

we would love our neighbors as ourselves, what a heaven this earth would be!

I ought to close here, but no utterance upon these two themes can ever end. Every thought suggests a new enlargement; every enlargement, a new sphere. So, the question of democracy suggests the idea of "majority rule," and this is in itself a denial of democracy. As to this I can say only that when the philosophy of democracy shall be fully understood, even majorities will not seek to rule; for they will declare with Shelley, "The man of virtuous soul commands not nor obeys."

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## ECHOES FROM THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

*(For the Review)*

By **BENJ. F. LINDAS**

### A NATIONAL DISGRACE

Washington has been called "The Most Beautiful City in America." In many respects this is far from being true. It may seem unpatriotic to say it, but landlordism has not only covered our wide avenues and streets with dilapidated and unsanitary shacks, and retained on the business streets houses that date from the War of 1812, but it has made the housing of the government a spectacle that to those who have not seen it, is scarcely believable. The following words from Chas. H. Whitaker, of the American Institute of Architects, made to the American Civic Association, are absolutely correct:

"We have a building problem in this city that is little short of a scandal. The United States pays in rent \$650,000 a year for the most ill-assorted, decrepit array of buildings used by any government on the face of the globe. Priceless documents lie exposed to fire loss, and unless some different method is speedily adopted conditions are certain to grow steadily worse."

### SINGLE TAX IN WASHINGTON

I wonder how many Single Taxers have seriously considered the possibility of the National Capital becoming the first real Single Tax city of the nation.

Think what such an event would mean. From one year's end to the other the city is crowded with visitors from every section of the country. Primarily, most of these come here to observe and learn. From morning until night the public buildings are the Mecca for these travelers who are beginning to give Washington the appearance of a perpetual World's Fair. To establish Single Tax here would mean to spread its objects and teachings into every nook and corner of the land.

Then, again, every year the political forces of the nation gather here.

Congress is the city council for the District of Columbia. It has supervision over the collection and distribution of its taxes. Single Tax here would mean that the law-makers of the country would come in contact with its philosophy in a way they could not ignore.

Washington, moreover, is the ideal experimental station for Single Tax. It has just one system of taxation, that is, it does not have the puzzling features of city, county and State taxation. It has here in miniature all the results that flow from the old obsolete methods of taxation; it has business streets lined with shacks because improvements are so heavily taxed; it has people crowded into unsanitary alleys and large areas covered with weeds because syndicates have cornered the surrounding land and are holding it for increase in value; it has license and business taxes, and a personal property tax that is effective only against the small merchant and business man; it has an intangible property tax and a tax on bank deposits.

To get the Single Tax here might not be difficult. The intellectual life of the city is honeycombed with Single Tax teaching. Many of the high officials are avowed Single Taxers: Secretary Baker, of the Cabinet, General Gorgas, a member of the local Single Tax Association; A. P. Davis, Director of the Reclamation Service, both civilian commissioners of the District, one of the District Assessors, and a host of other influential men and women who would lend their aid to give Washington a sane taxation system.

Last week in Columbia Heights, the aristocratic section of the city, the citizen's association appointed Walter I. Swanton, Secretary of the Tax Reform Association, chairman of a committee to suggest needed changes in the tax laws, and his committee reported in favor of the Pittsburg plan. The report was published in all the papers in full, was put in pamphlet form for distribution, and will be considered by the Federation of all the citizens' associations of the District.

If the New Single Tax Association wants to engage in some effective work that will have far-reaching results, let it put a plan on foot to make the National Capital a Single Tax city. Our advocates all over the nation could bring pressure to bear on their congressmen. Such a plan is far from being merely a dream.

#### HIGH COST OF LIVING

Overshadowing even the international situation has been the unrelenting increase in the price of food, culminating, in many places, in riots of hungry people crying for bread.

Senator Borah, in a speech in the Senate, said statistics showed that the price of practically everything upon which the American people live had increased from 300 to 350 per cent.

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“There is at the bottom of things no justification for this condition. Congress cannot longer ignore the cries of the hungry. The situation must be met at once.”

"The time will come when the people will no longer consent to have the bread taken from their mouths by laws enacted for the benefit of special interests; unless something is done to relieve the food situation, the cry of the nation's hungry will resound through the halls of the Capital."

These are not extracts from speeches of Mirabeau in the tennis-court of Versailles, or of Desmoulins in the gardens of the Palais Royal, but from addresses made by dignified senators in the U. S. Senate in the year 1917.

One peculiar feature about the situation is, that more and more, public officials and legislators are beginning to see that the question is at bottom a land question, but they lack either the courage or knowledge to apply the only remedy that might really settle it.

Said Senator McCumber, of North Dakota, in the Senate:

"We hear of no attempt to boycott the enormous prices paid for real estate in our cities and consequent fabulous sums paid for rents. We have a vacant lot in Washington at the corner of Vermont and H Street, where once stood the Arlington Hotel—splendid hotel, fit for kings—but it was torn down to meet the more extravagant demands of the American public. That little piece of earth is valued at \$1,250,000.00. The owners are now trying to figure out a way to use that corner so as to pay the enormous interest upon that investment. If a hotel is erected I presume the gentlemen who pay \$4.00 for a pound of sirloin steak will charge that high cost of living to the farmer who received eight cents for it."

