

National Convention of the Commonwealth Land Party

FOR PRESIDENT, W. J. Wallace of New Jersey
FOR VICE PRESIDENT, J. C. Lincoln of Ohio

THE Second National Convention of the Single Tax Party, now the Commonwealth Land Party, held in this city at the Engineers' Society Building, on 39th Street, was an inspiring occasion. Those who were present at the Chicago Convention where for the first time the followers of Henry George were brought together in a national gathering, recall the enthusiasm which marked that event. But this second convention was greater in many ways.

In the first place it evidenced the growth of the party movement. Its representation showed a notable increase over the 1920 convention. In addition to the scores of active party workers who have been publicly identified with the party movement for years, were a dozen or more who have thus far remained aloof. It was inspiring to have with us such devoted souls as Grace Isabel Colbron, Francis I. Mooney, Rev. John F. Scott, Chas. S. Prizer, J. C. Lincoln and that old war horse, still vigorous and undaunted, William McCabe. It was evident from their enthusiastic work for the success of the convention, that the act of enrollment was not a merely perfunctory one, but that they were now permanently enlisted for independent political party action, that they have been at last won over to the contention of party men that the one day above all others on which we should be Henry George men is on election day.

It was good to meet again that splendid spirit, Lona Ingham Robinson, to whom the triumph secured in California in the first campaign for the Great Adventure is in no small measure due. A remarkable woman who would be a notable figure in any gathering. It was pleasant to grasp again the hand of our old friend, Frank Chodorov, and to hear his voice in the convention, when with keen analysis and shrewd philosophic insight he debated the points touched upon in the platform. We wish it were possible to speak of all the friends, old and new, now flocking to the party standard under the leadership of Messrs. Wallace and Lincoln. Of the first it is hard to speak in terms that will not seem extravagant. He has the love and respect of all with whom he comes in association, despite that unbending devotion to principle which sometimes repels the timid and hesitant. Of Mr. Lincoln we know less through personal contact, but he is a great figure in the movement, better known in the west than in the east, and ever ready, in a quiet, unassuming way, to stand for this great principle and to work for it.

For two days the convention proceeded with quiet dignity. There was a seriousness in grappling with the work that was necessary to be done and while now and then was heard much good humored badinage, there was no acrimony even over the most vigorously debated sections of the platform. At no time has there been a Single Tax Convention in which every one felt himself to be more of a part of a smoothly running machine than during these two memorable days.

MORNING SESSION, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

At 11.30 Mr. Wallace called the convention to order, and Secretary Macauley read the Call. On motion of Mr. Macauley, Mr. Wallace was elected temporary chairman of the convention.

In assuming the chair, Mr. Wallace spoke in part as follows:

"This is a very unusual occasion. Once in every four years we hold a national convention of the Single Tax party. Either the success of the principles for which we contend will triumph politically or our civilization must go down.

"All those who are with us in this fight will be with us to the end. I see before me those who date from the time when Henry George wrote his memorable book, *Progress and Poverty*. For a long time I had studied *Political Economy*. As a young man I had read John Stuart Mill, an authority at that time. I had come to the conclusion that it was truly a dismal science. But when I read *Progress and Poverty* I saw that there was hope for the world."

Mr. Wallace pointed out the advantages of getting together. "We do not meet often enough," he said. "In this way, by association and interchange, we smooth down the rough edges of our convictions without however impairing them. We ought to get together for another reason. We are surrounded by people whose thought is foreign to our own. Insensibly we become affected by it.

"It is not because this is a complicated question that men reject it. Men reject it because it is not properly presented."

Mr. Wallace pointed out that all the states have passed income taxes and surtaxes on large incomes. "No one protests against the policy of taxing the rich merely because they are rich. It is tacitly assumed by nearly everybody that this is a perfectly right thing to do. These influences do really affect the Single Taxers.

"We must get together in order that these influences shall be overcome. Nowhere is such an opportunity afforded for the exchange of opinions as at a National Convention."

