TAX REFORM IN OREGON

Matter Prepared by Oregon Tax Reform Association

DOES TAX ON LAND VALUES BURDEN THE FARMERS?

Exempting Manufacturing Plants and Improvements Does Not Increase the Farmer's Tax Burden, but Greatly Reduces His Taxes and Kills Land Speculation

Editor Journal—The course of The Journal in encouraging the presentation of both sides of the different propositions before the people under the referendum and initiative provisions of the Oregon constitution is appreciated by thousands of its citizens, and has been and will be productive of great good. The public press should give information concerning matters of interest to the people. Fully informed the people are as competent to decide as the average legislature. They may make mistakes, but so have legislatures, and when the people find out a mistake they can right it, which is more than legislatures can do, or are willing to do very frequently.

The single tax amendment, as it is called, has excited wide attention in the state and from students of economics the world over. It is safe to say that except the referendum and initiative of Oregon it has advertised the state further and wider than any amendment ever proposed.

Citizens Right.

Some very able, honest and influential citizens are opposed to it and are doing everything in their power to defeat it. That is their right as citizens, and the discussion of its provisions is one of the objects of its sponsors. So far, however, the opposition has furnished no facts or figures to substantiate their contentions against it. They are possessed of access to public information the same as its supporters, and it seems strange that their chief reliance so far in the campaign is on the ignorance and prejudices of the farming community.

The objections to the proposed amendment seem to be three. First, that it would put all the taxes on the farmer, or double the taxes on the farmer. Second, that it would allow the manufacturer to saddle the taxes justly due on his plants on the farmer. Third, that it would tax the small home-owner so heavily on his land in city and country that he would be compelled to sell out to wealthy monopolists who would gobble up the entire state.

Point out to these objectors that the farmers of Oregon do not own the state, either in area or values, the tillable lands of the state being assessed for 75,000,000 out of over $384,000,000 of land values, and nothing is said in reply. Not a figure is given, or a fact, in refutation. Considering that much of the tillable land is held for speculation and rented to tenants it is a liberal concession to assume the farmers of Oregon own even $75,000,000 of its land values.

The value of the improvements on farms, livestock, implements and the furniture will amount to more than one third this sum.

Farmers Do Not Own Land Values.

So the farmers do not own the land values of Oregon. To increase the taxes on land would rest more of the increase on other land than the farmers. The first contention, that it would double the taxes of the farmer, or put all the taxes on the farmer, is as absurd as to say that twice two is seven, and maybe more. In county after county an examination of the assessor's returns shows that the exempted classes of property would increase the taxes on land values from one eighth to one fourth, and in every case that the farmers have more invested in exempted classes of property than the proportion of raise would amount to. Assuming that the raise would be as much as one fourth on land values, the farmers of any county in the state would find that the value of their livestock, implements, buildings, improvements and furniture more than equals one fourth of their land values.

Our objectors immediately reply that the farmer lives in the country and that taxes are levied and collected by counties, so that estimates of land values for the state at large are misleading. This is a poor objection, but any farmer can see how he stands in any county by subtracting from his tax receipts the sum paid on his livestock, improvements, implements and household furniture and adding from one eighth to one fourth to the land values assessed to him. In some counties the exempted classes of property are a larger proportion of the whole than in others. If we consider that much of the value of the tillable lands in reality consists of improvements, orchards, etc., and that such lands should not be assessed for more than the unimproved lands adjoining, the farmer who would under this amendment have his taxes on his land increased more than one sixth would be exceptional.

Does Not Exempt All Property.

It should not be forgotten by the investigating citizen that the proposed amendment does not exempt all classes of property except land values, but only such classes or kinds as are specifically mentioned. Business blocks, merchandise stocks, corporation shares, rolling stock of railroads and many other kinds of property, too numerous to mention, are not included in the exemptions provided for.

In Columbia county the property exempted would not exceed in all probability $2,000,000 out of a total assessed value of $16,786,655. If all improvements on land were exempted the total exemptions would be $2,299,580. Let us assume that the taxes added to the land values of the farmer would be 12.5 per cent, or one eighth, and that the tax is now 16 mills on the dollar. It is clear enough that on this supposition as a basis that a farmer with a piece of land assessed at $2,000 and improvements, livestock, furniture, and implements assessed for $1,000 would now pay a total of $48 tax. Under the amendment he would pay $36 tax on his land alone and nothing on the remainder. If his exempted property was greater than the land value, and on the average in Columbia county such is the case, his taxes would be 18 mills on his land and nothing on his improvements, etc.; so that with exempted property worth as much as the land he would still pay but $36 taxes and nothing where he would now pay $32 on land and $32 on his other property. It is a simple matter to calculate just what it would be if given the tax rate, the property taxed and the exemptions the law would allow.

