

# The Public

A National Journal of Fundamental Democracy &  
A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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Vol. XV.

CHICAGO, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1912.

No. 759.

Published by Louis F. Post  
Ellsworth Building, 537 South Dearborn Street, Chicago

Single Copy, Five Cents      Yearly Subscription, One Dollar  
Entered as Second-Class Matter April 16, 1898, at the Post Office at  
Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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## EDITORIAL

### Senator Bourne Again a Candidate.

It is gratifying to learn that Senator Bourne of Oregon is after all to be a candidate to succeed himself. He could not have been defeated at the primaries, if he had worked for the nomination; but, believing that his place of duty was at the national capitol, he stayed there through the primary campaign, leaving his official record to speak for itself. A good record it is. But democracy hasn't yet had experience enough with good records to understand them without the voice of a candidate to interpret. So Senator Bourne was defeated by an inferior man. But this man has been making a record since his nomination which the people do understand, and a cry for Bourne has gone up backed by a 12 per cent petition. For the sake of the democracy of Oregon, and for the good of the whole country, let us hope that Bourne will be re-elected with a majority big enough to leave no doubt of the political intelligence of the Oregon electorate.



### Singletax Statistics.

Urgent inquiries for statistical information as to the effect of the Singletax have been so frequent that we are glad to refer to another local compilation\* which is of great general as well as local value. Although this is a public document,

\*See The Public, vol. xiv, pp. 824, 844, 925, 997.

we suggest, as it cannot be furnished without expense, that all persons asking for it enclose at least 25 or 50 cents to cover expense of postage and extra printing. Our reference is to the pamphlet just published in connection with the campaign for local land-value taxation now in progress in Clackamas County, Oregon. The publishers are W. G. Eggleston of Portland and Wm. S. U'Ren of Oregon City, of either of whom copies may no doubt be procured if the expense of supplying them is properly covered. This pamphlet is well described in its title: "Clackamas County assessments and taxes in 1910, showing the difference between assessments under the General Property Tax system and the Land Value or Singletax and Exemption system proposed in the Clackamas County Tax and Exemption Bill to be voted on at the November, 1912, election."



Special interest attaches to that Oregon pamphlet because of its bearing upon the efforts of the Joseph Fels Fund of America\* to put the Singletax in operation somewhere in the United States within five years from 1909,—efforts that are opposed by land monopolists and their agents who have "caught on" to their significance and by such Singletaxers as have not. The election will come off in November under the county-option tax amendment to the Oregon Constitution which, under the leadership of Wm. S. U'Ren, was carried at the election of 1910. The statistics of the pamphlet were compiled by George F. Johnson, deputy assessor of Clackamas County. They show in detail, with reference to each agricultural taxpayer of the county, the following statistical facts: How many acres of his land is under cultivation and what its assessment is per acre; how many of his acres are uncultivated and the assessment per acre; his assessments in 1910 on land, on buildings, and on personal property, and the total; what would have been exempt in 1910 if the Singletax had been in operation; what the Singletax assessment would have been; what his actual tax was in 1910, and what it would have been under the Singletax. Similar information appears as to each city and town taxpayer, namely: The number of his building lots; the assessments of 1910 on his lot, his buildings, and his personal property, and the total; what his Singletax exemptions would have been in 1910; what his Singletax assessment would have been; the tax he actually paid in 1910, and the tax he would have paid under the Singletax system.

\*See *The Public* of December 1, 1911, page 1215.

For illustration, taking an agricultural case at random: Edwin C. Gerber was assessed in 1910 on 75 acres of cultivated land at \$60 per acre and on 25 acres uncultivated at \$17.60. His assessments were \$4,940 on land (including clearings, drainage, etc.) and \$750 on buildings and personal property, a total of \$5,690, on which he paid \$96.73 in taxes. Under the Singletax this farmer's property would have been exempt to the amount of \$3,930 (including clearings, drainage, etc., along with buildings and personal property), leaving his assessment at \$1,760 and reducing his taxes to \$49.76. Is it asked how that loss in taxes would have been made up? The pamphlet explains. Here is an example, however, that illustrates: Louis Jaggar, Oregon City, owns two lots assessed in 1910 at \$3,165, his buildings and personal property being assessed at \$650, a total of \$3,815, on which he paid in taxes \$123.98 in 1910. Under the Singletax his property would have been exempt to the amount of \$650, leaving his assessment at \$3,165, and increasing his taxes to \$208.38. That is to say, the loss to the county from exempting improvements and personal property is made up by increasing the rate on land values; with the effect, however, of reducing the total taxes paid by working farmers. An illustration of a different kind is furnished by the case of A. C. Mowrey, who owns 440 acres of agricultural land, not an acre of which is cultivated. It was assessed in 1910 at \$28.97 per acre, making a total assessment of \$12,750, on which in 1910 Mr. Mowrey paid taxes to the amount of \$318.75. Under the Singletax none of this property would have been exempt, and the tax, under the increased rate on land values necessary to raise the county income for 1910, would have been increased to \$401.12.