Mr. Wallace's speech was an earnest plea for organization and cooperation. He reviewed briefly the results of the Chicago Convention, the news of which was printed in every important paper in the United States; he told of the Oxford Conference when approximately forty members of the American Single Tax party journeyed to the Conference, and how in the clash of opinions that were varying interpretations of our philosophy the British Commonwealth Land Party was born. "It was there that our Single Tax party men took the position that the full presentation of our doctrine should be offered to the people everywhere. It is not an idle hope that something may result from this, for in Great Britain the situation is more desperate than here. Something must be done, and that soon, to relieve unemployment."

After reviewing what the Single Tax party had done in getting the Single Tax on the ballot in California, in helping Oregon, in presenting the philosophy of Henry George without disguise at Oxford, Mr. Wallace said with air of quiet conviction, "It does seem to us that if it were not for the Single Tax party all trace of Henry George's ideas would be lost to the people. For despite the efforts of Single Taxers who went into the Democratic party to influence its leaders in our direction no recognition of the principle has been embodied into the legislation of any state. And we cannot enter into affiliation with other parties without having our own ideas modified and our principle weakened."

Mr. Wallace said "We do not read Progress and Poverty enough," and then, craving the indulgence of the convention he read from chapter 2, Book 8 of the work beginning "We have traced the want and suffering" to "It is not necessary to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent."

Referring to a paragraph in this section where Mr. George says: "It is an axiom of statesmen which the founders of tyranny have understood and acted upon—that great changes can best be brought about under old forms," Mr. Wallace said that this phrase has been used to defend "a shifting of principle, and the implication that what is sought is the taxation of land values. This has actually been used to destroy the message of Henry George."

Mr. Wallace said in conclusion: "A dead fish flows with the current, a live fish swims up stream, what are you doing, swimming or floating? Do not be afraid of opposition. We who are standing for a great principle are in conflict with every other group."

On the conclusion of Mr. Wallace's speech Mr. Macauley was elected temporary secretary.

The convention now elected a committee on Rules, another on Credentials and another on Permanent Organiza-

tion. The latter committee was made up as follows: New Jersey, Mr. Bourgeois; New York, Mr. Oscar Geiger; Pennsylvania, Mr. Schoales; Ohio, Mr. Edwards; Oklahoma, Mr. Hamm; Massachusetts, Mr. Chodorov; Connecticut, Miss Colbron; Rhode Island, Mr. Fraser; California, Mrs. Robinson; Vermont, Mr. Powers; Alabama, Mr. Cohen; Maryland, Mr. McKnight.

After the appointment of the various committees the convention adjourned.

AFTERNOON SESSION, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

At 2.30 the convention was called to order by Chairman Wallace, and Mrs. Lona Ingham Robinson read a poem by Ernest J. Foord, "Hail to the Single Tax Party" We append a few lines:

"That hour will strike the doom of wrong
When Single Taxers gather strong:
For Single Tax will make land free
And give all men real liberty.
On, on to Freedom's precious goal
Where land is free to every soul."

Mr. Edwards, of Ohio, reported for Committee on Permanent Organization. Mr. Wallace was elected permanent chairman, Miss Charlotte Schetter secretary and Miss Annie Hughes, assistant secretary.

Mr. James A. Robinson was elected publicity director of the convention. Mr. Macauley reported for Committee on Rules, and recommended that a platform committee be appointed.

The Committee on Rules recommended that representation be based on the congressional representation of the states, and after a debate, in which many of the delegates took part, this was approved by unanimous consent.

A suspension of the rules was now moved that the convention might go into consideration of a change of name, and this was done.

Mr. Macauley proposed the Commonwealth Land Party, Mr. M. W. Norwalk, Justice and Freedom Party. Mr. Robinson declared his preference for the first named as the more descriptive and specific. Mr. Gottlieb, of Ohio, added a word in favor of the Commonwealth Land Party. Miss Colbron spoke in opposition to this name. In the discussion that followed many present took part including Messrs. McKnight and Mooney, of Maryland, Mr. Chodorov, of Massachusetts, Mr. Geiger, of New York, who proposed The Henry George Democracy, and others. Adjournment ended the discussion.

EVENING SESSION, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Convention opened at 8.30 when debate on the party name was resumed.

