

Real Progress In Colorado

ITS METHODS CONTRASTED WITH OTHER STATES

I FIND the Denver Single Taxers an earnest, devoted group, making many personal sacrifices for the cause of justice. Rather, I should say, the group is a State-wide one, which has conducted Single Tax propaganda in Colorado for more than forty years. The leader of the movement at present is Barney Haughey, of Denver; but he generously gives the credit for the enactment of initiative and referendum sections into the Colorado Constitution to the late Senator James W. Bucklin, of Grand Junction. Mr. Haughey tells me that Senator Bucklin fought for twenty years before he succeeded in getting this Home Rule measure for cities and counties adopted. This constitutional amendment gave Colorado's chartered cities the right to adopt their own local systems of taxation.

Following its adoption, the first effort in behalf of Henry George's principles in municipal government in Colorado was in Pueblo in 1914. Senator Bucklin, George Knapp and Barney Haughey had been the active leaders. In Denver, campaigns have been conducted for a like purpose in 1915, 1917, 1924 and this present year of 1929. At each election a fair vote was polled for the Single Tax measure. This year, the vote was 5634 in favor and 30,336 against.

However, the measure of success of Single Tax work in Colorado is not to be found in the vote cast on proposals. As the late Joseph Leggett, that grand old Single Tax philosopher and law partner of Judge Maguire, used to say, "We will never get the Single Tax directly through the efforts of Single Taxers; but they through their propaganda will so fill the atmosphere with the Single Tax principles that the whole community will absorb and apply them, without knowing that they are the Single Tax."

That, I can say, is the way we got the Single Tax in the irrigation districts in California, without Single Taxers knowing anything about it until four years after the California Legislature had adopted the bill, at the request of the Modesto Irrigation District. Likewise, in Colorado, Single Tax principles have been made law in relation to over three million acres of land owned by the State. And the Single Taxers had nothing to do directly with the adoption of these land and leasing laws by the Legislature.

Since coming to Denver, a month ago, I have spent all my time studying economic conditions, getting reports of each State Commission, United States officials, semi-public bodies, and thru interviews with all classes of officials and citizens. I also spent six weeks this spring in Arizona. There I found that the State is getting rid of its State-owned land as quickly as possible. Where State land is rented, it may be sold over the head of a tenant to an outsider, after the tenant has proven the quality of the land. Two years ago, I spent three months in Nevada,

and I found that the State had already sold practically all its State lands for a song.

In Colorado, I found a different condition exists. Of the total 4,487,349 acres granted the State by the United States Government, 1,355,376 acres have been sold, leaving in State-ownership 3,131,972 acres. The last report of the Colorado State Land Commissioners shows that of the school land alone, there have been leased for agricultural and grazing purposes 2,273,720 acres, at a total annual rental of \$292,143.70. This rent income from school lands is placed each year in a "Permanent School Fund", the interest of which is used to pay teachers' salaries and other school purposes. The total amount in that fund November 30, 1928, as shown by the report, is \$9,578,972.97. The administration of these lands, and the fund, by the Commission is excellent and in the interests of the schools. The funds of the school department are invested in State, county, municipal school district bonds, farm loans, State warrants, and a small portion is cash on hand.

The United States also made grants of land for Internal Improvements, Public buildings, Penitentiary, University and Saline purposes, of which a total is leased by the Commission amounting to 188,702 acres, the rental of which is likewise appropriated to a permanent fund for each of these State institutions. The income only can be expended each year. These lands are let for agricultural and grazing purposes, and the total rental received averages 127,868.08 each year.

There is also a Mineral Department of this Land Commission, which leased 782 acres mineral (gold, silver, lead and copper) land for an annual rental of \$633.; fire and plastic clay, limerock and gypsum land, 3,694 acres for an annual rental of \$5,078; oil and gas leases, 207,854 acres, rental \$19,306.; coal leases, 17,814 acres, from which 1,479,072 tons of coal were mined, and rental of \$94,363. paid for the past year. Besides these rentals, the State sold mature timber for cutting, in the same manner as does the Federal Government on Forest land, at a rate of about \$3. per thousand board feet, for which a total of \$2,265. was received.

I should explain here that the report gives the income received for the biennium, and I have taken half of those sums as the annual receipts, also that all the mineral, oil, coal and like lands are leased for a nominal sum, which generally is to enable prospecting to be done, and that in addition a royalty on production is paid. I have included both these items in one sum as rental.

