

The California Situation

To the Single Taxers of America :

Feeling it imperatively necessary that the California situation be clearly understood by you, we hereby respectfully submit a statement of the facts as they are up to date.

The unfortunate disunion among Single Taxers in California, which has prevailed for almost two years, showed its detrimental effects so plainly during the 1916 campaign that it was deemed imperative that a determined effort should be made to secure harmony and united action for the future.

To this end, an informal conference was arranged at Hotel Rosslyn, Los Angeles, on December 18, 1916, which concluded, after twelve hours' debate, in a failure to accomplish its purpose. The leaders of the Great Adventure group withdrew from that conference and the remaining delegates agreed that another conference must be called at an early date, as the Legislature was about to convene.

During the following days, three of the leading proponents of the Great Adventure idea, J. H. Griffes, Edgcomb Pinchon, and Charles James, attended a conference of the San Diego Single Taxers where, at the suggestion of Lincoln Steffens, it was agreed that, from then on, every effort should be made for harmony. All old differences, and especially personal ones, were to be wiped out, and the past was to be forgotten.

However, within a few days, Griffes and Pinchon, for reasons of their own, refused to live up to this agreement and, together with Herman Kuehn and Mrs. Lona I. Robinson, opposed all efforts to secure harmony; but in spite of this, harmony was attained among all the groups, these individuals alone standing out.

The conference decided upon in Los Angeles met in San Francisco on January 13 and 14, as the State Tax Conference.

The attendance was the largest, and the delegates most representative of all tendencies and groups ever assembled in this state, including the Socialists, Trade Unionists and many supporters of the Great Adventure in the last campaign.

J. Stitt Wilson was elected chairman, and R. E. Chadwick secretary. After all proposed amendments were submitted and considered, the convention proceeded to lay down principles that should be incorporated into a new amendment. A committee, consisting of Judge Jas. G. Maguire, R. R. Waterbury, J. H. Ryckman, of Los Angeles, Ex-Senator Bucklin of Colorado, and the secretary, all lawyers, were appointed to draft the following amendment, which was adopted, after three hours' debate, by the unanimous vote of the convention, excepting one person.

Proposed Amendment to the Constitution of the State of California :

The People of the State of California do enact as follows:

Article XIII of the Constitution is hereby amended by adding the following as Section 5 thereof:

Section 5. On and after January 1, 1919, all personal property, except the franchises of public service corporations, shall be exempt from taxation thereafter to be levied.

On and after January 1, 1920, all improvements on land shall be exempt from taxation thereafter to be levied, but the value of land and the value of such franchises shall not be so exempt.

Provided that Sections XI and XIV of Article XIII of the Constitution shall not be affected hereby in so far as they concern State revenues.

All provisions of Article XIII of the Constitution in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

This amendment shall be self-executing.

At the conclusion of the State Tax Conference, it was ordered that the action of the Conference in drafting the above Amendment and in organizing the Equity Tax League should be announced to all the Single Tax organizations in the State and other bodies interested in land and tax reform, and request made for their endorsement. This was done and everyone of them endorsed it, with the exception of the unorganized Great Adventure group, who are accountable to no one.

The California Situation—Continued.

The Socialist Party at its State Conference in Fresno, on February 19, overwhelmingly endorsed the Equity Tax Measure and recommended a constitutional amendment for the acquisition of public utilities by means of a tax on land values. Union Labor, through Paul Scharrenberg, the Secretary of the State Federation of Labor, at a mass meeting of the Equity League, held in San Francisco, pledged its support.

On January 23, 1917, J. Stitt Wilson, President of the new League, and Edward P. E. Troy, of San Francisco, went to the State Capitol at Sacramento and succeeded in having the Tax Exemption Amendment introduced in both houses of the Legislature, to secure its submission to the People for a referendum vote.

On the very day when the State Tax Conference met, the Great Adventure group, consisting of four persons, published the following bill:

FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION NOVEMBER, 1918.

To secure to every adult the power to own his own home and direct his own life and work; to abolish land monopoly, wage slavery, disemployment and pauperism, by applying the Golden Rule at the base of life—

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Article XIII of the Constitution is hereby amended by the following section:

On and after January 1, 1920, all public revenues, state, county, municipal and district, shall be raised by taxation of the value of land irrespective of improvements thereon, and no other tax shall be levied.

The intent of this amendment is to prevent the holding of land out of use for speculation and to apply the land values which the community creates to community purposes.

All laws in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Taxation shall be uniform throughout the State, and the legislature shall make adequate provision to carry this amendment into effect according to its intent.

The last paragraph of this bill has since been omitted.

The Great Adventure group from that time has refused all overtures for harmony, although they were advanced by some of their warmest friends, such as Judge James G. Maguire, Dr. H. F. Dessau, Judge J. H. Ryckman, J. H. McCleery, Fay Lewis, Charles James and Thomas W. Williams, State Secretary of the Socialist Party.

They have continued to publish their bill and make propaganda for it, thus creating the impression that there is disunion among Single Taxers in the State, and thereby jeopardizing the success of the measure now before the Legislature. In doing so, they are acting contrary to the spirit and purpose of the Great Adventure, which was to unify the efforts of all reformers on the abolition of land monopoly by means of the Single Tax.

We now beg to call your attention to the fundamental reasons why the Equity Tax Bill has received its overwhelming endorsement.

It is our opinion the measure proposed by the Great Adventure group cannot possibly be carried in 1918. It was the unanimous consensus of opinion at the Conference that the Equity measure can be carried in 1918. A comparison of the two measures will make this apparent to many, but those wishing further proof can get it by writing for a fuller statement, which is available.

The Equity Tax League Bill, being an exemption measure, is self-executing; the other, on its face, will require not only legislative action, but judicial construction before it can be made operative. This would mean years of delay, if not ultimate defeat.

In view of the foregoing, which we believe to be a correct and fair statement of the facts as they now are in California, we urge you to consider carefully before giving or advising moral or financial support to the Great Adventure, and that nothing shall be done to feed the flame of dissension or perpetuate a difference which, in view of the extremely slight opposition, was fast approaching a natural end. The least that Single Taxers outside the state can do is to allow us to settle our own differences in our own way, and in this desire the Single Taxers of California are practically a unit. Respectfully submitted,

THE STATE WIDE SINGLE TAX LEAGUE OF SAN FRANCISCO.

(Supported the Great Adventure.)
James G. Maguire, Acting Chairman.
Fred W. Workman, Acting Secretary.

EQUITY TAX LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA

(San Francisco)
J. Stitt Wilson, President.
R. E. Chadwick, Secretary.

SAN DIEGO SINGLE TAX SOCIETY.

Howard C. Dunham, President.
W. R. Edwards, Secretary.

THE OAKLAND SINGLE TAX LEAGUE.

(Supported Great Adventure.)
Dr. Henry F. Dessau, President.
R. R. Waterbury, Secretary pro tem.

LOS ANGELES SINGLE TAX LEAGUE.

(Supported Great Adventure.)
F. W. McFarlane, President.
Charles James, Secretary.

THE EQUITY TAX LEAGUE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (Los Angeles).

J. H. Ryckman, President.
Tom McClellan Acting Secretary.