Columbia county has a large proportion of its assessments resting on manufacturing machinery. Counting in steamboats, which would not be exempted, it foots up to $556,185. The prejudices of the farmers is sought to be aroused by the declaration that the proposed amendment would shift the taxes of the rich manufacturer to the farmer. A glance at the assessment roll of the county will suffice to show how feeble an argument it amounts to. Improvements on farms, farm machinery and implements, and livestock foots up to the total of $683,455. In addition come improvements on unpatented and undeeded lands, amounting to $701,745 and the furniture of which the farmer is probably assessed for half of it, amounting to a total of $95,440. The farming community would be relieved of taxation on all these and at the same time the manufacturing plants would escape. Which would be the greater gainer?

Manufacturing Plants.

Again, some of the manufacturing plants are largely owned by farmers. If a $200,000 cannery, creamery, cheese factory, tool factory, or other industry was established in Columbia county the demand for farm products and the increased home market would receive a tremendous impetus. A large cannery in a community adds, it is estimated by experts, fully $50 an acre to every acre of tillable land for miles around, and the population gathering around creates city-lot values for possibly as much more as the increase in agricultural land values.

The city of Baltimore exempts fully $100,000,000 worth of manufacturing plants and has become the chief manufacturing city of the south in pursuing this policy for the last 18 years. This single city has more manufacturing capital invested in its limits than 10 times what is in all Oregon. Kentucky exempts all manufacturing plants for the first 10 years, and Pennsylvania has for many years maintained her supremacy as a manufacturing state by sweeping exemptions. Alabama and Georgia are attracting more wealth in a year than Oregon in a decade for investment in manufacturing enterprises because of such exemptions.

Again the objector will urge that Columbia county is exemptional, that much of its land is untillable, undeveloped and held by timber speculators. Clackamas county has a greater proportion of manufacturing values and a much greater proportion of tillable land values and acreage. It appears, however, that the farmer owns less than one third the total land values of the county, and has property that would be exempted exceeding the value of his lands, and almost four times the value of the manufacturing plants.

This goes on with varying proportions from county to county, but always and ever clinching with undisputable figures that the farmer is always gainer by exempting from taxation the kinds of property proposed in the amendment. Twice two is four the world over, and in Manitoba, Alberta, New Zealand, New South Wales, and other countries experience over a number of years has demonstrated that the agricultural classes have greater values in improvements, implements and livestock than in land.

Our objectors, finding themselves worsted in county figures and facts will jump to the cities and towns. Here the home owner, with his one or more lots, the manufacturer, who is not more land speculator than actual manufacturer, and the mechanic with his kit of tools, a rented house and a little furniture is in the same class as the farmer who actually works his own or another's farm. In Portland the rate on land values will increase under this amendment about two, possibly three mills. The man with a plot of land worth $500 and a house worth $1,000 would now pay about $14 on the house and $7 on the land, estimating on a 14-mill tax. Under the proposed amendment it would be $9 on the land and nothing on the house. If the owner put a number of improvements on and made the total $2,000 it would still be the same tax of $9. The poor man unable at present to build could very well afford to pay the slightly increased tax on his lot in view of the fact that when he did build he would have no fines annually levied on him for doing so.

Kills Speculation.

The real animus of the objections to the amendment is this:

The assessors would have fewer things to assess, the principle thing being land values. The attention of the people would be concentrated on the matter of assessments on idle tracts and they would be insistent that such lands be raised to the values given improved lots. The trend would immediately go in the direction of eliminating speculative values in land, leaving only the utility values. The workers would then approach a condition where instead of having to give of their product more to the speculator than to the tax collector, the speculator would be eliminated as a parasite on society, and only the necessary expenses of government would remain. Such a condition would necessitate some very useless but wealthy citizens hunting a job of honest labor and create a large demand for all labor products and constructions to the elimination of the man out of a job; and in short, establish a condition of society intended by the Creator to prevail, where no man would eat unless he produced useful product to society at large.

