

Vancouver

NUMEROUS press reports having reached us that the City of Vancouver had reverted to the old regime of taxing improvements and business in order to supplement a diminishing revenue from its Single Tax on Land Values, we referred the reports to a trusted correspondent who resides in that city. From his reply, dated the 5th of May, we extract the following reliable data:

"The news of Vancouver's deciding to go back to the taxation of improvements did not reach you quite accurately. The proposal is still in abeyance.

"The situation is, that the present *method* of taxing site values does not provide enough revenue to meet the expenditure, though that has been considerably cut down. To meet the deficit, several aldermen advocated taxing improvements. Another (Ald. Kirk) proposed a business tax, to be levied on different classes of trade in varying proportions, according to their estimated ability to bear it, *and* in proportion to rental. This was adopted by the City Council; but the necessary charter amendment embodying it was vetoed by the legislature a few days ago, largely (I am glad to say) owing to the timely efforts of the Retail Grocers' Association. So the matter is again in the melting pot."

Our correspondent adds the following interesting information:

"The municipal franchise in Vancouver is at the root of the present reactionary tendency of the City Fathers. As a *tenant* of property of the capital value of \$300 or over, I am entitled to vote at city elections for mayor, alderman and school trustees; also to vote on by-laws that have no direct bearing on the raising of revenue or its expenditure.

"If I were an *owner* of any real estate, however trifling in value, I should be entitled to the complete franchise and wise enough to effectively criticize City Hall peccadillos."

Under the above circumstances, it is easy to understand how disfranchised public opinion is handicapped in its fight to maintain fair play in the city's taxation and to defeat attempts of the land speculators to foist the burden on the business and industrial sections of the community. It is also easy to understand how the Provincial government, elected on a broad franchise, have been induced to intervene on behalf of the general interests of the city.

The action of the Retail Grocers' Association is a further demonstration of the determination of the business community to resist a return to the old regime; and the business opinion undoubtedly is that of the mass of the population.

THE Retail Grocers' Association of Vancouver defended the Single Tax and defeated the attempt to revert to the taxation of improvements. When are we to see a similar line-up of business associations in this country in support of sane and equitable taxation methods?

Single Tax Party Club Dinner

ONE of the interesting monthly dinners of the Single Tax Party Club of this city was that of March 27 at the Cafe Chevalier in this city. Mr. A. Bastida was toastmaster and among the speakers were Count Ilya Tolstoy, Wm. J. Wallace, Frank Chodorov, J. R. Hermann, Miss Grace Colbron, N. C. B. Fowles and Joseph Dana Miller.

Count Tolstoy, whose address is commented upon elsewhere by Mr. E. Yancey Cohen, said that the land question was the only question that made the Russian revolution possible, and the only solution of that question was the one proposed by Henry George.

Mr. Hermann's appeal for California was simple and eloquent.

Our Washington Letter

THE BLIGHT OF LAND MONOPOLY

A FEW years ago Washington, from Capitol Hill, presented a beautiful picture. In every direction was a sea of fragrant green, and through the foliage one could get a glimpse of homes and gardens, while here and there arose in noble outlines the marble facade of government workshops. There was no smoke, nor dust; no noisy factories, and the sky seemed always blue. To the West could be seen the shafts to our hero dead, glistening on the slopes of Arlington. But now the picture is spoiled. Some rude hand has left its blot on the exquisite canvas. Parks have been denuded of trees that were a hundred years old, and acres and acres of flower beds have been trampled under the feet of the workmen. Dominating the landscape now in every direction are the drab-colored war buildings of Uncle Sam. Of course, these buildings had to be erected. Art and sentiment must step aside until the present grim work is over. This war must be won regardless of sacrifices. But the destruction of these beauty spots in the National Capital would not have been necessary but for the greed of the land monopolist. Millions of men have offered themselves to fight for their country's honor. Millions more have gladly lent to their government every cent they had saved. But when the nation needs a few feet of land upon which to perform its necessary work, it is forced to pay millions for the privilege, or tear down the artistic development of generations.

The nation did buy some land. It did not buy any more. These words of Senator McCumber will explain why. They were talking in the Senate about the site of the Arlington Hotel, purchased by the government for an addition to the Treasury.

"This site was sold a few years ago under a foreclosure mortgage for \$400,000, and I cannot see now how there can be \$4,200,000 in the present deal."