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Carl Vrooman, of the Department of Agriculture suggests that vacant lots and back yards be utilized for gardening. Wonder why it is that the Department of Agriculture has to ask people to cultivate these tiny playgrounds for the children, in order to relieve a food situation, when acres of unused fertile land are idle all about us?

"Put the 6,000,000 boys and girls in the city, town and village schools of the United States to work on truck gardens and the problem of the high cost of living will be solved," says P. P. Claxton, Commissioner of Education.

Open up the land held by speculators and land grabbers for the use of the unemployed, and we could then solve the high cost of living, and not have to drag little children from their play.

Senator La Follette approached very close to a solution when he said in a speech the other day:

"Food prices are higher for some commodities in this country than in Great Britain. The difference between the two countries is, that England distributes the burden of taxation among those who can best bear it through direct taxes and not in the shape of a tax on consumption as in the United States, where it bears heaviest upon the poor."

It remained for Congressman Bailey of Pennsylvania to offer the only real cure for the high cost of living in his bill providing for a direct tax on land

values to raise \$200,000,000. yearly. Under the present conditions in Congress no one expected this bill to be even considered, and it is now probably safely entombed in the pigeon-holes of the Ways and Means Committee. However, it would be well for our statesmen to ponder over the remarks made by Mr. Bailey, upon the introduction of the bill:

"My bill will not hamper industry nor discourage thrift. It will not take private property for public purposes. It will tend to encourage improvement and thus afford larger employment to labor and capital. Every branch of trade, commerce, manufacture, mining and agriculture would feel its beneficial effects. It cannot be assailed on economic or moral grounds and is fundamentally sound as a revenue measure. Land values are community value and the method I propose has the high merit of simplicity and the tax would merely take for the use of the whole people a value which belongs to them."

Some day Congress is going to have to consider such a measure seriously or food riots and labor disturbances will be occurrences of increasing frequency.

#### BEHIND THE SCENES IN CONGRESS

People generally throughout the country are very much puzzled over the failure of Congress to act upon a vast array of important measures. Last month, before the People's Church of this city, Lynn Haines, Secretary of the National Voters League, in a series of lectures disclosed the real reason for the inefficiency of our national lawmakers. He had made a careful study of congressional methods for three years, and his exposures were really startling. He explained how a very few members of important committees practically controlled all the legislation that is to be acted upon by either the House or Senate; how scores of committees are appointed for the sole purpose of enabling the chairman to better carry on his electioneering at public expense; how many of these committees do not meet for years at a time; how many committees keep no record of bills referred to them, consider them or ignore them as they choose; how political advantage, instead of the public good, has become the chief aim of our congressmen; how the franking privilege is abused, the clerk hire made a system of petty pilfering, and how "pork and patronage" have become the methods by which the constituents are bribed for their votes. He explained why members of Congress pay practically no attention to important measures, and how in the hotel and theater lobbys, signals are given members when measures are to be voted upon. He exposed the whole system of "canned speeches," by which congressmen fill the Congressional Record with speeches on bills, sometimes days after the bill has been passed.

With such conditions in our legislative body it is almost impossible for any progressive measure to be even considered. Every Single Taxer should look into this. I suggest that every one interested write to Sid Evans, Secretary of the Single Tax Association, and assistant to Mr. Haines, for a copy of their "Search-Light on Congress." I can promise interesting revelations.

FROM HEADQUARTERS

For the past two months Washington has been buzzing with Single Tax activities. I wish more readers of the REVIEW would hunt us up when in Washington. At the public meetings, held twice a month in the auditorium of the Public Library, we have had addresses from Congressman Bailey, Congressman Crosser, and John Z. White of Chicago, who addressed a large crowd on the Pittsburg and Vancouver plan for city prosperity. Herbert Bigelow, of Cincinnati, spent three days here and was on the jump all the time. He spoke at three of the high schools, twice at class meetings of the George Washington University, one evening at a meeting that packed one of the largest churches in the city, another evening at the Y. M. C. A., and then to a big crowd in one of the suburbs.

We are trying out an idea that might be adopted by other Single Tax organizations, that of holding a class a half hour before each of our regular meetings for those who do not understand Single Tax.

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**MRS. VAN ALLEN, OF MANHATTAN, WRITES TO MRS. VON TWILLIGER, OF THE ORANGES.**

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DEAR EUSTACIA:

I feel that the time is coming when I must leave New York. The town is so abominably common that it is no longer a fit place of residence for the really select. There was a time when the old families could maintain a reasonable degree of isolation from the objectionable elements that infest a city—the commoner kind of working people. You know I have no unreasonable prejudice against the professional class—indeed I have been quite radical, as you know, and have thrown open my parlors for occasional visits at set intervals to men and women who are so unfortunate as to be compelled to earn their living by writing or ministering to the sick, which I think may not be dishonorable in its way.

These have not been penny-a-liners, of course, nor physicians whose patients are among the poor of the city—quite the contrary. They have been writers like William Dean Howells, who has quite a reputation, you know, though it is true that I did rally him on his radicalism. And among physicians I did not think that I was treasonable to the best interests of society in receiving Dr. D., who comes of an excellent Cambridge family. Of course, I carefully drew the line to exclude physicians who treat objectionable diseases, or I may say diseases peculiar to the poor. There are so many diseases, like tuberculosis, which seem peculiarly a disease of the poor, rarely affecting the better classes; and I sometimes think that this points to the natural separation of rich and poor, for they are not alike even in their physical ailments.