

their sentiments and eloquence deserve. Short-sighted beyond measure is the politician who imagines that Mr. Bryan is without honor in his own country. Defeated though he has been in two historic presidential campaigns, he is, nevertheless, without exception, the most popular man, simply as a man, in the United States to-day. No glamour of success envelops his personality, and he has no official power with which to command the admiration and gratitude that consist in a lively sense of favors to come. He is a simple citizen. Yet in the great heart of the American people—the common people of the East as well as those of the West, including many of both sections who for one superficial reason or another voted against him—there is a feeling that this man has represented them. His eloquence is of a kind that touches a popular chord which the mere politician is too apt to ignore and the money-changers cannot understand. Mr. Bryan's public life has not ended. It has only fairly begun.

In this connection, a word about Bryan's Commoner will not be out of place, though an exception to a general rule to which we are disposed most strictly to adhere. That publication is now entering upon its second year. Fresh from the presidential campaign of 1900, Mr. Bryan started the Commoner to keep alive in the public mind the declarations of the Kansas City platform which so many Democratic papers of the nominal sort were eager to consign to political oblivion. The Commoner has been made to serve that use with ability and fidelity; and it will be well for American democracy if it is liberally supported in the same service in the future. Though some of us may not be in full agreement with the Kansas City platform, and for this reason may be disposed to criticise the policy of the Commoner in some particulars, that platform represents on the whole the best democracy that the Democratic party has put forth since it fell under the domination of the slave

power, and the Commoner is its able exponent and loyal defender. Such a paper is needed at this critical period, and in conducting it Mr. Bryan is doing a work for good government which is not even second to that which for five years he has been doing on the platform. It is to be hoped that in its second year the Commoner may at least double the circulation of its first.

Besides being really an excellent news collector and news purveyor, the Chicago Tribune is notable for its editorial candor. When it has a bad cause to defend, it conceals nothing. It boldly defends the cause, not deceptively for what it isn't but frankly for what it is. An example is its plea in the issue of the 13th for the "real estate" owners of Chicago as against the demands of the public for lower street car fares. George C. Sikes, the secretary of the Chicago council committee on local transportation, has advocated low fares without compensation to the city, for Chicago, as Mayor Johnson is doing for Cleveland; and the Tribune appeals in all seriousness, to them both, to desist for the sake of real estate interests. "The people of Chicago," it urges, "have not complained of 5-cent fares; they have not appealed to the legislature for relief, as the owners of real estate have." Therefore don't tax the real estate owners who do complain, but tax the patient public which doesn't. That is the gist of the Tribune's argument.

Correctly enough, the Tribune traces the responsibility for low fare agitation to the single taxers. They, it says—

are its most earnest advocates. It is in their clubs that it is chiefly preached. The most conspicuous three-cent fare man in this country is Tom Johnson, of Cleveland, who is a notorious single-taxer. The Chicago single-taxers know perfectly well that real estate is already ferociously taxed here. They would like to see other sources of municipal revenue cut off so that even higher taxation of real estate may become necessary. They wish to have more taxes piled on this kind of property until all of what they call the

"unearned increment" shall be wiped out, and all motives for owning or building on real estate destroyed.

This is so correct a diagnosis, in a general way, that it ought to be more accurately stated in particulars, and that we shall attempt briefly to do.

At the outset it should be understood that what the single taxers want is not heavier taxation of real estate, which includes improvements as well as land, but of land itself. So far from wishing an increase of taxes on the part of real estate which consists of buildings and other improvements, they want to exempt that kind of property altogether. It is the land, the site for improvements, the building lot, which they wish to see heavily taxed; and they want this kind of property, this part of real estate, taxed so heavily that no one can afford to monopolize it without improving it. In order to bring about that result, they would like, as the Tribune says, to see other sources of municipal revenue cut off. This is not their only reason for advocating three cent fares. They advocate three cent fares in preference to higher fares with a tax on them to be paid by the companies, for several reasons. The taxation of fares, if honestly enforced, would amount to a tax on the use of street cars, falling with equal weight upon all. The mechanic, the clerk, the washerwoman, the errand boy—all would pay taxes to the city for riding in street cars, over and above the value of the rides, though the only benefit they would get would be the value of the rides. Yet landowners would pay no more, though they would get the same benefit as to riding, plus the benefit of lower taxes on their valuable building sites—sites to which they have no better claim in justice than the others. Another objection to taxing receipts is that this arrangement would furnish an incentive to street car managers to "cook" their books, so as to collect the tax without turning all of it over to the city. Another is that the users of street cars would be compelled to pay five cents for a ride worth only three

cents, in order that the landowners and the street car companies might divide the other two cents between them—the latter as an excessive charge for service and the former in reduced taxation on their valuable building lots. There are still other reasons of this general character; but the greatest reason of all with single taxers, doubtless is, as the Tribune insists, that the rejection of this source of municipal revenue would tend to increase taxes on building lots, and so lead on to the single tax goal, which is the abolition of all taxes except on the value of that part of real estate which furnishes the site, or opportunity, for improvement.

