

ECHOES FROM THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

(For the Review)

By **BENJAMIN F. LINDAS**

THE MILITARIST AND THE DEMOCRAT

I want to relate an incident that occurred in Washington last month, which to my mind illustrates the absurdity of a great deal of militaristic propaganda. I know that it has always been the idea of most people that the higher departments of education, colleges, universities, etc., were institutions where the budding manhood and womanhood of the nation could be trained for the real work of civilization, where they could be directed into the paths of culture and refinement and grow to be fitting torch-bearers of the beacon light of progress, and from which they were to emerge spiritually developed, broad-minded, lovable, peaceful citizens of the world.

This, however, seems to have been a mistaken idea, for at the graduation exercises of the George Washington University, Rear-Admiral Charles H. Stockton, president of the University, in an address to the graduates, unburdened himself of this brilliant intellectual flight:

“Preparedness is not a topic of interest to men only, though the men must fit themselves for any emergency, but the girls must be trained to be nurses and to take their places in the industries when the men go to the front.”

In the future, don't seek to induce the youths to learn to appreciate the classics, don't encourage them to delve into the sciences, don't urge them to master any of the fine arts, don't tempt them to develop the highest and purest in human life—teach the young men how to handle the musket, and the young women how to turn out shells. Pray, what higher education is there than this?

It is really refreshing, however, after listening to this driveling puerility to consider another incident that occurred at about the same time.

The organizers of these “Spontaneous outpourings of citizens” known as Preparedness parades, were attempting to have the day of the Washington parade made a school holiday. A meeting of the school-board was held to consider this question, and during the meeting the energetic, always-on-the-job Single Taxer, Warren Worth Bailey, of Pennsylvania, asked permission to speak, and threw this verbal bomb-shell into their midst.

“I have two children in the public schools of Washington, and I would be very sorry to see these schools prostituted at the feet of politics. Preparedness is one of those “weasel words” we have heard so much of recently. The children should not be inoculated with the virus of militarism. I am afraid of the military spirit being engendered in this country and I wouldn't give the snap

of my finger for any nation that rests on force. We should make our children think in terms of peace instead of terms of war. The Preparedness parade is under the auspices of patriots for profit and patriots for promotion."

Of course these remarks were ignored, but everyone who knows that the parade was actively supported by the national government itself cannot but admire Mr. Bailey's courage.

SOME RECENT REPORTS

Month after month from the government departments at Washington reports are issued, which, were they given adequate publicity, would tend greatly to strengthen the foundation upon which most fundamental reforms rest.

Last month a report was issued by the Public Health Service. It is the result of an exhaustive investigation into the health conditions of sixteen large American cities. The outstanding fact of the report is this: That tuberculosis is the worst enemy of city life, and that poverty is the cause of the disease. Says the report, "The great factor underlying the entire problem is seemingly that of economic conditions—one-sixth of all tuberculosis cases come from cheap lodging houses."

The report shows more than this. It shows that in cities where population increases greatly and where numerous new buildings are erected, that the death rate from this disease is much lower than in stagnant cities where living conditions are bad.

There can be but one conclusion after the reading of this report; that the only way to eradicate the White plague is to improve economic conditions and make possible the erection of newer and better homes. There is but one way to accomplish this, and that is by encouraging improvements by removing the tax from buildings, by giving all men an opportunity of employing themselves and forcing land into use by a tax on its rental value heavy enough to discourage the withholding of it.

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We shall soon hear a great deal from the spell-binders about the great wave of prosperity that is sweeping over this fair country of ours. I can hear them now shouting in the hustings: "Wages have gone up—here are the statistics—Skinnum and Eatum Oil Co. voluntarily advanced wages 10% (and the cost of oil 150%); the Dum-Dum Shell Company have advanced wages 9.99% and have put swings in the parks for the workers, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*."

Granted that some wages have risen. What of it? Here are extracts from a report of the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that disposes of all these vaporings.

In a single year, March 1915—March 1916, the average retail price of food (26 articles in common use) increased between 9 and 10 per cent. In the one month, February to March 1916, the increase was one per cent. Food prices since 1890 have practically doubled.

In 1890 the price of a round steak was twelve cents a pound.

In 1915 the price was 22.8 cents per pound. Other food increased in about like proportion.

I trust the workingmen will also remember these facts when the wage increase is flaunted in their faces, and also remember that land values and rents have likewise enormously increased.

There is but one royal road to real prosperity—low prices, low rents and high wages. Only under one set of conditions is such a result possible: To have plenty of land available both for building and for cultivation. This will tend to keep men employed and hence in a position to demand an honest return for their toil, it will keep the market stocked with every imaginable product and this competition will keep prices fair and reasonable.

There is only one thing that can bring about these conditions, a tax on land values heavy enough to pry the land loose from the hands of the speculators and gamblers.

To attempt to secure prosperity in any other way is about as efficacious, to quote William Marion Reedy, "As applying a poultice to a wooden leg."

ONE OF THE PREPAREDNESS PARADES

It looks like discussing ancient history to say anything about a Preparedness parade. They are as catching as the measles in a boarding school—and about as prevalent. But the parade in Washington was different—so our papers boastfully announced. Ours was a history-making parade. It was the first time a President of the United States marched down the Avenue at the head of a parade; it was the first time in history that the entire civil force of the government in Washington marched in a body.

