

The Public, September 14, 1917, p. 883:

Part of an editorial, likely written by Mary Fels, one of the 5 editors of *The Public* at the time

It is the way indicated in a statement by Joseph Fels:

Stop crushing business with taxes.

Abolish all taxes on personal property, buildings and occupations.

Do away with every tax on labor or its product.

Then we will have prosperity.

Rescuing Business

“We must solemnly see that we do not smash business by imposing too much of a strain,” said Senator Wadsworth of New York, while urging, in effect, that the poor and posterity be made to bear the heavier share of war expenses. It is regrettable that an effort should thus be made to make of “Business” a buffer to stand between privilege and taxation, though Senator Wadsworth may not have realized that this is the nature of his position.

Concern for useful business ought to lead to the support of the policy of wealth-conscription in preference to proposed excise taxes and taxes on small incomes. These must decrease the purchasing power of a great majority of consumers and thus subject most business to a bigger strain than could result from heavy taxes on war profits and big incomes.

There is a way, however, by which Senator Wadsworth could make his opposition to taxation of wealth consistent with his concern for business. It is the way indicated in a statement by Joseph Fels:

Stop crushing business with taxes.

Abolish all taxes on personal property, buildings and occupations.

Do away with every tax on labor or its product.

Then we will have prosperity.

In speaking against crushing business, Senator Wadsworth takes apparently the same position as was taken by Mr. Fels. But when it comes to actually affording relief he balks. He wants to see that business is not smashed but, unlike Mr. Fels, he forgets to demand that the crushing weight of taxation be removed. Instead he champions the additional burdens which the Senate Committee on Finance would impose. That may be attributed to the possibility that he does not see how revenue can be obtained otherwise. But there is the way which Joseph Fels had in view. Revenue can be had by taxation of land values, a method conspicuous by its absence in the pending revenue bill.

Such taxation would be no burden to business whatever. It would turn into the public treasury money which business men and other citizens must pay in any event, but which now remains in the possession of private individuals. And it would make possible abolition of taxes on industry which business men and others pay in addition to ground rent. It would further help business by widening opportunities for labor, and increasing the purchasing power of all engaged in useful

industry.

Looking at the proposal from the standpoint of a business man, Joseph Fels said:

No sane business man turns down a sound business opportunity. Such an opportunity exists. It only requires the co-operation of all who would benefit. The opportunity is known as the taxation of land values.

If Senator Wadsworth were to take this same position he could offer a substitute for suggested taxes on wealth, which would give strength to his protest against burdening business. Since, however, he has no inclination to take such a stand, his words have no other meaning than a plea in behalf of war profiteers at the expense of labor.