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TAXING THE FARMERS HARD

By W. G. Aggleston.

Connected with the cultivated land of the working farmer are three values—first, the tangible, visible value of houses, fruit trees, livestock, fences, farm implements, household furniture, etc. All these are "labor value on the land." Second, the labor value that the farmer has put into the soil to make it more productive. Third, the "unimproved" land value created by the community, by general industrial growth and population. All these values are taxed now, but the third value is the one that would be taxed under the single tax; the other two values would be exempt under the single tax. Would that injure the working farmer? Here is a note from a Yamhill County farmer:

"Many people don't understand why the wealth of the country should be exempt from taxes, and all taxes put on the land, which many believe will increase their taxes half more. Many claim their wealth is in the land for a home, and a business proposition to grow crops and to make money, and that to exempt the merchants and manufacturers is wrong. Others think values on land would be so high that poor people could not buy land."

Working farmers who shy at the single tax don't see the difference between taxing "land" and taxing the "unimproved value" of land. When they see that difference they will see how the single tax will benefit every farmer who is not more of a speculator than farmer. To show the difference, let us take a trip through the assessments of Yamhill County for 1907 and 1910; and let's take it for granted that the assessments are correct, though we know they are not. The legislature of 1911 refused to enact a law providing for true assessments.

Country land in Yamhill is owned by farmers and speculators. The farmers live in the country, but many of the speculators live elsewhere. Two or three of them live in Portland. In 1907 Yamhill farmers paid taxes on \$879,545 worth of houses, farm implements, livestock, etc. All of that is wealth—farmers' wealth. Did it help the farmers to be taxed on that wealth? In 1910 they were taxed on \$1,744,110 worth of the same kind of wealth. In three years they more than doubled that kind of wealth, and were taxed for being industrious.

In addition, they made their farms more productive; they added labor value to the soil, they improved the land, and every day they worked the land and other industrious members of the community added to the value of the land generally; they helped to increase the "unimproved value" of land, some of which is owned by speculators. What was the increase of this "unimproved value"? In 1907 the average value of unimproved land in Yamhill was \$8.32 an acre; in 1910 it was \$11.20 an acre. So in three years the average "unimproved value" added to Yamhill land was \$2.88 an acre.

In 1910 cultivated lands in Yamhill were assessed at an average of \$49.95 an acre, or \$13.79 more than in 1907. The increase of \$2.88 added to an acre of speculators' land was the value added in three years by increased industry and population. To the average cultivated acre of the farmers the same value was added, and that increased the value of the cultivated acre from \$36.16 in 1907 to \$39.04 in 1910. But each farmer was improving his own land all that time, adding labor value to it, and what is the result?

The assessor estimated that in addition to the "unimproved value" of \$2.88 an acre added by population and industry, the Yamhill farmers had put into their land an improved value of \$10.91 an acre, on an average, in three years; so the total assessment was raised to \$49.95 an acre on cultivated lands. Thus, while in 1907 the farmers were assessed \$27.84 an acre for the labor they had put into their lands, three years later they were assessed \$38.75 on that labor. Does that help the farmer? Now let us see how it works out to the injury of the farmer by comparing the assessments on farmers' cultivated land and speculators' unimproved

land, keeping separate the three different values that are taxed under the general property system of taxation—the system we now have. In making this comparison I give the farmers all the horses and mules and cattle, but none of the furniture and money. That seems to be fair. I believe these figures are fair:

Average Assessment Per Acre, 1910.

	Farmer.	Speculator.
Unimproved land value	\$11.20	\$11.20
Labor value in land	38.75	
Labor value on land	14.34	
Total per acre	\$64.29	\$11.20
Total in 1907	49.00	8.32

Inc. per acre, 3 years.....\$15.29 \$ 2.88

The speculator is assessed \$11.20 an acre on the "unimproved value" that he didn't create. The farmer is assessed the same amount on the "unimproved value" he didn't create; but in addition he is assessed \$53.09 an acre on the labor values, or improvement values, he has created. Does that help the farmer? Every day he labors he adds a little to the "unimproved value" of the speculator's acre. How much does the speculator add to the "unimproved value" of the farmer's acre? How would it injure the farmer to equalize assessments in this way:

Single Tax Assessment.

	1907.	1910.
Farmer's acre	\$8.32	\$11.20
Speculator's acre	8.32	11.20

Would that put a higher tax on the farmer? Suppose a farmer with 25 improved acres, assessed at \$64.29 an acre under the present tax system (counting all improvements and personal property as above), and next to his land are 25 acres of speculator's land of the same "unimproved value" \$11.20. Suppose the tax rate is 10 mills. Under the present tax system the farmer would pay \$16.07 in taxes, but the speculator would pay only \$2.80. Now change to the single tax and see what happens.

The speculator is assessed \$280 on his 25 acres, as he was before; but the farmer is assessed only \$280, while before he was assessed \$1,607.25. Now suppose it was necessary to raise the tax "rate" from 10 mills to 57 mills to get money for state, county, road and school purposes. The farmer would pay \$15.96 in taxes, or 11 cents less than he pays under the present system, and the speculator would pay \$15.96, or \$13.16 more than he pays under the present system.

Would that raise the price of land so high that the poor man could not buy land? No; because the land held out of use by speculators, who are waiting for farmers and other workers to increase the "unimproved value" of their land, would be improved or sold. Instead of men who want land having to compete for land—and that raises the price—speculators would be competing for buyers, or would immediately improve their land and put it to good use. The purely speculative value would be taxed out of the land.