The State also sells land at ten per cent. cash payment, and the balance payable annually over a period of fifty years. The total paid and agreed to be paid for the 25,513 acres sold during the biennium term was \$391,104, or at the rate of \$15.33 per acre. This makes the average during the year that was paid and agreed to be paid for the State lands \$195,552. The average annual figures of

rents and royalties received from State lands as given above amounts to \$421,656.78.

This sum total of annual rentals is more than double the amount paid and pledged from sales of State lands. The sales are made at mere nominal sums. In other words, these lands, belonging to State School Department and institutions, the birth-right of the people, are being sold for a mess of pottage. Undoubtedly, if the school teachers and others interested could have their attention drawn to these facts, they would bring about a change in the laws that would prevent the sale of any more State lands. Otherwise in a few years there will be no land to lease and bring income to the different permanent funds.

Unlike the unfair method used in Arizona, Colorado's Land Commissioners will not sell land rented after the tenant has developed it; but grants "immunity" leases, under which agricultural and grazing land is withheld from sale during the term of the lease, most of the leases being of this character. The leases are generally granted for a term of five years, and the lessee is permitted to cut timber on the land for building fences and for fuel. The term of other leases is often for a greater number of years.

In all grazing and agricultural leases, the Board reserves the right to lease the land for mining purposes, and to sell the timber on it. Likewise, in all sales of land, the right is reserved to the State of Colorado to all rights to all minerals, ores, and metals of every kind, and all coal, asphaltum, oil, gas, and other substances in the land, and the right of way for mining, and enough of the surface to conveniently work it for minerals.

—EDWARD P. E. TROY.

Pennsylvania

THE annual meeting of the Pennsylvania State Committee of the Commonwealth Land party met June 9, at which time the following officers were elected: John W. Dix, Chairman; Frederick E. Mayer, Treasurer, and Julian P. Hickok, Secretary. As this is not a state year the party will make no effort to get on the ballot, but will take some action on referendums to be submitted at the polls this Fall for public improvements, etc.

Several resolutions were passed at this meeting, the following being the one of general interest, and others covering the Philadelphia franchise situation:

WHEREAS public improvements are a positive factor in the creation of land values: it is

RESOLVED that the proper construction and use of public improvements and justice to industry and commerce depend upon the financing of all public improvements whatsoever by a direct assessment upon all land benefited in proportion to benefits received rather than upon financing through general property taxation.

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Queensland

PERHAPS readers of LAND AND FREEDOM may like to read a few notes from this corner of the earth. A general election has just been held in this state and has resulted in a change of government. The Labor Party which has held the reins of power for fourteen years has been overthrown and a coalition government—Nationalist and Country Party—has come into power with a good working majority.

The reason for the Labor defeat can be attributed to the fact that its rule has not resulted in the improvement in the condition of the people that was promised and fondly hoped for; and the disappointed people have concluded to try a new broom. Georgian Single Taxers are now in a position to say to their Socialist friends, "I told you so."

Queensland at the moment is crying out for somebody to show the way to abolish unemployment, and there are signs that in some quarters Henry George is more likely to get a hearing than has been the case for many years.

It is deplorable to find the subject of unemployment treated by members of Parliament, in letters to the press, and in the sermons of the clergy as if it were a natural phenomenon instead of the result of human folly.

From a Single Tax viewpoint there is not much hope of any permanent general improvement since the present government has pledged itself to reduce the tax on land values. In the last session members of the opposition moved in that direction, claiming that the land value tax fell upon the farmers. When the other side of the house replied that it fell most heavily on city land they were informed that in that case it was added to the price of things made in the city and sold to the farmers. This led to some newspaper correspondence in which the present scribe argued that if ploughs, for instance, were made on land of varying degrees of value they were all sold at the same price. And that a good site for manufacturing or other purposes was an advantage, and did not add to the cost of production but the reverse.

The Queensland Henry George League, which came into existence last September, is doing its best to encourage the study of the works of the great leader and kindred literature. They meet once a month in the city, when a paper is read or an address given which is thoroughly discussed. The May meeting was notable for an able paper read by William Kearney, in which he advocated free railways, which he claimed would so increase the value of land that a tax on this value would pay the cost of railroad operation. He claimed that as the land belongs equally to all men it is not right for some men to own land near the center while others must be content to live miles away from anywhere, and that a free railway would put a far-away man on more of an equality with the near-by man. He showed that under present conditions the distant producer is handicapped by fares and freights both