

First Annual Convention of the New York State Single Tax Party at Albany

JOSEPH DANA MILLER THE UNANIMOUS CHOICE
FOR GOVERNOR

IT WAS a short, sharp, business-like convention that took place in Albany at Keeler's Hotel, on Saturday and Sunday, July 20 and 21. The attendance was not large, but this was owing to the fact that the notifications were sent out only a few days before the event, and little time was given to preparing the friends for the day of meeting. Yet about thirty delegates came from New York City, and there were representatives from Buffalo, Syracuse, Poughkeepsie, Schenectady, Binghamton, Hudson and other cities in the State.

What must be borne in mind is that this was the beginning of the movement that heralds new methods and a new outlook on the future. For the first time since State gatherings of Single Taxers have taken place in New York there was entire agreement as to the policy to be pursued. The doubters were there, but they soon swung into line, and before the evening came were expressing their confidence in the new movement.

For days preceding the convention, and during the several sessions, the press of Albany was featuring the convention. Nobody in Albany was left in ignorance of the presence of representative Single Taxers of the State. As many can testify, it was the topic of conversation in the streets, and in the lobbies of the hotels. That Single Taxers were now in the political field gave new significance to the gathering, and reporters were constantly closeted with the State Committee at headquarters which were besieged for news regarding platform, resolutions and the personnel of the nominees. Single Tax Party men have contended for the publicity value of their method in gaining attention for the doctrine and they have been amply justified by events so far as they have proceeded.

The morning session was called to order by Mr. Borsodi. Mr. Dangerfield was elected permanent chairman and Mr. Chodorov permanent secretary. A Ways and Means Committee consisting of Messrs. Newman, Triner and Chodorov was appointed. Messrs. Borsodi, Bastida and Haxo were appointed Committee on Resolutions and Platform. Messrs. Riley, Triner and Sague were appointed Committee on Nominations. The Committee on Credentials consisted of the officers of the State Committee and this was added to in the persons of Messrs. Fowles and Hanson.

In the afternoon Chairman Dangerfield announced that Mr. Goeller of Binghamton, had been added to the Ways and Means Committee. He also announced the appointment of a Committee of Arrangements.

Mr. Miller addressed the convention. He indicated the long series of mistakes that had been committed in furthering the political ambitions of Single Taxers by activities in the Democratic party, or by the formation of little side

parties. He said that for years those who wanted the Single Tax had been told to go after something else as the true way to get it. First it was a fifty cent dollar, and now when we have finally got a fifty cent dollar no one is particularly happy on that account. Then at a later period we told the young man who wanted to do something for the Single Tax to go out and work for three cent carfares, and now many cities have seven cent carfares and few will contend that seven cent car fares may not be perfectly equitable in certain cities and under certain conditions. Mr. Miller reviewed the weaknesses of former and existing organization methods, and said if there was nothing else to recommend political party action it was enough to know that it provided the kind of organization that attracted the young men, that it held and retained converts, and that it added enormous strength to the unorganized propaganda that is being done by individual lecturers and workers in other fields. He congratulated the young men who had discovered in the party movement the opportunity for work for the greatest cause that had ever inspired human effort. He pointed out that the great war and its aftermath was our opportunity, for in the blood red letters of this conflict is being written the last will and testament of an old world. He said that the Single Tax Party was the only organization of men and women that held out any promise to the boys returning from the war of a real future and a stake in the land they had fought for.

Chairman Dangerfield in addressing the convention briefly, said that in all we had done in the past for the Single Tax we had neglected one thing which we had now gathered to do—namely, to give Single Taxers a chance to vote for the thing they believed in.

Resolutions which appear elsewhere were now read and adopted.

Mr. Riley, Chairman of the Committee on Nominations, now read the list of nominations suggested by the Committee, which the convention unanimously ratified. They were as follows: For Governor, Joseph Dana Miller; for Lieutenant-Governor, Antonio Bastida, of New York; for Comptroller, L. Carl Seelbach, of Buffalo; for Secretary of State, Horace Sague, of Poughkeepsie; for State Treasurer, Ellen G. Lloyd, of Brooklyn; for Attorney-General, Benjamin W. Burger, of New York City; for State Engineer, James Dangerfield.