Isn't this a vivid illustration of how even the most

terrible catastrophe means increased profits to the landholder, and how these truly named "lords of the land" can demand their "pound of flesh" even from the government itself, in the hour of its need.

THE CRIME OF THE ALLEYS

Some four years ago a bill was passed that was to be a monument to the humanitarian efforts of the wife of the President. It provided that after four years from the date of its passage, it would be unlawful for anyone to rent an alley house for living purposes. Thus were these vile, hidden slums to be abolished. And many reformers actually believed that this would be the result of the law, and congratulated themselves on the results of their efforts. But it never was intended, by certain interests, that the law was to be obeyed. If they could not succeed in amending it, it was openly proposed to test it in court, and as Washington is some two or three years behind on its docket, this would mean probably a half dozen years at least before the law could be enforced. And during the four years that have passed, the alley houses have been completely neglected. Some of them seemed about ready to crumble into the heaps of rubbish around them. The tenants, however, stayed. They stayed for the same reason that brought them there—they were unable to pay for a better place. Then came the war, and Washington was filled to overflowing with war workers. It would be a crime, of course, to enforce the law now. The alley people would be forced out of their "homes" and have no place to go. So it was decided to postpone the enforcement of the law until a year after the war.

And here is the tragedy of it. These same people in the alley are now making good money, better money than they ever made in their lives. Some are making, as laborers, \$4.00 and over a day. They are able to pay for better places, but there are no places where they can go. They are compelled to stay in their alleys, and the population of these miserable slums is being increased instead of diminished. The American people should not tolerate such conditions at their National Capital. Congress has appropriated \$10,000,000 to provide temporary homes for the government employees who come to Washington. At least a part of this sum should be expended in erecting homes for the alley-dwellers and the law closing the alleys should be enforced without abatement or delay. If Congress had just been wise enough to have placed a penalty on the thousands of unused acres in and around Washington, now held at fabulous prices, the slum question would have been solved long ago.

THE RENT PROFITEER

The profiteers all over the country are being restrained by the government. The price of bread is fixed, the price of coal and even of steel is being regulated. The government seems able to keep down within reasonable bounds the exactions of most of those who wish to profit out of the war. But before the real estate profiteer the nation seems

helpless. In Washington is presented the anomalous spectacle of a city of less than 500,000 people engaged in the most bare-faced profiteering, and directed against the very government itself. This profiteering is taking the form of rent-raising and notices to tenants to buy at exorbitant figures or move out. The situation threatens to become a national scandal.

"Bill Price," one of the best known of local newspaper correspondents says, "Landlord evictions in Ireland in the old days were mild compared to some of the work going on in this city today."

One of the afternoon papers considers the conditions so unspeakable that it prints the following editorial in big type on the back page:

"Now, for heaven's sake, let's have an end of this grinding policy. I believe, if it continues, a curse will fall on this city which will blight it for years to come. The idea that a war is sent to earth for the benefit of business, smells of the lowest pit of hell.

"I am no lawyer, and can say but little as to the merits of the proposal to change the landlord-and-tenant law so as to prevent eviction of rent-paying tenants for the period of the war, but it sounds good to me.

"I also call attention to the fact that there is enough vacant land in this city to house a million people. The War Department should set up houses on some of these broad expanses of vacant land."

Says Commissioner Brownlow, of the District government, "Rent profiteers in the District at this time are one grade, in their despicable nature, below the slacker, and not far above the actual traitor."

Senator Townsend, in speaking before the Senate, adds,

"In many places the occupants of rooming houses, apartment houses and hotels have been notified that their rents are to be increased. Many of these rents have already been increased 75% and now it is proposed to increase them 100%."

"This thing has been going on for months, and Congress seems helpless before it. A bill was introduced by Ben Johnson of Kentucky to tax these increases 100 on% every increase over 10%. This bill was passed by the House, but so mutilated in the Senate that it is now a farce."

Congressman Johnson said in discussing this amended bill:

"The bill (as amended by the Senate) guarantees the landlord a net return of 7 per cent., not on the value of the property but on the value plus 50%. If the landlord has a house valued at \$5,000 he can collect 7% on \$7,500. In order to arrive at the 7% net the tenant would have to pay taxes, insurance, depreciation, light, heat, janitor and elevator service. If the profiteering is to continue, it is better that it should be done without sanction of law rather than under Congressional sanction."

