

ECONOMIC DEPARTMENT

ALFRED D. CRIDGE, Editor

Portland, Ore., June 7, 1912.
Editor of The Labor Press:

The garbled and mutilated form in which my previous letter to The Labor Press was presented in the issue of the 30th ult. by the editor of the Economic Department was rather disappointing. However, having been assured by the managing editor that no such violation of the ethics of modern journalism will occur again, it is my desire to have my rejoinder to the editor's comments appear in the columns of The Labor Press.

It is quite proper that tax measures which are to be voted upon by the people should be discussed on the economic department of The Labor Press, and I made no objection to this policy. On the contrary, it is my desire to assist the editor, and, if possible, make the explanation of a particular tax measure complete. The graduated single tax and exemption amendment is now "before the house." What omniscient or high authority has furnished conclusive proof that this measure, if adopted, will be beneficial to the interests of the people in general and the members of organized labor in particular? I know of none.

Furthermore, it seems to me that one of the measure's foremost advocates is unable to present the bill clearly and consistently to the readers of this paper. You state in your reply that the graduated tax proposed in the "graduated single tax and exemption amendment" is not a graduated land tax. If you will consult the issue of The Labor Press of the 23d ult. you will find in the "Economic Department" an editorial entitled "Cords Around Our Throats," in which you make the following statement: "The graduated land tax will cut the cords around our throats and the throats of our children." Again, same issue, page seven, third column, lines ten to seventeen, you state: "The graduated land tax proposed in Oregon expressly and repeatedly provides for the taxation of

In support of your advocacy of the proposed measure you have made mention of a recommendation, made some four years ago, by Land Commissioner West, for a graduated land tax on unimproved values.

If the graduated tax in the proposed amendment is not a graduated land tax, why do you make mention of that recommendation at all, it being in other features so dissimilar to your remedy?

The foregoing remarks prove that you have repeatedly referred to that particular feature of the proposed measure, as a graduated land tax, it is no matter how it is written or worded in the amendment.

We are informed in the reply that "the proposed graduated tax amendment does not embody a 10 or 15 per cent single tax proposition."

I wish to direct your attention to The Labor Press of the 16th ult., page seven, column one, lines five to ten, and you will find: "There is no proposition put before the people of Oregon to take over the whole of the land values created by the people. There is a measure which would take about 10 per cent of such annual values for public purposes."

The measure there alluded to is the graduated single tax and exemption amendment. The taking over of the whole of the land values created by the people would be full single tax; hence, the taking over of about 10 per cent of such annual values would be an "about 10 per cent single tax." Substitute "10 or 15" for the words "about 10" and we have the very statement controverted in your reply.

INNE RUS.

MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL.

The People's Power League measure is one of the three very important measures before the people. There are others of importance, but this is one that deserves the support of every man who wants a better and more representative legislature and a state Government returning a dollar's worth of service for a dollar in taxation.

It abolishes the state senate. This body has no more reason for existence than would a third legislative organization. One house in a legislature is enough. We have one-house city councils. People used to think that two were necessary.

This measure gives every party full and exact representation in the legislature. It is simple justice. The proxy system makes the jerry-mander possible. It secures the rule of the majority.

Other features are especially good. One is the ending of fake emergency clauses in all city and state legislation. Another is that the Governor fixes the highest sum that may be appropriated, the legislature having power only to reduce it.

Among the many needed measures which the Legislature should have passed is one to permit the division of counties and the joining of cities according to the vote of the people. Such a measure is being put before the people now. It may have some shortcomings, but in the main is about right. It gives too much power to a commission appointed by the Governor to say whether or no a new county shall be formed, but if this is found to work out badly it can be changed.

If a thousand dollars was offered for a school law that should prevent working men having anything to say about the schools and at the same time preserve a semblance of democracy, the Oregon statutes could not be improved upon.

Special privilege is never ready to endorse any proposal to abolish it. The slave owners of the South always found some great moral difficulty in the way of any abolition proposal. It is so now with any fundamental attack on the grafters and big land speculators. No law that can be proposed that amounts to anything receives any encouragement from them.