Mr. Bastida responded to calls with a short address to the convention. Mr. Sague also spoke briefly and announced himself a convert to political party action. Mr. Sague is eighty-six years old, but physically and mentally well-preserved, full of a quiet humor, and not too old to embrace new ideas and new methods of work which the new time calls for. Mr. Seelbach of Buffalo, said he believed that the party was on the right road, and that young men to whom he had talked hailed this movement as offering a new era for the Single Tax.

The evening of the first day was devoted to the discussion of the admirable platform presented by the Committee, and in this discussion all of the members of the convention

participated, including visitors from outside the State.

Many differences were developed as to the wording of particular planks, as naturally would occur among any body of Single Taxers. But these were all harmonized, and the convention adjourned with a deep sense of satisfaction for the work performed that was universally shared.

On announcement by Mr. Miller that the Single Tax amendment in California was now certain of a place on the ballot a motion was made and carried that a telegram of congratulations be sent to our friends in that State.

A vote of thanks was given to Mr. Borsodi for his work in preparing the platform.

With a formal vote of thanks to Chairman Dangerfield for the able and impartial manner in which he had presided, the convention adjourned to meet in the afternoon of the following day.

On Sunday the convention reassembled. A number had left in the morning, but many remained to receive those who arrived for the concluding session, which now listened to recommendations from the Ways and Means Committee.

The Committee recommended that headquarters be opened in Buffalo and Albany, and also in other cities as soon as practical. The question of financing the campaign was left to the Executive Committee of the the State Committee.

N. C. B. FOWLES.

PLATFORM OF THE SINGLE TAX PARTY OF NEW YORK

Adopted at Albany, July 21, 1918

PREAMBLE

The Single Tax Party of New York, in convention assembled, adopts the following platform and advocates the application of the principle herewith described to the end that involuntary poverty and fear of poverty be abolished, the just division of the products of labor be assured, equal opportunity be achieved, and industrial justice consummated, and it calls upon all men and women, regardless of their former political affiliations, to join this movement for the emancipation of mankind.

THE SINGLE TAX

We assert as our fundamental principle the self-evident truth enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.

We hold that all men are equally entitled to the use and enjoyment of what God has created and what is gained by the general growth and improvement of the community of which they are a part. Therefore we hold that no one should be permitted to possess natural opportunities without a fair return to the community for the special privileges thus accorded to him, and that the value which attaches to land by reason of the presence, growth and improvement of the community should be taken through the exercise of the taxing power for the use of the community.

We hold that each man is entitled to all that his labor produces. Therefore we hold that justice requires that taxes should not be levied upon the products of his labor.

To carry out these principles we demand that the rental value of land (irrespective of any improvements on or in the land), shall be collected by the State and that all improvements, industry, and enterprise be exempt from taxation.

The Single Tax we propose is not a tax on land, and therefore would not diminish the use of land.

It is a tax, not upon land, but on the full rental value of land. Thus it would not fall equally on all land, but in proportion to the price which the users of land now pay to the owners, either in purchase money or rent, for permission to use land. It would thus be a tax, not on the use and improvement of land, but on the ownership of land,

taking what today is received by owners in the form of ground rent and not what the users of land produce over and above the ground rent.

In assessments under the Single Tax all values created by individual use or improvement would be excluded, and the only value taken into consideration would be the value attaching to the bare land by reason of neighborhood, etc., to be determined by impartial assessments. Thus, the farmer would have no more taxes to pay than the speculator who held a similar piece of land idle, and the man who, on a city lot, erected a valuable building would not be taxed more than a speculator who held a similar lot idle.

The Single Tax which we propose in place of all other taxes would call upon men to contribute to the public revenues, not in proportion to their ability to earn, but in proportion to the value of the natural opportunities they hold. It would compel them to pay just as much for withholding land from the use of others, as for putting it to its fullest use themselves.