Its completeness and variety of facts regarding the fiscal affairs of an American county of some 15,000 taxpayers, and its summaries of and practical comments upon those facts, make this pamphlet the most important supplement to Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" that has yet been published. With all the rest, it demonstrates the absurdity of the pretense that the Singletax would fall upon farmers. Although two-thirds of the agricultural land of Clackamas County is unimproved, yet the exemption of clearings, personal property and improvements would make an average reduction of taxes on the entire area of farming lands of more than \$8 a year for each farmer. As the owners of the unimproved parts would not share in that reduction, the average saving to

working farmers would be much more than \$8 a year.



### Trusts and Land Monopoly.

In a discussion of Regulated Competition versus Regulated Monopoly, before the Boston Economic Club on the 8th,\* Professor Johnson tripped a little, for him, in saying that the question of who should do the regulating (and in whose interest) whether of Competition or of Monopoly, is vastly more important than the question of regulation of competition versus regulation of monopoly. The important question (whether or not more important than the main question) isn't *who*? It is *how*?



But if Professor Johnson slipped unexpectedly in this way, Mr. Brandeis and some of the others slipped in a worse way—and not so unexpectedly—in ignoring the importance of land monopoly in connection with the trust question. Agricultural connotations of the term “land” have lodged so firmly in some men's minds that much of their reasoning in economics is vitiated by it. To talk to them of land monopoly is to make them see only little farmsteads or wide stretches of public domain. Their perception of the importance to trusts of urban land monopoly, of monopoly of transportation rights of way and terminals, and of the economic emphasis that railroad tariffs and customs tariffs give to landed privileges, is a blur.



Yet it is demonstrably true that no trusts have long survived without some landed privilege, directly owned or indirectly enjoyed. The oil trust depends upon its pipe lines and terminals, which belong in the category of land monopoly. Railroad monopoly depends upon the monopoly of rights of way and terminals. The tobacco trust depends upon monopoly of tobacco lands, accentuated by tariff leverages and transportation privileges. The express monopoly depends upon its parasitical relations to railroad monopoly. The beef trust would lose its power in an instant if it lost its monopoly of the transportation terminals called “stockyards.” There is not today a single trust, with any commercial power as such, which does not possess some great government privilege; and the basic privilege of all is land monopoly. In this would concentrate *all* the profit and all the power if every other government privilege were abolished.

\*See current volume, page 975.

### The Ananiasing of Brandeis.

Louis D. Brandeis has been Rooseveltized into the Ananias club. Mr. Brandeis—whose progressive record, by the way, may be at least favorably compared with Mr. Roosevelt's—ventured the statement about the Roosevelt platform which we quoted at page 938 of this volume of *The Public*. “Nowhere in that long and comprehensive platform,” said Mr. Brandeis, “neither in its nobly phrased statement of principles, nor in its general recommendations, nor in its enumeration of specific measures, can there be found *any pledge* to secure the right of Labor to organize, without which all other grants and concessions for improvement of the condition of the workingmen are futile.” He then proceeded with this explanation: “*It contains merely a friendly approval of the practice; the platform promises social and industrial justice, but it does not promise industrial democracy.*”



A fairer characterization of the Roosevelt platform it would be hard to make. Yet for having made it, Mr. Brandeis comes under some of the sweeping denunciations which Mr. Roosevelt has for several years been trying to popularize in rowdy forms. But is it Mr. Brandeis who is in the wrong? On the contrary, the truth is as he has said. In Roosevelt's platform we find no pledge to secure organization rights to Labor. Yet organization rights, not sympathy handed down, is what Labor demands and needs. The Roosevelt platform *pledges* his party “to work unceasingly in State and nation” for several good things; but when it comes to Labor organization, in the next succeeding paragraph to the last in the list of pledges, it quits pledging and begins to “favor.” It only *favors* the organization of the workers; it offers no pledge. Why that jump from the potent “pledge” to the frivolous “favor”? If not intended to define a difference, why the milder term at that important point? Was it an accident of composition? Mr. Roosevelt wouldn't say “accident” if he found as bad a break in any other platform.



The reason was suggested by Mr. Brandeis. And it was not far-fetched. In view of the Labor policy of the Steel Trust which Mr. Roosevelt's economic mentor, Mr. Perkins, has only recently applauded, the substitution of “favor” for “pledge” is significant; for Mr. Perkins boasts that there are no labor strikes any more among Steel Trust employees. He does not boast that this trust has utterly destroyed Labor organization among them.