Mr. Chandler of New Jersey, argued in favor of Site Value Tax Party and told of his work in New Jersey. Mr. Caffall, of New Jersey, urged the adoption of the name, Equity Party. Mr. McKnight suggested the name of Land Rent Party. Mr. Miller, of New York, suggested a

postal card referendum by a system of preferential voting on several names selected by the convention. Mr. Loew, of New Jersey, opposed the suggestion on the ground that no such vote would be representative, since many would vote who were not Single Taxers. "Before voting on this question every man must determine in his heart whether he is a believer in the principles of the land for the people, or a mere fiscal reformer. A name should be selected that defines our position in relation to the land question.

"The real reason for a change of name is to finally differentiate us from the Single Tax tax reformers.

"Against the Henry George Democracy it could be urged that Mr. George's name was allied with questions which were not the issues of the party. The party was organized for only one of the questions, through that the most fundamental one, associated with the great name of Henry George."

After much discussion and the rejection by vote of other names, the name, Commonwealth Land Party was selected by the unanimous vote of the convention, and as such the party pledged to carry into legislation the land doctrines of Henry George, will now be known.

MORNING SESSION, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9

The morning session was occupied in the reading of the platform by Mr. Geiger, of New York, chairman of the platform committee.

Mr. Morino, of Rhode Island, moved its adoption. In the discussion that followed many took part and Mr. McCabe, of New York, noted the absence of any Scriptural allusions and asked for the introduction of "The Earth is the Lord's."

AFTERNOON SESSION, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9

At 2.30 the reading of the platform was resumed.

Mr. Lloyd, of New York presented an amendment to the platform declaring labor and capital not enemies. This was adopted and referred to the platform committee for insertion in the platform.

Mr. Schoales, of Pennsylvania, presented a resolution to be a part of the platform, on adjusted compensation to ex-service men and made an earnest plea for its adoption.

Mr. Robinson moved that the consideration of this resolution be deferred till the evening session that the convention might hear from Lona Ingham Robinson.

ADDRESS OF MRS. ROBINSON

"I have enjoyed being here at this convention. It was worth making a journey of 3000 miles to mingle with people who seem to me the most congenial of all people I have met.

"I think it is due to Luke North and to him especially that the issue was raised in the State of California, beginning with the campaign of 1916. He anticipated that when he raised the standard, Single Taxers everywhere would rally to the movement. In this he was doomed to disappointment.

"At the Buffalo Conference we expected friends to give him the right hand of fellowship. When his name was mentioned there was a storm of applause. Things were however not so favorable as they looked. That was during the campaign of 1916. Mr. North had the advantage of his magazine. He believed at this time that it was possible to get a majority in the State of California for the Single Tax Party. The actual result, the magnificent vote of 1916, was a disappointment to him. But he straightway began to take steps for the next campaign.

"On the breaking out of the war, the workers in California said, why go on. But Luke North entered the fight with the slogan, "Food to Win the War." The vote of 1918 fell below the vote of 1916. Luke North died in February 1918.

"The next campaign was fought on a compromise measure. The various elements could not compromise on anything fundamental. It was for an amendment embodying the exemption approach which we have learned to disregard. The vote was much lower than the vote of 1916. Two years later the friends who had been allied with us in that compromise for an exemption amendment refused to amalgamate, and a campaign was hurriedly improvised with an amendment which received 125,000 votes."

Mrs. Robinson spoke hopefully of the coming campaign in the State of California. She stated that Mr. John A. Hennessey, who secured for the recent amendment 3000 signatures to the petition, thought it would be possible for him to do as well this time. He thought it might be possible to enlist a sufficient number of local workers to secure the requisite number of signatures.

Mrs. Robinson related a humorous incident of having broken into an Anti Single Tax dinner in time enough to hear one of the speakers say, "Why under the Single Tax no one would want land but for use." The old arguments no longer serve, so a lot of new ones have to be advanced. The bankers have sought to make common alliance with the business men and merchants against the Single Tax. But people are coming to see that the bankers are not the last authority on finance. Not long ago they started an opposition to the Torrens Law. This is causing a decline in popular faith in the wisdom of the banking fraternity."

On the conclusion of Mrs. Robinson's address a rising vote of thanks was given her.

EVENING SESSION, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 9

At the opening of the final session of the convention rules were suspended to permit of the nomination for President and Vice-President.

