

The Public

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A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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EDITORIAL

Singletax Conference at Boston.

The largest and in its leadership the most widely representative conference of Singletaxers ever held in this country, that of last week in Boston, was felt by all who attended it to be a successful affair. As a meeting it was successful. The thoughtful local management, the friendly first greetings and reunions, the orderly yet unrestrained proceedings under competent and wise chairmanships, the enthusiasms and the clashes of opinion, the encouraging reports from places where Singletax policies are in practical politics and from Canada where they have begun to blossom in fiscal legislation—all these and many other features of the Conference stamped it as a successful meeting—simply as a meeting. Whether or not it was successful as a national conference, remains yet to be seen.



The important reason for such an assemblage at this time—the only reason just now of a practical character with reference to establishing the Singletax in this country—was to enable the Joseph Fels Fund Commission to seize upon the opportunities offered by the direct Singletax vote in Missouri and Oregon and in the cities of Seattle and Everett, as well as by the home-rule vote in California, and utilize them for promotion of the Singletax cause in the United States. Those large votes offer the best openings at present available, not only for se-

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curing the Singletax in some place on a large scale, but also for creating an effective national organization. As organization takes shape for political action in those States, it will have a tendency to extend spontaneously and in wholesome ways through neighboring States and so over the country, until national Singletax conferences can be representative in the responsible sense of representing organized constituencies.



To accomplish both those results or either, the present imperative necessity is co-operation by the Singletaxers of the whole country for the support of the western "firing lines." Whatever is done in that direction whole-heartedly and effectively will be returned many fold. Success in California must react favorably upon New York; the Singletax in Oregon or Missouri or Washington will be prophetic of the Singletax in Illinois and Ohio and Maine. Campaigns for it in one State inevitably excite public opinion elsewhere. As to the manner of support, the Boston Conference has advised. It consists primarily in contributing to the Fels Fund—each within his means, from dimes to dollars and from hundreds to thousands of dollars.



Under Mr. Fels's offer, every dime means two dimes, every dollar two dollars; it also means, and for this restriction let Mr. Fels be thanked as much as for his generosity, that not even a dime will come from him except to duplicate the dime of somebody else. Upon the support that Singletaxers and their sympathizers over the whole country give to the Commission during the coming year—not in large individual amounts but in dimes and quarters and halves and dollars, and weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly—the question of failure or success of the Boston Conference, as a national conference, will turn.



If the Fels Fund be not enabled, by frequent and regular contributions of small sums by many persons, to carry out the policies advised by the Boston Conference (reported fully in this week's News Narrative), then that Conference will prove to have been a failure in every other respect than as an enjoyable but ephemeral mass meeting. If, however, the Fels Fund be heartily supported, then will there be the most convincing reason for believing that the Boston Conference must prove to have been the most successful, not only as a meeting of kindred spirits but also as a conference of effective workers, ever yet held by Singletaxers in the United States—perhaps in the world.

Taxation in Piedmont.*

Hugh Craig, the Mayor of Piedmont, California, who is described by a friendly pen as "70 in December of this year, and sound in wind, limb, brain, heart and stomach," has not waited for special authority to improve the prevailing system of taxation within his jurisdiction. He is enforcing the law as he finds it. Here is Mayor Craig's way in dollars and cents, the year 1911 being the year before his program began to work, and the year 1912 being the first year of its activity:

	1911 Valuations.	1912 Valuations.
Land values.....	\$2,277,600	\$7,662,857
Improvements	1,111,700	3,048,125
Total	\$3,389,300	\$10,710,982

Upon final adjustment the land valuation was reduced to \$7,200,000, and the improvements valuation to \$1,200,000. The remaining aggregate of real estate valuation was then reduced to \$5,812,000, plus a much diminished personalty tax of \$164,000. The basis of taxation for 1912, under Mayor Craig's administration, is therefore as follows:

Land values.....	\$7,200,000
Improvements	1,200,000
	\$8,400,000
Less horizontal cut.....	2,588,000
	\$5,812,000
Plus personalty.....	164,000
Tax basis.....	\$5,976,000

On this basis the estimated rate for 1912 is \$2.25 to the \$100, whereas that of 1911 was \$2.80. With this reduction of rates on all property, but falling on land monopoly fully three times as heavily as on land using, a beautiful object lesson in taxation is presented. The rate of \$2.25, equal to \$6.75 on land values, will make the holding of land out of use impossible if Mayor Craig's policy is persisted in. Little wonder, therefore, that Mayor Craig has "hard sledding." He is an insurance agent by occupation, and the usual Big Business tactics are employed against him. According to these tactics the "bread and butter" point is the object of attack always. Accordingly 38 or 40 insurance risks have been withdrawn from Mayor Craig by owners of buildings who are also owners of *unimproved land* out of which, if taxed lightly, they expect to make more than out of their buildings. Under Mayor Craig that unimproved land is assessed four times as much as last year. He

*See The Public of October 11, page 964.