

for the common people in one session. It passed more beneficial labor laws than organized labor had been able to obtain in the past thirty years. It allowed the city dwellers, by a referendum vote, to bring their buildings within the same classification as the structures and improvements upon farm land. It is a big record of what the farmers can do when they are organized politically and follow their adhesive slogan, "We'll Stick."

J. M. BAER.

Our Washington Letter

SOME LOCAL PROFITEERING

FOR anyone who had not been in the National Capital within the past few months, it would be difficult to realize the change that has come over this city. Its streets are crowded day and night; thousands of clerks have come here from all parts of the country; it is almost impossible to rent a house of any kind, and even single rooms have become as scarce as coal during a cold snap. The result has been a tremendous increase in the rent of furnished rooms and apartments, and strangers who came here to work for the government have found their not-too-high salaries quickly disappearing in rent. The situation threatened to become a scandal. The Solons on the Hill cudged their brains to devise some means to curb the extortion, and then Ben Johnson, of Kentucky, Chairman of the District Committee, hit upon the happy thought of taxing all these dwellings, and rooming house and apartments, 100 per cent. of all the increased rent, that was over 10 per cent more than the previous rent. You see, if the government took all this unearned increment, what would be the use of raising the rent?

But here is another point. For years the government has been trying to purchase the south side of Pennsylvania Ave., for the purpose of erecting needed buildings. This splendid thoroughfare, by the way, is now lined with shacks that would be a disgrace to a town of fifty thousand people. But the land has not been sold to the government. Every year it increases millions of dollars in value. Another thing; thousands of acres of vacant land surround Washington and the people are crowded into stuffy rows of "speculators' houses" without light or air. The vacant lands are so valuable that no one but "syndicates" can buy them for use. I wonder why the Hon. Ben Johnson doesn't apply a dose of the same medicine to the landlord profiteers as well as to those who run the rooming-houses?

THE CONGRESSMAN FROM NORTH DAKOTA

One of the new congressmen who is making good, locally, is Hon. John M. Baer, of North Dakota. His splendid cartoons appear frequently in Arthur Brisbane's "Times," and he speaks often at meetings of liberal organizations. I heard him one evening a few days ago when he addressed an open meeting of the Single Tax Association. He is not an orator, but he speaks readily and entertainingly. It is an inspiration for anyone to hear him tell of the organization of the Nonpartisan League—how the farmers, disgusted with the "old-line" poli-

tics, took the reins into their own hands and swept the old gang completely out of political control. He told how the farmers of the Northwest were going to have their own stock-yards and packing houses, and storage-houses, and grain elevators and flour mills and warehouses, and how they were going to deal directly with the consumers who used their products. He told also that the farmers were beginning to see "the cat" and to recognize the injustice of taxing the man who was making valuable the land of the speculator who was holding the land out of use. They have already reduced the taxes on improvements, which, he said, resulted in an average saving of \$28.00 on each section of land. He described North Dakota as being like a checker-board, with the black spots the unused holdings of the railroad and the speculators, while the red spots were the barns and homes of the real farmers. He predicted a speedy disappearance of the black spots as soon as the farmers fully realized the possibilities of the land-value tax.

THE LAND QUESTION IN CONGRESS

Since the beginning of the present war, congressmen and senators are beginning to interest themselves more and more in the land question. I don't know whether the individuals whom I now quote are Single Taxers or not, but they evidently see the injustice of our present land laws.

Says Rep. Charles H. Randall, of California:

"Let every nonproducing acre of arable land in the United States grow food next year or pay a tax towards the support of the war. The result will astound the country, for ample food supplies can be produced and billions of dollars can be raised."

Senator Harding, of Ohio, made a speech on the same question, that I should like to quote in full. But I will have to be content with giving the following extracts:

"Every thoughtful man realizes that the proper distribution of the land is the basis of national well-being. The land should as far as possible be in the possession and ownership of the men who work it.

"The magnificence of France when the test came, has been largely due to the sturdy folk on the farms. They have been the saviours of France in many emergencies.

"The weakness of England, the inability of that nation to feed itself in the present crisis, the internal unrest, the Hooligans of the slums of London, have been caused by the ownership of the land by the few.

"There are 35,000,000 acres of land in the Middle States that might be farmed but that are lying idle. In the Pacific States there are 180,000,000 acres of unused arable land. In all about 500,000,000 acres lying idle. This would make five acres farm for a million families, and this little farm life is the greatest need of the nation."

The only objection I have to the speech is that Senator Harding does not yet seem to see the only way in which this land can be turned into these little farms.

