, politically and morally."

QUEENS BOROUGH OUTLOOK

President Connelly Predicts a Revival of Real Estate Activity.

A revival of activity in Queens Borough real estate was predicted last Wednesday evening at the City Club in Manhattan by Borough President Maurice E. Connelly. President Connelly and Borough President Lewis H. Pounds of Brooklyn were the guests of honor at a dinner given by the Real Estate Exchange of Long Island to celebrate the re-election of these two members of the Exchange to the Board of Estimate.

The essential soundness of the real estate situation in Queens, Mr. Connelly said, was shown by the fact that there were few if any foreclosures in the borough. He said that he had not heard of any holder of real estate in Queens clamoring to sell it at a sacrifice. This, he said, proved that realty owners in Queens have confidence in their holdings.

The confidence, President Connelly proceeded to say, was justified by the fact that although Queens only drew an allotment of elevated lines in the recent settlement of the transit problem, it will be the first borough to obtain relief in the new scheme. He said that lines to Brooklyn and the Bronx were now crowded, and that already an exodus to Ridgewood had started from the Bronx. The new Bronx and Brooklyn lines will not be ready for four or five years, while those to Queens, he said, would be in operation by three years at the outside. Then the tide would start rushing into Queens.

Once Queens has the advantage of a year or two year's start on the other boroughs in opening up new territory to settlement, he said there were factors which would make its development far outstrip that of the Bronx. In the Bronx, he pointed out, the presence of rock made the laying of sewers, as well as grading, &c., difficult and expensive. The character of the soil in Queens, free from rock at the surface, made these operations cheap and easy, so that development would advance rapidly. Preparation for this growth has been made by the laying of great trunk sewer systems, with which sewers in undeveloped areas might readily be connected.

Mr. Connelly urged the real estate men to help the citizens of Queens to unite in favor of four or five great avenue improvements, which would establish main arteries of travel. If four or five should be concentrated upon, he said, it was likely that the cost could be put upon the city as a whole rather than upon the Borough. No good would be accomplished by asking the Board of Estimate and Apportionment to approve placing on the general tax roll the cost of many avenue improvements, since this would lead to the rejection of all.

Another thing Mr. Connelly urged was that in laying out streets none less than sixty feet in width should be planned. He said that many realty men believed they could sell their land on fifty-foot streets before an order widening the street was made. He said this was poor economy, since in practice the realty man always has some lots left, and that the expense of widening a built-up street, assessed against his unsold lots, would eat up the saving of making the street five feet narrower on each side.

Borough President Pounds of Brooklyn said that the problems of both Queens and Brooklyn centred about real estate, and were questions of development. Such questions, he said, had been settled in Manhattan and the Bronx and had not yet been reached in Richmond.

A. L. Langdon, traffic manager of the Long Island Railroad, and many prominent real estate men attended the dinner.

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