The higher cost of living helps pay for the big rents and prices idlers and speculators in our large cities get for their lands.

The city of Birmingham, Alabama, exempts all manufacturing plants from taxation for city purposes provided they represent an investment of \$10,000 and operate not less than eight months in the year. Evidently they want capital to come there and invest in establishing useful industries. What do we want in Oregon? From the way we fine men for building manufacturing establishments we do not want them to come here.

By an enormous majority the people of Duluth have adopted the initiative, referendum and recall. The plutes told the people that it would result in the loss and confiscation of their little homes.

The Retail Clerks' Association of Shawnee, Okla., has been successful in securing agreements whereby all business firms in that city will recognize a materially shorter workday. The Clerks' association was assisted by the local central body in getting the betterments.

WHY NOT TAX BUILDINGS?

A correspondent asks why buildings should not be taxed since they need protection from fire.

A building costs no more to construct where not protected than where protected from fire. True the land can not run away, but that is no reason why you should punish a man with a tax on something that need not come and can be taken away.

Let our correspondent ask himself this question: Which would be the best investment, a \$50,000 building where it was not taxed or where it was, both being equally protected from fire? And then this: Which lot would be worth the most, the one where buildings were not protected by water system, fire department, police, street cleaning, public schools, light, sewer, etc., or the lot where none of these services were given? If in doubt ask any real estate agent which lot he could sell for the most, or whether if added to a lot he would be able to secure a buyer at a better figure.

Any honest investigation along these lines will show that a tax on land values exclusive of all taxes on revenues will secure a revenue that is created by the public and can more naturally be taken for public service.

Where a line of taxation is drawn between two communities in close juncture but separate municipal government, the new buildings will almost invariably go up on the side where they are not taxed. It takes very strong inducements and advantages to offset the retarding effect of taxing buildings in such localities.

This has been tested out time and time again in Australia, New Zealand and British Columbia. No community can resist the pressure very long that comes from a close close neighbor exempting improvements.

LEGION VISITS PRINTERS' HOME.

Colorado Springs.—Carl Legien, president of the Federation of Trade Unions of Germany and secretary of the International Secretariat, together with his traveling companion and interpreter, A. Baumeister, who has just completed a lecture tour under the auspices of the American Federation of Labor, paid a visit to the Union Printers' Home in this city recently. They expressed themselves as being highly pleased with the institution and commended the patriotism and loyalty of the members of the International Typographical Union in maintaining such a magnificent establishment for their indigent members.

HOMESTEAD BILL PASSES.

Washington.—It will be remembered by students of the labor movement that years ago the trades unions and reform papers were responsible for carrying through the legislation which resulted in the homestead, pre-emption and timber claim laws. Congress has just passed a bill which reduces the requisite period of residence on homesteads from five years to three, and grants five months' leave of absence annually to permit homesteaders to go away for the purpose of supplementing their incomes.

POST'S "TRADE WORKERS."

Washington.—J. W. Brice, president of the National Trades and Workers' Association, alter ego of C. W. Post, with offices in the "saw-dust factory" of the famed union buster, recently invaded the capital city. It is reported that he came here for the purpose of visiting the members of the local Trades' and Workers' exchange, which shows that the Trades and Workers' Association of this city are perfectly agreeable to permitting the employers to establish wages and conditions of employment. As a Mutual Admiration society the Trades' and Workers' Association surely are entitled to the blue ribbon.

VICTORY FOR CIGARMAKERS.

Los Angeles.—In signing up the Baer Cigar factory the union cigarmakers have won a notable victory. The factory originally opened as a union concern, but in April, 1907, it refused to sign the new scale of prices and since that time has been a non-union concern. The cigarmakers, however, have kept up an active contest against the products of the firm, and as a result an adjustment has been secured and the factory will again employ none but union cigarmakers.

DUNKIRK DOINGS.

Dunkirk, N. Y.—The Journeymen Tailors of this city recently organized and have been successful in securing agreements with three of the largest merchant tailors. The plumbers also recently demanded a 50c advance per day and secured in a very short time the two recalcitrant firms, thus making this a union city so far as the plumbers are concerned.