Such has been the invariable result to the extent taxes have been taken from the kinds of property proposed for exemption by this amendment. It is hardly necessary to say that the wealthy monopolist would not be investing in land. If so why does he not buy up New Zealand, where the land in over 80 cities and counties bears all the local taxes, and where tramps are unknown and land speculators unheard of? There is a class of objectors who assert that to tax land values more and improvements less would result in land having no value whatever, and therefore no taxes would be possible for the support of local or state government. They are generally found on the next corner to be declaring that the same proposition would result in the poor man being compelled to sell to the monopolist, who would raise rents and inflate values based on the rents. The two objections devour one another. Experience shows that land is just as productive if more of its values created by the community are taken by the community for public use, and that capital and labor will desire it for use, not speculation, and be willing to pay its utility value to the owner or the state as now. Experience in many lands the world around is demonstrating that the objectors to justice in taxation are childish in their reasoning and not without guile, either. To the landless man it need hardly be pointed out, that his furniture, tools and future savings invested in a home are exempt. Oregon jumps on the limited load or two of furniture owned by the renter in the city, on the livestock and implements possessed by the tenant in the country, with greater severity than many other states in the Union, and if this amendment should fail the assessors will take especial delight in coming down still harder on the landless victims of land monopoly.

Justice in taxation means more for the workers, less for the loafers. The richer the loafer the harder it hits him if his riches consist of lands rented or leased to labor and capital wherein the land owner does naught but get out of the way that the one may sweat and the other risk. FRED C. DENTON.

TOM L. JOHNSON'S TALK TO FARMERS

(Extract from an address delivered by Hon. Tom L. Johnson, mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, before an audience composed almost exclusively of farmers.)

After speaking on the issues in state and county for some half hour, the mayor, as is his custom, called for questions. A venerable gentleman, with long white whiskers, arose and said: "Mr. Speaker, I have a suspicion, from what I have read in the papers, that Mayor Johnson desires to place all taxes on land. Is this correct?" Some one else in the audience then called out: "Tell us about the single tax." Replying to the elderly man, the mayor said: "Most emphatically, No!" He paused for a moment, then continuing, said: "But if you mean that I have a desire to place all taxes on land values, I answer most decidedly, Yes! If you want to hear about the single tax, I will stay with you and let my tent meeting in the city wait, while I say that if it were not for this idea, called single tax, I would not be here tonight. This is the reason I am what I am, and making the fight which we are now in. A tax on land would be an unjust and iniquitous system, but a tax on land values would be the best and fairest system that the world has ever known. Laws which would bring about the taxation of land values would be of more service to humanity than any legislation ever yet enacted. Farmers are large owners of land, but not of land values. We have land in our city that sells at the rate of $5,000,000 per acre; have any of you farmers land as valuable at that? In New York city there is land that sells for $15,000,000 per acre; is there any land in this neighborhood at that price? To answer my friend's question, I will relate a little talk I had one day with Congressman Pierson of Tuscarawas county, when we were in Washington together. Pierson was a farmer and he said to me one day: 'Tom, I cannot go your single tax, as it would be a hardship on the farmers, and then already have more than their share of the burden of taxation.' I said: 'Look here, Pierson, if I thought the single tax would increase the farmer's burden I would not stand for it for one minute. In fact, if I did not know it would be the greatest blessing to the farmers and to the workingmen in the city as well, I never would advocate it again. I can show you that the single tax will lighten the farmers' burden as compared with the present method. Let me ask you some questions, to see if we can get at the facts of the matter. How much, Mr. Pierson, of the present tax burden do you think the farmers bear?' 'Well,' he answered, 'the farmers constitute over half the population of the United States, and I should say that they pay at least 60 per cent of all taxes.' 'Very well, let's call it 50 per cent to be safe.' 'No, no,' said Pierson, 'that's too low. They pay more than 50 per cent, rather than less.' 'All right, but to be safe, let's call it 50 per cent. Now, Mr. Pierson, I want you to tell me how much of the value of land the farmers have in the United States? Please take into consideration all the valuable coal lands, the iron, silver, gold, copper and other valuable mines—the waterpower privileges, the railroads and their rights-of-way and terminals, including street railroads, telephones and telegraphs, for these are built on the most valuable lands; all the gas and electric lighting rights-of-way, built on land of great value; all the city lots, some of which are worth more than a whole county of farming land. I want you to take all these into consideration, and then tell me how much of these values in the United States the farmers have.' Mr. Pierson replied: 'Well, I should say less than 5 per cent,' I said, 'Call it 10 per cent to be safe.' 'Oh, no, no; that's entirely too high; that's double.' 'Well, we will call it 10 per cent, anyway. Now, don't you see that if the farmers are paying 50 per cent, that if all the taxes were raised by a single tax on land values the farmers, since they have but 10 per cent of these values—you say 5 per cent—would pay less; that their taxes would be reduced five times? That instead of paying one half as now, they would, under that plan, pay but one tenth?'

