

- Entertainments, etc., from fund of Ground Rent alone, and Inheritance would form enormous surplus for further development, education, etc.
- G. Reduced Tax on business, therefore reduced cost of living.
 - H. No necessity of child labor.
 - I. Reduced cost of living and of business would mean greater ease in meeting world competition.
 - J. Easier living conditions would encourage immigration and permit highest standard of selection from applicants.
 - K. Land Taxation would eliminate speculation in Land. Financial panics being directly traceable to Excessive Land speculation would disappear, thus permitting greater business stability.
 - L. No enormously rich and undeserving class due to Inheritance.
 - M. No willfully lazy unemployed.
 - N. No gambling—Prohibited by law.
 - O. Improved public education, wealth, morals, etc., with increased funds available.

Our Washington Letter

ONE of the encouraging signs that show that a break is being made here and there in the armor of conservatism that protects most of our daily papers from the imagined dangers of radical thought, is the fact that now and then some purveyor of public news will herald as a new discovery the injustice of some prevailing tax law. The *Washington Times*, for instance, a few days ago published the following in large type:

"The District of Columbia should be a model community, and its laws should be 1918 model, at least. In respect to its license laws it retains the flavor of the middle ages, when the strongly armed men of the gated cities descended from the walls and stripped the merchant of a large part of his wares before he was allowed to do business in that burgh.

We have a long list of license fees, complicated and absurd. When an enterprise fails to live up to the standard, close it up, but don't rob it at the start."

Perhaps, in the dim and distant future, when our learned legislators have, one by one, properly labelled our archaic tax laws, they will discover the fact that a tax on land values is the only just and practical method of providing city revenues.

MEN'S MINDS PREPARED FOR CHANGE

If the war has done nothing else, it has prepared the majority of the people to accept with resignation governmental action that a short while ago would have been looked upon as a step toward anarchy and a loosening of the wild forces of social unrest.

Frequently, very frequently, in fact, I have heard the objection made against Single Tax, that it was synonymous with confiscation, that it was governmental robbery, that it was the taking of private property without compensation and without the owner's consent.

And yet, last week, in the National Capital, the Housing Division of the War Department seized one hundred and fifty houses of wealthy residents who were away from the city and not using their homes. They were taken because places were urgently needed for war workers.

Strange to say, the action was received by everyone with emphatic approval. The papers commented on the injustice of rich individuals holding houses out of use, when people were hunting for homes, and staid business men nodded their heads in perfect accord with this reasoning.

Perhaps some day the fact will dawn on the public, that it is just as much an obstacle to health and convenience to hold land out of use as to hold houses in the same way; as unjust to lock up the earth as to lock up the mansions. In fact, the people may become wise enough to make their tax laws do the double duty of raising revenue and making it possible for homes to be built for all who need them. It would at least do away with the humiliation of necessary government workers begging from door to door, in the National Capital, for a place to lay their heads.

THE FOOD AND WAGE PROBLEM

To those who follow events, even casually, from day to day at the National Capital, it is becoming more and more apparent that Single Tax must be accepted or some drastic government action will have to be taken to open up natural resources everywhere, in order to escape a world-wide shortage of food, if not an actual famine.

Within the past few days I have listened to several discourses on the subject. Two public men in particular accentuated this thought; David Lawrence, a well-known newspaper correspondent and reputed to be a very close friend of the Administration, and Benj. C. Marsh, of New York. Both emphasized the fact that the immediate need, the crying need after the war would be food; food for the soldiers, for our allies, for our enemies. As Mr. Lawrence pointed out, after the war, during the days that must pass before the torn fields of France can be made productive, or the ordinary occupations of peace time resumed, every nation in Europe will be a heavy bidder in the markets of America for the supplies that we produce. This will keep prices high, and with millions of returning soldiers and war workers seeking employment wages are not apt to rise sufficiently to meet the advancing prices. Mr. Lawrence touched upon another question closely related to the food problem. He said that rumors were already current, although not voiced by the press, that the "selfish classes" of the great powers were seeking to form an international combination for the control of the raw products of the world. They were to do this on the theory that those who control the raw material control the commerce of the world. It is perfectly clear that there can be no control of raw material without a control of the natural resources of the earth. This is a real and imminent danger, as great, if not greater, than "kaiserism," or autocracy that has now been destroyed.