MASSACHUSETTS RATIFIES.

Boston.—The legislature of this state has adopted the resolution ratifying the amendment to the national constitution for the direct election of United States senators by the people Massachusetts is the first state to ratify the amendment since its submission by congress to the several states.

UNIONISTS, NOT ANARCHISTS.

(By the Rev. Charles Stelzie.)

Possibly my experience with trades unionism has been peculiar, but I hardly think that is so. My impression is that I have seen and heard the worst as well as the best in trades unionism. There is much in the movement that needs to be remedied. But no organization made up of flesh and blood is perfect.

Because of the very practical experience that I have had with the men in the ranks as well as with the leaders of organized labor, I have come to have little patience with the cry of "Anarchism," in some quarters when the question of trades unionism is being discussed.

To judge a movement by isolated causes, as these opponents are doing, is rank injustice. It is an indication that their judgment as to the value of things is hardly to be trusted. They have failed to give matters their proportionate value.

But if their argument is to be considered, then others may also employ it. Numerous are the illustrations that might be cited which prove that trades unionism is not anarchistic, but only one or two may here be given.

Questions were being fired at me in a meeting of a machinists' local, when one brother asked: "Don't you think that we ought to use the weapons of the boss—the gatling gun and the rifle?" Cries of "Anarchist," "Shut up," from men all over the hall effectually silenced the questioner. He stood absolutely alone, and I half suspect that he asked the question simply for the sake of getting up an argument.

It has been reported that a high official in our country had favorably received a delegation from an organization which opposed legislation favorable to workingmen. While the matter was being discussed at a meeting of a Western Central Labor Union, a delegate arose and remarked, "We ought to treat that official just as some of the Russian officials have been recently treated." In other words, the delegate implied that that dynamite was the dose that should have been served him because of his apparent discrimination against workingmen. Instantly there came hisses from all parts of the room. Charges were preferred against him. The offender was given a formal trial and was unanimously expelled because of the anarchistic speech which he had made.

While it is true that here and there one finds a man in the labor movement who, under peculiar circumstances, will give expression to a declaration which may be anarchistic, it must not be forgotten that the tendency of trades unionism is for the enforcement of law and order.

OLD OFFICIALS RE-ELECTED.

The 37th annual convention of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers recently held in Chicago, re-elected its old officers, President John Williams succeeding himself, as did also Secretary-Treasurer M. F. Tighe. The convention arrived at a decision to ask for an advance of 25c per ton in the rate of puddling, making the base \$5.25 on a 1c card rate, each succeeding advance giving the puddler an increase of 15c instead of 12 1/2c as at present. Changes in other classes of work were made to conform to the above advance.

The annual convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers was in session the week of June 3-8 at Toronto, Canada. Secretary Frank Morrison of the American Federation of Labor was in attendance and delivered an address before the convention, as was also John B. Lennon, treasurer of the American Federation of Labor. The International Ladies' Garment Workers since the strike of two years ago in New York city and vicinity have a membership close to 100,000.

Blue label cigars can be found everywhere, and may be had for the asking. Likewise, however, cigars may still be found without this label. It ought to be the privilege of every smoker to assist in changing this condition of affairs until the blue label—the mark of quality—shall adorn every box.

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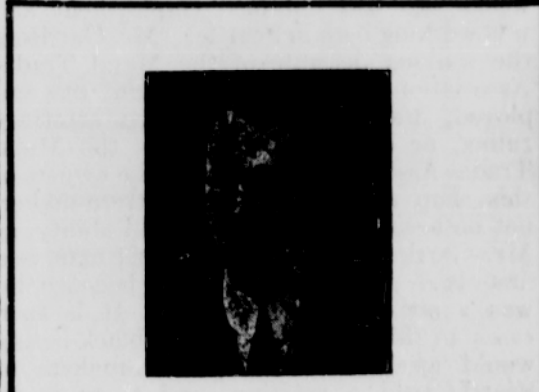
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