THE IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Mr. Walter I. Swanton, of the U. S. Reclamation Service, and a well-known Single Taxer, has been giving lectures on the work of the Reclamation Service, illustrated with pictures

taken at the different reclamation points. It would be a splendid thing if Mr. Swanton could deliver this lecture all over the country. It is a very vivid illustration of how the government can assist its people in getting real homes. Says Mr. Swanton:

"The average income of the government employee in Washington, counting all from the President to the volunteer workers at \$1 a year, is less than \$100.00 a month, or \$1,200 a year, while the average income from more than 25,000 farms on the government projects is about double that amount, or about \$200 a month. Besides the farmer has his own home, and most of his food, and does not have to worry about the cost of living."

The lecture illustrates another thing, which is that every improvement made anywhere by the government, or the individual is reflected in increased land values. The territory irrigated by the Roosevelt Dam was worth about \$2,500,000 before the dam was built. Now the assessed value of the property in that same territory is \$72,000,000. Of this value \$40,000,000 is land value, \$12,000,000 improvements and the remainder personal property.

The cost of the dam, by the way, was \$3,500,000. This makes the land value equal to the value of the dam, the improvements and the personal property. To whom, would you say, does this land value in equity belong?

A HOUSING PROBLEM

An interesting discussion took place one evening last month at a meeting of the Single Tax Association, between Major Potter of the War Department, and John Z. White, of Chicago. The question was as to what should be done about the housing question in Washington. Major Potter has worked out a plan by which the government is to build temporary and permanent buildings, and rent them to the government clerks, saying that it would be impossible for the private contractors to build homes because of the scarcity of material and the high prices.

Mr. White in answer to this said that while it may be true that under present conditions a government building plan would be the only remedy, the real fault was in the chronic over-crowding of this city, and every city, due to the inflated value of all city land, and the unjust system of assessing taxes against houses when they were constructed. He pointed out that if it had not been for the prohibitive land values there would be ample housing accommodation now in Washington to take care of the increased population. He also pointed out that if it was not for land speculation which has made the land from Washington to Baltimore almost a barren waste, dozens of little towns would be scattered about within easy reaching distance that could very well take care of any overflow.

I might add that the worry and excitement of the war has caused no cessation in Single Tax propaganda activity in Washington, and that real effective work is being done.

FOOD WILL WIN THE WAR

This was the slogan of one of the most enthusiastic Single Tax gatherings held in Washington for a long time. The purpose of the meeting was to listen to an

explanation of the California situation by J. R. Hermann, of the Great Adventure.

The hall was crowded, and a number of members of Congress and some of the most prominent Single Taxers in the city were in attendance. Mr. Hermann, who is a splendid orator, gave a stirring address. He told why it was that the prospects are so good for putting over a straight Single Tax measure this coming November. He said that the war had jolted the people out of their old habits of thought and action; that they were becoming used to radical action, that they were impressed with the idea that food will win the war, and that they were beginning to realize—as never before—that food can come only from the land. Finally, he said, that the people of California are becoming convinced that if the nation can conscript men to fight in the trenches in France it can conscript the idle acres to help feed them.

At the conclusion of the address, about two hundred dollars were raised within a few minutes, and many signified their intention of supporting the movement with regular contributions. Some of the more prominent citizens who contributed to the fund were Judge Lawrence Becker, solicitor of the Treasury, Arthur P. Davis, Director of the Reclamation Service, Geo. P. Hampton, editor of the *Farmers Open Forum*, H. Martin Williams; Jennie L. Munroe, former member of the Fels Fund Commission, Walter I. Swanton, E. J. Dakin and a number of others.

If Mr. Hermann can continue the success that he had in Washington, the Great Adventure will have ample funds to carry on a vigorous campaign, and the backing of sufficient nation-wide public sentiment to give it a good chance of success.

Mr. Hermann will speak in many places in New York city and vicinity and will soon start for the West, visiting Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Omaha, and other cities. He will also tour Canada. Appointments may be made with Mr. Hermann by writing to Single Tax Party headquarters, 246 West 14th Street, N. Y. City.

B. F. LINDAS.

Single Tax Party Activity in New York

THE Single Tax Party of this State has started to secure petitions nominating a full State ticket for the Fall elections. In connection with this work Mr. James A. Robinson, of Philadelphia, is making a lecture tour of the State. A meeting at Middletown was the first to be addressed. At Grace Church parish in that city over fifty persons paid admission. It is the intention of the lecturers of the party to charge a small admission fee, and the experiment seems to have proven a success from the start. There were two meetings in Middletown, where Single Taxers have preached the gospel these many years. The reception to the party idea was instantaneous and emphatic, and the two meetings were given generous space in the news columns of the *Argus* and the *Times-Press*.

A lecture at the Poughkeepsie Y. M. C. A. auditorium,