"'I declare, Tom, I never looked at it in that light, and I guess you have got me.'

"So, I say to you farmers here tonight that this single tax, of which I am proud to be an advocate, would be to the over-burdened farmers and workingmen the greatest boon, the greatest blessing, the greatest Godsend that any country ever knew. I wish you good-night."

TAXATION IN CANADA

A citizen of Portland has received the following letter from A. G. Harrison, secretary of the board of trade of Edmonton, Alberta, which in view of the present discussion on the subject of taxation in Oregon may be of interest here:

"The city of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, does not tax the improvements made on property therein. In other words unimproved property pays the same tax as improved property. The same tax this year is 13 1-3 mills on the dollar. That this method has been of benefit to this city, I think the following statistics will prove:

Population.	Building Permits.
2,626	$
1905, 11,167	1,868,069.00
1906, 11,167	2,280,210.00
1907, 18,000	5,000,000.00
1908, 19,050, (estimated)	

Of which $1,814,860 were taken out in January this year.

"In Alberta province, farm implements or stock are not taxed. The tax is levied against the land for road improvement and educational purposes. The local improvement district, or local school district fix the rate of taxation and it runs about $7 per quarter section for school district purposes and $10 per quarter section for road improvement purposes. In new districts the tax does not exceed $8 for both purposes."

NEED SINGLE TAX IN SUNNY OREGON

The Oregonian, March 29, had the following editorial lamenting the fact that too much good land was held, as a howling wilderness, right in the very suburbs of Portland. So we have reprinted it with the answers to each paragraph following. This we have done for the benefit of the editorial department of that paper which thinks bull calves have an unearned value.

In an Undiscovered Country.

Portland business men who went to Salem, a few weeks ago, to join in celebrating the completion of the Oregon Electric railroad were astonished at the scenes they witnessed along the line, and particularly along that portion of it between Portland and Wilsonville, a distance of 25 miles. Surprise was not occasioned by views of highly cultivated fields, thickly settled agricultural communities or other evidences of advanced farming conditions. On the contrary, it was the panorama of undeveloped country that caused amazement and made the visitors wonder that within so short a distance from a large commercial center so much fertile land should be lying idle.

Held for speculation, as the tax is small, and the chances for profit are good.

While no accurate figures are available showing what proportion of land in the region mentioned is yet untilled, the impression gained by those who have traveled over the line is that at least 75 per cent of the soil that could be made to bear annual crops is still covered with trees, brush or stumps. Land answering this description is practically unproductive, for it scarcely affords poor pasturage.

And will remain so until we get the single tax.

It stands there today because no one has been ready to clear the land and raise cultivated crops.

From the fact that they would have to pay the land speculator such a high price to get out of their way, and let them go to work.

One may ride the entire 25 miles from Portland to Wilsonville, where the road crosses the Willamette, and see no commercial orchards, and, indeed, no orchards of any kind except the old family orchards common around pioneer homes.

A condition peculiar to all land held by speculators, as they are too wise to improve, and pay taxes on their improvements.

Mention is made of these conditions, not for the purpose of presenting an unattractive picture, nor with an intention to reflect upon the enterprise of the people who have lived all these years in the section so recently tapped by a trolley line.

As this land has long since passed into the hands of the land pirate, who is ever ready to allow his neighbor to do the improving, while he takes the profit.

The desire is, rather, to call attention to the vast latent resources that lie within easy reach awaiting the home-seeker. Here, within half an hour's ride of the metropolis, is a stretch of country that would easily support a population twenty times as large as that which finds sustenance in it now. Perhaps inadequate transportation facilities explain the slow development of agriculture in the section referred to, but, if that be the case, the coming of the trolley line should mark the beginning of an era of improvement which would soon place that region where it belongs among the well-known and densely-populated portions of the state.

If it were not for the forestaller, or the dog in the manger, known as the land speculator.