Everyone knows the incentive behind the patriotic fetes by our warrior people in other cities—march or lose your job!

Surely, you will say, it must have been different in Washington. There at least was real enthusiasm. No, this was another kind of history-making, the kind the newspapers don't crow over. It was the first time in the history of the nation that the influence of the government was used to induce its employees to march in a body in support of a political measure. Before the parade every department chief sent around a list, headed by his name, to be signed by the employees who would march. If you didn't sign, an explanation was forthcoming. The workers of the District of Columbia force who were paid by the day had to march or lose a day's pay.

To those who objected to marching this ingenious excuse was suggested. "Put your own construction on it. You don't have to be marching for Preparedness. You can be marching for Flag-day. We want our department to make a good showing and we want you to march." And they marched—thousands of them.

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And now for the unexpected sequel. A few days after this came the call

to arms. The National Guard of the District was found to be short of men. Advertisements appeared in the papers, and on the public streets; military officers pleaded, "Did you mean it when you paraded June 14th?" And out of 75,000 marchers, 100 joined. "Spontaneous outpouring." What a joke!

THE SOCIAL PREPAREDNESS CONFERENCE

When war threatens, reforms languish. When preparation for war is on every one's tongue the people are very apt to give all their attention to the spectacular part; the troops and guns and cannon and flags. It was fitting, therefore, that while our cities were echoing with the tramp of marching men, that a conference should be held in the nation's Capital to determine whether or not real preparedness was not being entirely overlooked.

The conference was held June 27-28 at the Raleigh Hotel. It was called by some of the best known reformers, economists and publicists in the country and to the call for the meeting was appended such names as; Mrs. Joseph Fels, Daniel Kiefer, Grace I. Colbron, Morris Hillquit, Frederick C. Howe, Lincoln Steffens, Benj. C. Marsh, H. Martin Williams, and a host of others.

By piecing together the ideas of the different speakers who addressed the conference a definite, logical working basis for real preparedness is disclosed.

"To be really prepared," said Benj. C. Marsh, "every adult and able-bodied person must work for a living and no one can be permitted a natural monopoly."

Said John W. Slaughter, of Philadelphia, "We want to organize not to fight any other country, but to fight privilege which dominates this country."

"Democratic preparedness involves protection from enemies within the country as well as those without," exclaimed Frederick C. Howe.

These remarks indicate the real thought of the conference as to what preparedness should mean, and in an excellent paper of Mr. Leubuscher, read in his absence, and in a series of resolutions adopted before the conference the proper way to attain this preparedness was pointed out, namely:

The untaxing of improvements; a rapidly progressive tax on large incomes and inheritances; Federal acquisition of natural monopolies; municipal ownership and operation of public utilities; and a tax on land values to force vacant land into use.

And now another word. This important conference, whose proceedings should have been scattered broadcast, and whose findings should have received the widest publicity, was almost completely ignored by the wealthy, servile, aristocratic, and misrepresentative press of Washington.

A SUCCESSFUL WASHINGTONIAN

Here is an example of what consistent, fearless effort can do. It never has been given sufficient publicity.

Washington is probably one of the most difficult cities in the country in which to arouse public opinion. The citizens have no vote; the population is

to a large extent shifting and uncertain; a large number of residents keep their legal residence in other States. These facts are responsible for an apathy that it is almost impossible to dispel.

Two of the most prominent features of municipal government in Washington, a few years ago, were the inequitable and disgraceful assessment of real estate and alley slums.

Living within the city of Washington for the past 25 years was a militant Single Taxer who some time ago decided that such conditions were in serious need of a change. So he went to work. Day after day he followed up real estate transfers and checked them against the assessments. Then he listed the valuable holdings and checked the assessments on these. When he had collected all his ammunition, in letters to the papers, in special articles, in addresses before labor-unions and churches, he fired broadside after broadside into the Assessors' office. He carried on this attack year after year, single handed.

He then turned his attention to the slums. Every scrap of information that could be secured about slum conditions he preserved in a scrap-book until he had collected an encyclopedia of information that constituted a terrible arraignment of the City. This book has been used by Presidents Roosevelt and Taft, by Miss Margaret Wilson, and by numerous congressmen and senators. This single-handed agitation gave great impetus to two recent alley bills; one turning the worst alley into a park, and the other providing for the total abolition of the alleys.

As a fitting tribute for this devoted service, Mr. E. W. Oyster, for he is the man, was, a few years ago, appointed assistant Assessor for the District. Since his advent into this office a vast array of the inequitable assessments have disappeared.

Glancing over his career, one cannot help appreciating the saying of the old Britisher, "It's dogged as does it."

THE INCIDENCE OF TAXATION UPON FARMS

(For the Review)

By JOHN T. McROY

The American farmer presents the spectacle of one of the most overtaxed of all men, yet constantly devoted to the very taxes which have so injured him. The farmer is overtaxed mainly because his personal property being easily visible, is more often appraised than the invisible personal property of his city brethren. The possessions of the farmer are comparatively simple and show little variety; their value is consequently an everyday fact. With city men, on the other hand, even their visible personal property presents so many