Mr. Geiger placed in nomination William J. Wallace in a few earnest words of deep feeling. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Miller. Mr. Macauley added an urgent appeal that the nominations be closed. Mr. Wallace was then elected by acclamation.

Mr. Wallace in accepting the nomination recalled the history of the Single Tax party movement since 1912 when he was a candidate of the party for the same high office. "We were not on the ballot at that election so it was necessary to write the name in. This many did.

"If the party grows in the next twelve years as it has in the last 12 it will be a power to be reckoned with. We are not yet old men. Every man in this room can look forward 10 or 20 years to come for work in this cause.

"The inspiration we have will spread."

Nominations for Vice-President being in order Mr. Chodorov, of Massachusetts presented the name of J. C. Lincoln. Mr. Macauley seconded the nomination. On motion the Secretary was instructed to cast one vote for Mr. Lincoln for all the fourteen states represented at the convention.

The resolutions printed elsewhere in this issue were presented and adopted.

The convention then instructed the various delegates to select a National Committee to consist of five representatives from each state.

Before adjournment the platform prepared by the committee with the amendments proposed was passed. This also appears elsewhere in this issue.

An appeal for funds resulted in collections and subscriptions totalling nearly \$2,700, which was remarkable since it included additional sums from those who had contributed at the dinner of the Single Tax party on December 14. Mr. Chodorov offered to put the ticket on the Massachusetts ballot at his own expense.

MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Immediately following the adjournment of the convention a meeting of the National Committee was hurriedly convened.

Herman Loew, of New Jersey was elected National Chairman, and Robert C. Macauley, National Secretary; and A. Bourgeois, of New Jersey, National Treasurer.

The Executive Committee will consist of Miss Schetter and Messrs. Wallace, Miller, Chodorov, Geiger, VanVeen, Haug, Tracy, Dintenfass.

New York City was selected for headquarters of the National Committee.

On motion of Mr. Cohen, the following cablegram was sent to R. L. Outhwaite, London, England:

"Commonwealth Land Party, formerly Single Tax Party, nominates William J. Wallace for President and J. C. Lincoln for Vice-President. Change of name makes party movement international.

(Signed) R. C. MACAULEY.

After many felicitations on what all agreed had been the most successful and harmonious gathering in the history of the movement, the convention ended.

Another Party

THERE will be a national convention in New York on Feb. 8 and 9. New York has landed this convention without any committee working for it and has not had to put up any entertainments fund or any contribution to the campaign fund. Bully for New York. She does things!

It is a national convention of the Single Tax Party. Its platform demands that economic rent shall be taken for public uses by a single tax on land values, and thus land be made available to everyone. It proposes to put in the field a national ticket.

Why not? It champions the basic reform of human life. And why should not the thinking man vote for its ticket? Why, you will say, this absurd little ticket cannot be elected and therefore one voting for it will lose his chance to do something as to the real issues up for decision. Well, what issues are up for decision as between the Republicans and Democrats?

There is no real difference between these old parties worth mentioning. It's all bunk and hokum. But a vote worth while for the Single Tax Party would show that some people, at least, know that the so-called issues between the other parties are false alarms.

This New York conference expects to choose a new name for the party. Single Tax has always been recognized as a very unsatisfactory name for many reasons. The British Single Tax Party has adopted the name "Commonwealth Land Party." Our land reformers can hardly do better.

The economic rent of land is the product of society. It is a claim on wealth which is properly common property. The Single Tax proposal is a demand that the state take possession of the common wealth.

The new party will proclaim freedom from taxation for our food, our clothes, our moneys, our livestocks, our houses and everything individual labor has produced, and will found itself on the dictum of Justice Samuel F. Miller of the United States Supreme Court: "The reserved right of the people to the rental value of land must be construed as a condition of every deed."

It will have as its slogan (or might have) the words of Henry George: "Everywhere in all times, among all classes, the possession of land is the base of aristocracy, the foundations of great fortunes, the source of power."

HERBERT QUICK, (*Syndicated*)

I DO not think we appreciate how profoundly taxation affects not merely the prosperity of a nation but the character of its institutions. Exorbitant taxation has often lain at the foundation of destruction of states and of civilization itself. Governmental extravagance and a lack of intelligent financing have overthrown more than one mighty nation.—The late SAMUEL W. MCCALL.