Now don't you see that single tax is not a tax on "land," but merely a tax on the "unimproved value" that the whole industrial population adds to the land, no matter whether the land is used or held out of use? Don't you see that under the single tax the farmer's wealth as well as the merchant's and manufacturer's wealth would be exempt from taxation? And remember that while most of the "land" is in the country, "unimproved values" of land are mostly in the cities, in railroad rights of way and in franchises.

Just remember that the "unimproved value" of the 123,381 cultivated acres in Yamhill County last year was \$1,381,867.20, but the "unimproved value" of the 45 most valuable blocks in Portland—41.32 acres—was \$28,957,300. The "unimproved value" of town and city lots in Yamhill County last year was \$952,463, or more than two-thirds of the "unimproved value" of the cultivated acres in the county. How many acres in those town and city lots?

The Reasons for the Labor Unions

Washington Gladden in Outlook.

The fact that unorganized labor is steadily forced downward toward starvation and misery is a fact that no student of industrial conditions would dream of denying. The history of the industrial revolution by which the factory system supplanted the domestic system of production is full of examples of this process. Men who angrily declare that there shall be no organization of labor ought to read carefully the industrial history of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when the conditions which they consider ideal were prevailing in the great industrial centers. There were no unions in England during the earlier part of this period; laws of the most drastic character, which made it a criminal conspiracy for two or three workmen to consult together for the purpose of securing shorter hours or better wages, had effectively stamped out unionism.

The state may usefully interfere in behalf of children and women, and in the interest of public health, and for the safeguarding of the life of the laborer, and in some other ways; but so long as competition is the regulative principle of industry the state can do very little to shield the laboring man from the pressure on his means of subsistence of the superincumbent mass of consolidated capital. Nor is it desirable that the state should take any class of its citizens under its special patronage.

By American workmen organizing themselves into unions they obtain and preserve their power. I know no other way under the present industrial system by which they can obtain it. I have never heard any other way suggested.

By this method they do maintain their freedom and prevent the degradation to which, with

out organization, they are doomed. There is no question that, in the well-weighted words of John Mitchell, "trade unionism has justified its existence by good works and high purposes. . . . It has elevated the standard of living of the American workman and conferred upon him higher wages and more leisure. It has increased efficiency, diminished accidents, averted disease, kept the children at school, raised the moral tone of the factories." Much of the legislation by which the conditions of the laboring classes have been improved is due to the initiative of the unions. Beyond all controversy, that frightful deterioration of the industrial classes which the large system of industry set in deadly operation has been arrested, and the lot of the laboring man has been vastly improved during the last seventy-five years.

It is true that not all workmen have been included in the unions, but even those outside the organizations have largely shared in the gains that have been won by organized labor. When, in an open shop, the union succeeds in getting better wages or shorter hours, the non-union men get the benefit of the rise. The unorganized trades, like that of the sewing women, have, no doubt, often been exploited by their employers; but the general level of wages is undoubtedly kept up by the labor unions.

So great have been the benefits which unionism has brought to the laboring classes and to the community at large that a philosophic statesman like Professor Thorold Rogers, of Oxford, declared that if he had the making of the laws he would exclude from the franchise all workmen who were not members of trade unions. Certain it is that the man who proposes to outlaw or exterminate them assumes a heavy responsibility.

the confiscation of the peasant's land. The criticism of the Pope meant the death. The criticism of the king meant death. Today we may think as we please, but liberty of thought and liberty of speech have cost 4000 battles and hundreds of thousands of lives.

Livingstone, the African explorer, giving ten years of his life and finally dying in the heart of that dark continent, did more to heal the open sore of slavery than had been done in a thousand years.

To live the best kind of a life one must be willing to give away one's life. This may seem like a paradox but it is in harmony with the laws of nature. The great Teacher once said that he that saveth his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for the sake of mankind shall find it. Without vicarious suffering or sacrifice there can be no physical or social progress. The great movements of the world have been inaugurated by men who have been willing to sacrifice everything for them. In a similar degree, progress will be made in every man's world by the extent to which he is willing to offer himself for the realization of his highest ideals.

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BARTENDERS. NO. 142.—Alternate Sundays, 3 P. M. Labor Union Hall. Chas. Martin, secretary, 549 Bond street.

CARPENTERS. NO. 917.—Saturdays, 8 P. M. Labor Union Hall. Mr. Shephard, president; William Bell, secretary, 475 Fifteenth street.

CIGARMAKERS. NO. 425.—First Friday, 8 P. M. Labor Union Hall. C. W. DeYoung, president, 528 Exchange street. 474 Commercial street.

BARBERS. NO. 167.—Last Monday, 8 P. M. Union Labor Hall. Geo. Langford, president; Jas. Lindley, 654 Commercial street.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS' UNION.—First and third Wednesdays, 7:30 P. M. N. Brunold, president; George W. Walters, financial secretary, 523 Commercial street, Astoria.

FISHERMEN'S UNION.—Meets at Fishermen's Hall, first Tuesday, 7:30 P. M. H. M. Loutsen, Fishermen's Hall.

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MACHINISTS. NO. 26.—First and third Thursdays, 8 P. M. Marine Engineers' Hall, 577 Bond street. H. N. Yman, president; A. W. Bryant, secretary, Box 750.

PAINTERS' UNION.—Second and fourth Thursdays, 8 P. M. Longshoremen's Hall, Howard Pennell, president, 206 Tenth street; Chris Simonsen, recording secretary, 1640 Harrison avenue.

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PLUMBERS AND STEAMFITTERS. NO. 481.—Monday evening 8 P. M., Eighth and Willamette streets. H. B. Woods, secretary, Box 522.

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