AGRICULTURE AND THE SINGLE TAX

A Single Tax on land values would greatly reduce the weight of taxation on agricultural land which has little value irrespective of improvements, and increase it on land in towns and cities which rises to a value of millions of dollars per acre.

It would force upon speculators in farm lands the choice of either improving and using such land, or of disposing of it and permitting others to use it. Thus it would force millions of acres of farm land into the market, enabling the ever increasing number of tenant farmers to become farm owners merely for the payment of the annual taxes upon the bare land. It would check the movement of young men from the farms to the cities by enabling them to freely acquire farms of their own. During the year 1917 more than 40,000 young men left the farms of this State and moved into the cities in search of employment. The reversal of this movement of our population would decrease the army of unemployed in the cities, thus improving the conditions of the wage-earner, and by increasing the annual production of our farm crops furnish the solid foundations for prosperity.

LABOR AND THE SINGLE TAX

A Single Tax on land values would, by taking for public use that value which attaches to land by reason of the growth and improvement of the community, make the holding of land unprofitable to the speculator, and profitable only to the user. It would thus make it impossible for speculators in city land, in agricultural land, in timber land, in coal land, in mineral land, and in oil land to hold these natural opportunities unused or only half used, and by forcing upon them the choice of planting, mining, or building themselves or of permitting others to do so, would throw open to labor the illimitable field of employment which the earth offers to man.

It would thus solve the labor problem by abolishing involuntary unemployment, raise wages in all occupations to the full earnings of labor, reduce the cost of living by increasing the use of land in the production of foodstuffs, lower rents by making possible the building of homes on land now held for a rise in value by the speculators, and by increasing the buying power of the laborers of the nation enable them to enjoy the comforts, leisure and advantages of an advancing civilization.

CAPITAL AND THE SINGLE TAX

A Single Tax on land values, by abolishing the taxes now levied on anyone who improves a farm, builds a house, a machine, or a factory, or in any way adds to the general stock of wealth, would encourage thrift, enterprise, and industry.

It would leave everyone free to apply labor or expend capital in production or exchange without penalties or restrictions, and would leave to each the full product of his enterprise and exertion.

It would, by equitably distributing among the workers of the nation, the millions annually absorbed at the present time by land speculators, increase the buying powers of our entire population, thus insuring the prosperity of the people and stabilizing all business.

It would destroy the selling value of land, and with it the fictitious capital based on land speculation. With the disappearance of this

fictitious capital, labor and true capital would be rid of a constantly increasing tribute demanded by the owners of land.

In thus denouncing the system of appropriation of ground rent by private individuals in this country, we also denounce the efforts of any citizens of the United States to exploit the peoples of other nations by securing possession of their lands without paying to them the full ground rental, and we demand that no support be given by our government to our citizens practising such exploitation.

GOVERNMENT AND THE SINGLE TAX

A Single Tax on land values would dispense with a multiplicity of taxes and a horde of tax gatherers, simplify government and greatly reduce its cost.

It would do away with the fraud, corruption and gross inequality inseparable from our present methods of taxation, which allow the rich to escape while they grind the poor. Land cannot be hid or carried off, and its value can be ascertained with ease and certainty.

Finally, it would utilize the governmental machinery and methods of assessment and of taxing land already in operation, and require none of the hazardous changes in our traditional republican institutions which a wise conservatism deprecates.

SOCIALISM

We oppose Socialism as defined in the platforms of the Socialist Party and its various branches, and as expounded by its votaries.

Socialism proposes artificial laws for governmental regulation in the control of all the means of production and distribution. We charge both the Democratic and Republican parties with participation in this un-American tendency.

We realize that the drastic measures employed by our government for the successful prosecution of the war are in no sense an endorsement of socialistic philosophy, but are an avowed temporary suspension of our liberties, applying the ancient maxim, when armies enter laws are silent.