In no other locality can better marketing facilities be found, and, while it might be true, and is not necessary, to say that this is the most fertile region in Oregon, it may safely be asserted that the soil is at least as good as the average in the Willamette valley; and that is good enough for anyone.

What is here said in behalf of one small section of the state need not be looked upon as prejudicial to the interests or the advantages of any other section. All over the state there are rich agricultural regions awaiting satisfactory transportation facilities or some newcomers who will "discover" them anew.

Yes, they are all in the same boat, so to speak, in the grip of him who works not, nor will he allow those who are willing to improve and produce to work, until they pay him to get out of their way.

The particular locality directly affected is not alone interested in the work of development. Industries along the Oregon Electric line cannot grow without helping to make Portland a larger city and Oregon a more populous and wealthy state.

That is a fact. Every lick that the farmer strikes adds value to the land in Portland, so the city landlord can demand and get more rent for the land made valuable by other men's work.

The single tax amendment would make it unprofitable for the land speculator to hold such land idle, so he would have to let go, and then you would see homes and schoolhouses with happy children in them, instead of the wilderness one sees out there now. Vote yes on No. 322.

Vote No. 322 on the ballot.

A COMPARISON

Between the Assessment of the Farmers and the Railroads

Livestock, furniture and farm implements are assessed for $33,859,688.

All railroads in Oregon, $32,321,368.

Farmers pay more by $1,538,320 than all the railroads in Oregon, on his livestock, household furniture and farm implements. The farmer is assessed for about four times as much as they would sell for, while the railroads pay big dividends on five times as much as they are assessed for.

The railroads have passes to give while the farmers have to work.

Vote for the single tax amendment, No. 322 on the ballot.

STATUTES OF MANITOBA, 1890, PAGE 496.

All land in rural municipalities improved for farming and gardening purposes shall be assessed at the same value as such land would be assessed if unimproved.

SINGLE TAX AND THE PRODUCER

How the Proposed Constitutional Amendment Would Affect the Laborer and the Farmer

The single tax would raise wages by opening up land so the people could employ themselves and thereby relieve the labor market. The single tax would reduce rent by bringing more land into use for homes, and encourage building of houses by exempting them from taxation. The single tax would break up land monopoly and give the man who works with his hands a chance to have a home of his own.

The single tax would give wealth to him who works, to him who makes wealth, instead of the landlord who takes all the wealth that labor makes.

The men who labor with their hands have made all the land values of Portland and everything else worth having, and what have they to show for all their labor?

Suppose all the men who own no land were to leave Portland, what would the land then be worth to its owners? Who will get the benefits from the building of the great Swift packing plant? Will it not be the land owners who have now advanced the price of lots near the site 100 per cent in expectation that many men who work with their hands will need this land to live on, and raise their children?

The single tax would make this land cheap to the man who wanted to make use of it, and the sordid land speculator could not well afford to hold it out of use as he does now, and make labor come to his terms.

New York has had a rent strike in the tenement district, and the landlord and his court have evicted the poor workers by the thousands. Had the single tax been in vogue in New York those workers would not now be in poverty, but would own the homes now rented at exorbitant rates.

The single tax would settle the child labor question. No father or mother would send their children to work in the mills if they could support them with the wages of the father.

The single tax would give the children of the laboring man their playtime, with better schools and better clothes to wear to school.

One Portland block, 200 feet square, bounded by Washington, Alder, Third and Fourth streets, is worth $3,200,000. This would buy 64,000 acres of farm land at $50 per acre. That amount of land would make a strip one mile wide and 100 miles long. The ownership of this city block is the same as the owning of many shares, as it takes an army of workingmen to pay the ground rent.

One prominent class of opponents to the so-called single tax amendment is those who know nothing of the single tax philosophy, but think it is something bad because they have heard someone say that it means to tax land only. That, they think, would put all the taxes on the farmer, when, in fact, the single tax would benefit the farmer more than it would any other class. The farmer has not much land when you measure it with the dollar, and, since the single tax proposes to tax land according to its value, the most taxes would be levied on the land in the cities.

Portland has more dollars' worth of land than all the rest of the state. This is about the way you find land values: Portland and suburbs ....62 per cent. Railroad land and franchises 8 per cent. Timber and grazing land ..5 per cent. Other cities .....15 per cent. Farm land .....10 per cent.