All of which goes to show that temporary palliatives

are valueless. The increased rent is reflected in increased land values and nothing else. A tax on these land values, that will bring them into the public treasury would soon stop the practice. Nothing else ever will. Not only will it stop this most miserable form of hold-up, but it will open up the acres around Washington that the national government needs. It would stop the spoliation of the beautiful parks, relieve congestion, and keep from private pockets the values that the thousands of new residents are bringing here.

The only thing that will cure conditions in the Capital is a large dose of Single Tax.

NEWS FROM DAKOTA

A few days ago I had an interview with Judson King, Secretary of the National Popular Government League. Mr. King had just returned from a long speaking trip through the Northwest and he was enthusiastic over the prospects of the Non-partisan League, convinced of their patriotism, and inspired by their intelligent understanding of fundamental questions. He told how he would go to some town of about 75 people far out on the prairies, the thermometer about 20° below, and yet at the meeting hour the hall would be packed with farmers who had driven in from miles around—some of them living as far as 15 miles away. And they were intelligent men, he said, who were disgusted with quackeries, and who would listen to you by the hour if you had a real message for them as to how they could get to the root of the nation's social ills. He said they had worked out a comprehensive plan of popular government. They were to have a short ballot, elect only the governor and hold him responsible for the proper administration of the laws; they were to have a one chamber legislature, and would have a check on the action of every official by means of the initiative, referendum and recall. He said while they were not talking Single Tax directly they were doing it indirectly. They were talking of the removal of taxes from farming implements, personal property and improvements, and they were denouncing in unmeasured terms the land speculator and the man who would not put his land to productive use. He said that there were no slackers in the Northwest, that the farmer boys were going gladly to the battle-front, that the farmers were putting in larger crops than ever before, that there was no sedition or treason except in the eyes of the Milling interests, and Special Privilege, and Big Business, that had been fattening for years on the labor of the farmers. Mr. King suggests that every real democrat keep his eyes on the Northwest. Upon the prairies they have passed the propaganda stage and their decks are cleared for action.

B. F. LINDAS.

THE Limitation of Output and a Better Plan, is a pamphlet by W. R. Lester, published by the United Committees for the Taxation of Land Values, at 11 Tothill St., London, S.W., Eng. It is admirable, as is all that comes from Mr. Lester's pen.

James F. Morton's Lecture Work

FOLLOWING the present policy of THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW, I present a brief summary of my field and lecture work since the period covered by my last report. My annual record, to appear later, will give more details.

Unusual difficulties prevented an early start in the Fall; and the work throughout the year has suffered through lessened co-operation in certain quarters, due to unfortunate events which could not be foreseen, as well as to the extraordinary conditions existing during the war. Nevertheless, thanks to the help of certain friends of the Single Tax cause, the continuity of the field work has not been broken.

Of special importance has been the co-operation of the Farmers' National Single Tax League. Commissioned as its field secretary for New York State, I have been able to reach a number of granges, where the planting of Single Tax thought has proved of special value.

Up to the Christmas holidays, my work consisted of sporadic lectures not far from New York City, with the exception of a short trip during which good meetings were held with various organizations in Hudson, Albany, Troy, Schenectady, Saratoga Springs, and smaller communities in the neighborhood of these cities. In January, a brief visit to Middletown included several lectures with satisfying results. Then followed a longer trip, with lectures in numerous communities in Herkimer, Oneida, Madison, Onondaga and Broome Counties. The present trip, not yet completed, following a short but very busy period in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties, and a flying visit eastward to debate the Single Tax in Philadelphia with Professor Hollander, of Johns Hopkins University, has taken me to divers points in Erie, Niagara and Orleans Counties, with further engagements waiting to be filled.

JAMES F. MORTON, JR.

Missouri

FOR sixteen years I have worked from day to day on the front end of this car with the ambition in mind to some day have a home of my own, but today I am about as far away from it as I have always been. The working man doesn't stand much show under the present system." These were the words of a motorman in the employ of the street car monopoly in St. Louis, Missouri, when the programme of the Homestead Home and Land League was explained to him.

The speaker was a man of more than ordinary intelligence and capabilities. He is the father of six children, and he and his wife have always endeavored to provide them with the common advantages of schooling and freedom from early wage slavery. As a consequence, the father's small wage has been insufficient to do more than provide for the family needs, with nothing in addition for the establishment of real economic independence. The man went on to tell of instances with which he was familiar