In proposing the restoration of the natural order of production and distribution, leaving to labor and capital their just earnings, we challenge this tendency so foreign to the American tradition of industrial self-reliance. We further assert that the apparent justification for these socialistic measures exists solely because labor and capital are at the mercy of land speculators, many of whom are not even citizens of this country, who exact a continuing and ever increasing tribute from labor and industry merely for permitting them the use of the earth.

THE PRESENT CRISIS.

We pledge the candidates of this party when elected to support the National Government by every means in their power in the prosecution of the just and necessary war which we are waging against the Imperial German Government and its allies. But we deem it necessary and we should be recreant to truest patriotism if we failed at this time of national stress to point out to the National Government and to the people the peculiar merit of our principle in making our country powerful in times of war and prosperous in times of peace.

A Single Tax on land values would strengthen the government by stimulating the production of foodstuffs and raw materials, would lessen the cost of living and of conducting the war, and render unnecessary the multitude of vexatious taxes now being imposed upon the products of labor by providing the nation and the State with ample revenues for the expenses of the government and the conduct of the war.

Finally, the Single Tax would greatly simplify the grave social and economic problems of the coming period of reconstruction.

It would furnish ample revenues for the redemption of the debts of the nation.

It would open to the employment of the millions of soldiers and sailors when they return from the front the 400,000,000 acres of arable farm land now unused and in the hands of speculators, of which 14,000,000 acres alone are situated near to the great Eastern markets in this State. Thus it would avoid the otherwise inevitable period of unemployment, low wages and hard times which will follow the demobilization of our armies and the changing of the status of those most precious citizens into armies of unemployed men.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT ALBANY CONVENTION

RESOLVED: That we call upon the national government to take immediate measures to provide us with a Federal Land Valuation, showing the value of all lands, urban, agricultural and mineral, exclusive of all improvements, so that the people may know the value of their natural resources.

WHEREAS: Secretary of the Interior Lane has recently suggested rewarding our soldiers and sailors upon their return from abroad by allotting them plots of land in the arid desert of the West; and

WHEREAS: Such land being below the margin of cultivation, only a scanty living can be eked out thereon,

BE IT RESOLVED: That we, the delegates of the Single Tax Party in assembly convention at Albany, July 20, 1918, call the Secretary's attention to the fact that in all of the States, fertile arable and mineral lands are held out of use for speculation and that the application of the Single Tax to these lands would force them into use and would open great and valuable resources to the boys when they return from the front, thus enabling them to settle in their own States among friends and relatives, and in an environment to which they are accustomed, also saving the people of the country the tremendous expense of making usable the desert land of the West;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of this resolution be sent to Secretary Lane for his information.

Congressional Hearing on a Federal Land Tax

MEMBERS of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives listened to strong pleas for a Federal Land Tax from ex-Congressman Kent and Messrs. Willock, Ralston, Marsh and John Z. White, late in June.

Mr. Kent pointed out the two functions of taxation as he considered them, one from the revenue standpoint and the other as a remedial measure to secure enlarged production. He said that one of the greatest problems growing out of the war would be the adoption of a Federal Land policy.

Judge Jackson H. Ralston was outspoken, and he deserves credit for his reported words, which were as follows:

"I am an extreme Single Taxer, and if it came to the matter of land holding as a matter of abstract right I would say that no man has an indefensible right to even a foot of land."

Benjamin C. Marsh, who appears to be adopting more and more of the Socialist doctrine as distinguished from the Single Tax principle, advocated the "taking over" of all natural resources. If he is correctly reported he said that by this he did not mean a Single Tax but a triple tax.

It is hard to place our friend Marsh. He is now Executive Secretary of the Farmers' National Committee on War Finance. The programme of the Committee is the taxation of all incomes in excess of one hundred thousand dollars and heavy taxation of excess and war profits. Mr. Marsh has been active for a number of years in furthering measures in the direction of the Single Tax and has received the aid of Single Taxers in his work. Mr. Marsh has, let it be said in his own justification, always denied being a Single Taxer, and his present programme must be taken in proof of that declaration.