Under the single tax Portland and the other cities would pay 77 per cent of the taxes; railroad and timber land 15 per cent; farmers, 10 per cent.

When you hear a man or a paper saying the single tax is something to hurt the farmer, you can put him down as a man who knows nothing about the single tax or he is a knave who is interested in perpetuating the land monopoly and is trying to fool the "poor farmer," whom the land monopoly has enslaved through all the ages.

The land monopolist thinks the farmer can be fooled all the time, and is now banking on the ignorance of the farmer by telling him that the object is to exempt the rich manufacturer from taxes. The facts of the case are that every land monopolist and all who are fighting this amendment would be whooping-it-up for exempting manufacturers from taxation if that alone were submitted, because they know the growth of manufacturing would boom their land around the plants.

Don't be afraid of the bogie man, Mr. Farmer. He has always been used to scare the innocent children.

Just think with your head a little and you will see that those who are now rushing to defend you are the same crowds who have profited off the railroads and other monopolies, while those same railroads and monopolies have been fleecing you for the past generation.—Labor Press.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS TAX LAW?

You Are Going to Vote on It—Read This and You Can Vote Understandingly

Some eminent jurists and local statesmen are professing deep anxiety lest the farmer and the workingman be led astray and induced to vote for that awful single tax amendment proposed by the Oregon Tax Reform association. It obtained the required number of signatures to entitle it to a place on the ballot in less time than any of its associate petitions and had a greater surplus over the required number.

The Peoples Press called attention to the work of preparation of the amendment from time to time last fall and its articles attracted wide attention. It was supposed that it would be impossible for the association to secure the names required and not until it was accepted by the secretary of state did the owners of big tracts of city and county lands, which they are holding idle for speculative purposes, begin to sit up and take notice. The fact is that the people of Oregon have been informing themselves of the progress toward just methods of taxation going on in other countries. Many of them have kept themselves informed of the methods by which New Zealand has relieved the farmers of taxation on improvements and livestock, taken taxation from local manufacturing plants, encouraged homebuilding in the cities and towns by relieving improvements from taxation and broken up speculation in land and monopoly holding of land as an incident arising out of the new methods of collecting of public revenues. Manitoba has done likewise, and many German cities have increased the taxation on vacant lots several fold and relieved improvements entirely or almost so. These and many other facts have been discussed by thousands of people in Oregon. It is becoming known that New South Wales, an important and wealthy state of the Australian commonwealth, has swung into line with a tax law that puts as high as a 20-mill tax on land values in some cities and exempted all personal property and improvements from local taxation entirely.

Ready Helpers.

For these reasons the Oregon Tax Reform association found ready helpers in all parts of the state anxious to help along a just cause in our absurd, antiquated and essentially unjust methods of collecting public funds. As soon as the batteries of the land speculators could be unlimbered they began to let fly all sorts of misrepresentations and absurd arguments, nearly every one based upon the assumption that the people of Oregon did not know anything, could not find out anything for themselves and would believe any assertions made without any facts to accompany them if the assertions were only made often enough and positive enough.

One of the oldest and most powerful papers in the state has over and over again made the declaration that the adoption of the proposed amendment would double the taxes on the farmer, would increase the taxes of the farmer, would make the farmer pay all the taxes. Any farmer can obtain the figures for himself, either from the county assessor, or the secretary of state, and easily calculate just where the farmer would get off should the new amendment be adopted. The provisions of the proposition are as follows:

The Exemption.

"Excepting that all dwelling houses, barns, sheds, outhouses, and all other appurtenances thereto, all machinery and buildings used exclusively for manufacturing purposes and the appurtenances thereto, all fences, farm machinery and appliances used as such, all fruit trees, vines, shrubs and all other improvements on farms, all livestock, all household furniture in use, and all tools owned by workmen and in use, shall be exempt from taxation."

In Umatilla county the exemptions would amount to about 14 per cent of the entire property assessed now. Any farmer would pay 14 per cent more on his land values and 100 per cent less on his machinery, livestock, farm buildings, furniture, orchard trees, etc. Unless the value of his land exceeded the value of these things exempted about six times he would not be hurt. In proportion as his land values decreased relatively to his improvements and other exempted property he would be benefited.

Lane County.