Now this goal involves two points: its justice and its civic wisdom. If it is not just, it is, of course, to be condemned. Single taxers will agree to that. But who can with a straight face argue that the ad valorem taxation of a kind of property which no one produces—the site of a city,—and the value of which is due to no one's individual labor but solely to the growth of the city, would be unjust? Surely not those who argue for the taxation of street car riders. Not being unjust, then, the propriety of such a tax depends upon its advisability as a matter of civic wisdom. On this point the Tribune's objection is that it would destroy "all motives for owning or building on real estate." What crass nonsense! Consider it. Such a tax would reduce the selling price of building lots without diminishing their desirability. How could that destroy the motives for owning them? It would, indeed, destroy the motive for owning them for the purpose of keeping them vacant; but so far from destroying the motive for owning them for the purpose of building on them, it would make that motive more general, more intense, and more effective. This is not a bare assertion; it is the statement of an obvious fact. Then, as to the destruction of all motives for building, is it not quite clear that the exemption of buildings from taxation would en-

courage building? Yet here is one of the leading papers of the West which so far sacrifices its reputation for intelligence to the exigencies of a bad cause, as to assert that the exemption of buildings from taxation (which would favor the production of that kind of real estate), and the taxation of lots so as to reduce their selling price (which would make it easier for intending builders to buy them), would obstruct the acquisition and improvement of real estate. Go to!

As an illustration in a small way of the single tax idea in practical operation, some single taxers point to the little village of Fairhope, on Mobile bay. It is the only "fad" colony that has grown and strengthened. It owns the values of its own site and with this fund pays the state and county taxes of its inhabitants. It also owns its own public improvements. Commenting upon the financial condition of the village down to the close of last year the Fairhope Courier says, in its issue of January 1:

The rent list for this year on the basis of present holdings will bring the association nearly \$800, of which considerably over \$500 will be available for local expenditure, in addition to the net revenues from the wharf, which are increasing rapidly. If any are disposed to think the rentals too high, let them imagine an individual holding the 1,200 acres of land upon which this colony is located, including this thriving village of nearly 250 people, growing in population and business at the rate of about 40 per cent. a year, and ask himself if this individual would not expect to be able to exact more than \$500 a year for all the opportunities afforded on these sites. It seems hard for people to understand that the association is exactly like other landlords in wanting to get the full value of its lands. Everywhere where there is growth and progress land increases in value. Where growth is greatest there values rise most rapidly. This is as true under single tax as under the generally prevailing system. The purpose of the single tax is to see that these increasing values go to those properly entitled to them. Where they attach to lands unimproved or to improved land in excess of the value of the improvements they manifestly do not belong to him who happens to hold the title, but jointly to the people whose common

demand and improvements have caused them to appear. If the association does not take for the common benefit the values thus created they will be taken by individuals who are not entitled to them, and a long train of evils will follow.

The British board of agriculture is reported to be so thoroughly aroused on the subject of rural depopulation that it is about to ask appropriations for the purpose of offering prizes for plowing, ditching, hedging, straw-binding, stacking and thatching. It also proposes interesting schemes for adding interest and variety to country life. Excellent proposals. One drawback, however, should be guarded against. If the appropriations are made from general revenues, the ultimate effect of thus exciting the energies and improving the life of farm-laborers will only be to raise the standard of efficiency without raising wages and to increase the value of agricultural holdings. This was demonstrated in principle when parliament sought recently to relieve tenants from oppressive rents by exempting landlords from taxation. The landlords gratefully accepted the exemption. But they did not lower rents, to the surprise, curiously enough, of confiding tenants and benevolent members of parliament. Yet it is easy to avoid such an undesirable result. Let the board of agriculture get its revenues for prizes, etc., from an ad valorem tax upon farm holdings, exempting improvements, and it will be gratified with the success of the undertaking. The same result might be accomplished without offering prizes, but merely by so burdening land monopoly with taxation while exempting improvements and other productions, that the prizes of work would go naturally not to landlords but to workers. Farm workers would then make their own prizes in their own way without the intervention of a paternal board of agriculture.

Apropos of the controversy over second-class mail matter we might observe that the third assistant post-