For both of these problems, Single Tax offers the only real solution. If widely adopted and honestly enforced it

would throw open countless fertile acres to the labor of the country; thus meeting the world's demand for food; at the same time it would put such a heavy burden on unused land and natural resources that even a combination of all the selfish classes of all the nations would find them too expensive and unprofitable to hold.

WORK OF WALTER I. SWANTON

A splendid chart has been prepared by Walter I. Swanton of this city that gives in graphic form the terms of the soldier settlement laws of the warring nations. I hope he may find it possible to publish it and give it the publicity it should have.

The chart shows that the United Kingdom, Canada, the Australian States and South Africa have already made provisions for the care of returning soldiers. It shows that in every instance the object is to get the soldier onto the land. For instance, New South Wales is to acquire 1,500,000 acres and lease this land to the soldiers on a perpetual lease at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the capital value; in other words, Single Tax. Many other States have similar provisions. Some are to give the land away. In fact, all of the nations, with the exception of the United States, have made provision for the opening of unused land for the use of the returning soldiers.

INADEQUATE PROVISION

It might be well to mention in this connection that Congress has made a small appropriation for the investigation of the land settlement question. A committee now has the matter in charge, headed by Arthur P. Davis, a well-known Single Taxer, a man of wide experience and education. He states that in the United States the work along this line will probably be undertaken by the Reclamation Service; that the land to be set aside will be government reservations, cut-over land in the forest sections, and swamp land that can be reclaimed and made habitable. All of this, however, requires time and it looks very much as if the United States will have no adequate settlement acts on the statute books when the boys come marching home.

But while the United States is very much behind with its reconstruction programme, the liberal thinkers of the country have not been entirely inactive. It may be interesting to know that a committee is being formed in Washington of prominent small "d" democrats for the purpose of introducing a bill that has been prepared, for the establishment of a Department, to be known as the "Department of Human Welfare." I have seen a copy of the bill. It wants to have the head of the Department in the President's Cabinet. It provides for the adequate handling of the problem of the unemployed. It provides for the co-ordination, under one head, of all governmental departments having to do with human welfare. It seeks to establish schools, industrial and agricultural, at government expense, so that the youth can be properly equipped for life. It asks that all the remaining land of the government be leased to bona fide settlers and that no land be sold.

A BEAUTIFUL LAND BARRED TO SETTLERS

The contrast between a city swarming with its multitudes in the dark canyons of noisy streets, and the deserted appearance of the immediately adjacent country, was brought vividly to mind during a drive last week through the hills of Virginia.

With difficulty we had crept through the wide streets of the Capital, made almost impassable by the unusual business of war times, crossed the parks littered with the debris of temporary buildings, and reached the Long Bridge, at the site of the old structure across which the soldiers of another war had tramped away to the battle-fields.

The willows along the river's edge were still green and hung over the banks of the Potomac like fountains of emerald. The reflection of the monument to Washington blended with the shafts of sunlight that danced on the waters. A moment more and we were over the hills, past the mud forts of '61, hurried by the walls of Fort Myer and Arlington and the giant towers snapping their messages around the world. The woods were just beyond, a perfect riot of color; yellow, crimson and brown.

Five minutes' ride away was a city filled to overflow. Here were miles of woods and underbrush, a few tenant shacks, embryo subdivisions with furrows clogged with weeds marking the streets, an old mansion or two far back from the road, and tumbling cabins peeping through the trees. The whole neighborhood abounds with historical associations. Here is an old church where Washington worshipped, there runs the road between its crumbling banks, along which Braddock and his Redcoats started on their disastrous expedition. Farther along is the commodious tavern where prosperous planters clinked their glasses and drank to the health of the new nation.

And yet this section, once so full of prosperous farmers and busy workers, is now desolate. The reason for the change is not hard to find. The land that is for sale is held at exorbitant figures. Many large tracts are in the hands of old families who refuse to part with them for sentimental reasons. Many refuse to sell because the land is close to the Capital and will some day be worth fabulous sums.

At first glance it would seem a losing game to pay taxes on all this vacant land, and one day while in the vine-covered court-house at Fairfax I mentioned that thought to the clerk. He smiled and showed me some tax bills. Land that was held for sale at from three to four thousand dollars was taxed, State, county, local taxes included, at about seven dollars a year.

An application of Single Tax would make this part of the "Old Dominion," blossom like a garden. It would give the community money to build the roads that they need, and secure proper schools for the children. It would break up these old estates, get rid of the speculator, and open thousands of acres for Washingtonians who would be only too glad to have a home on some of these wooded hills, or in the quiet, restful valleys.

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