In Lane county the proportions would be the same. In Linn county the proportion of exempted property is about 24 per cent. In most of the farming counties of the state it runs about 14 per cent. Any real live farmer that would be hurt by this proposition would have too much land and should let go of some of it, concentrate his capital on fewer acres, cultivate his land better and make more. In other words, he is either land poor or a land speculator. Any man with education sufficient to work a simple sum in addition and subtraction can see just how it would fit him by looking at his last tax receipt.

Manufacturer.

Another bugaboo trotted out is that this is a vile scheme to make the manufacturer rich at the expense of the producing classes in both city and country. All the manufacturing plants in the state are not assessed for as much as the household furniture and farm machinery by over two million dollars. In Marion county the value of all the manufacturing plants, exclusive of the land under them, does not nearly equal the value of the horses, mules and cattle, and is only about one fourth the improvements on farms.

But enough of the farmer. How would it affect the thousands upon thousands of home owners and builders on the east side of Portland?

Any man can easily figure that out, too. While the proposed amendment would not exempt business blocks from taxation, we can assume that all improvements would be exempted and then it would only raise the tax rate on land values about two mills. The rate is now 14.2 mills. A man with a $100 house on a $600 lot would not be hurt. If he had a $200 house he would be ahead about $1.42; and if he had a $1,000 house he would be paying less taxes by nearly $13 than he would now. The difference would go to the land values, and as there are about seven lots held for speculation to one in use, the idle lots would absorb the taxes now paid by the man who builds and beautifies and does something to make Portland a city. Any man can take his tax receipt and figure it out for himself. The exempted property would be about 14 per cent of the entire assessed values of Multnomah county.

Empty Lots.

Empty lots do nothing for Portland. They do much to make street-building costly, to make waterpipes run six miles past empty lots to get to one mile of occupied homes, to compel the home builder to ride six miles past these empty lots to every mile of used lots. An empty lot builds no churches or schools, buys no groceries, builds no homes, needs no carpets but tin cans, and helps no improvement clubs. It turns no factory wheels, builds no bridges, buys no clothing, oysters, jewelry, machinery, flowers, theatre tickets. In no way does an empty lot, as such, assist in making a town. Ten thousand years ago Portland was all empty lots, and if it had remained that way it would not be a city in ten thousand centuries. The empty lot speculator does nothing but keep in the way of capital and labor until they bribe him to get from between them, and the gift of nature he monopolizes like the dog in the manger. He does not keep the lot there. It was there when God put it there, and when the owner and his heirs and assignees are dust it will still be there for aught they do. The working, home-building, honest man does not need to worry about the land grabber, They are able to take care of themselves.

Figure it out for yourself and act accordingly.—Peoples Press.

THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

OF THE OREGON TAX REFORM ASSOCIATION

"Excepting that all dwelling houses, barns, sheds, outhouses, and all other appurtenances thereto, all machinery and buildings used exclusively for manufacturing purposes, and the appurtenances thereto, all fences, farm machinery and appliances used as such, all fruit trees, vines, shrubs and all other improvements on farms, all livestock, all household furniture in use, and all tools owned by workmen and in use, shall be exempt from taxation."

Would Reduce House Rents

Would the single tax amendment reduce house rents? Would more houses reduce house rents? If so the amendment will when passed reduce the rent of houses.

The exemption from taxation of dwelling houses with much other labor produced articles would necessitate more taxation on land values. With land values bearing a greater burden of taxation it would be harder for the non-user of land or the land speculator to hold land out of use. It would force more land on the market at a cheaper price. Cheaper land makes it easier for the man seeking a home site to obtain what he desires. He has more money left after the purchase with which to build his house. He would pay taxes according to the site value of his land. He would have no taxes to pay on his house, furniture or personal property.

There would be more money made in building houses to rent under single tax than in holding land out of use so that others cannot build.

With the incentive of cheap land and no taxation on improvements, dwelling houses would be built in great numbers. Houses then would be competing for tenants instead of tenants competing for houses.

What is the effect of many men out of work competing for jobs? Low wages. Then many houses out of tenants would mean lower rents.

Why do men and their families live along the bottoms in scow houses? Because rents are too high in good localities.

Why do people live in housekeeping rooms? Because the rent of a whole house is more than they can afford.

Lower rents would mean higher wages. Wages are figured by the amount left after expenses of living are paid. If we had lower rents, we would have more money left to purchase clothing for ourselves and the children. We might purchase better furniture, or better still, we would save the difference and buy a home of our own.

Vote No. 322 on the ballot.

VOTE FOR NUMBER 322 ON THE BALLOT