

The need of a Single Tax organ is none the less because the *Public*, in its field and in its own way, is reaching out beyond our circle with the same message. Nor is the propaganda value of the REVIEW diminished because it is chiefly read by Single Taxers for information as to the progress of the cause. No single issue of the REVIEW has ever been devoid of propaganda matter of real value. A glance through the present number will confirm this impression as to the current issue.

The *Public* and the REVIEW have each their chosen and peculiar field. The REVIEW should be a monthly magazine with its general plan somewhat modified, and placed on newstands. This can be done, with the general support of Single Taxers.

IS THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NEW SINGLE TAX LEAGUE PRACTICABLE?

At the Niagara Falls Single Tax Conference, before the vote on the resolution calling for the formation of a new Single Tax League, Mr. Louis F. Post (who seemed at times to act as spokesman for Mrs. Fels and the Fels Fund Commission) stated that it was planned to have a national committee of 49—one delegate from each State and one from the District of Columbia. The writer believes it is safe to say that at the time, every one present believed that in the constitution of the new organization, such a plan would be carried out.

However, the provisional committee of the National Single Tax League has drafted and adopted a constitution (printed elsewhere in this issue), the fourth section of which provides that "there shall be a National Committee consisting of members receiving the votes of 200 or more members of the League."

Mr. Daniel Kiefer stated, at the recent meeting of the provisional committee, that there had been, in round figures, 4400 contributors to the Fels Fund during the whole term of its existence; that there were 1200 contributors in 1916; and that 900 persons had been pledged to contribute to the support of the new league. With the above figures as a base, it will be seen that the highest possible number of members of the national committee

would be 22, if the whole number of contributors during the Fels Fund's existence should enroll and apportion their votes equally among the largest possible number of committeemen. If only those who contributed in 1916 should enroll, the greatest possible number of committeemen would be 6, and with those so far enrolled for the new organization, the greatest possible number is 4.

But this pre-supposes an equal number of votes among the largest number of committeemen. Such a division is inconceivable. Single Taxers isolated in distant points who seldom come in contact with other Single Taxers, will shoot all around with their votes. Of course, one can make his own guess, but it seems reasonable to suppose that three-quarters of the voters of the new organization, if left to themselves, will vote for one with less than 200 votes, thereby being unrepresented in the organization. If the vote is narrowed down to the present enrollment, it is possible that no one will be elected a member of the National Committee.

In jest, the writer remarked to a Single Taxer that he thought he might be able to get 50 votes, but the writer could not see how this particular Single Taxer would corral 200. He replied—"You evidently did not notice that the constitution makes all who enroll members with a vote. I should be able to get 200 enrollments signed at each open-air meeting and a two-cent stamp will do the rest."

If this is a correct interpretation of the constitution, anyone interested in a local matter might readily secure the mere signatures of enough people to control the national organization.

What is the meaning of the word "enroll" as used in the constitution? The third section says, "Its membership shall be those who enroll." Surely the right to vote implies some duty or obligation. At the meeting of the Provisional Committee which adopted the present plan, the writer assumed that the word "enroll" implied payment of the membership dues or some concrete stake in the organization. But the constitution is silent as to this and if there is to be any discretion used in the enrollment, who is to decide and what principle is to govern?

It was also stated at this meeting that there were 36,000 names of Single Taxers on the mailing list of the Fels Fund Commission. If all of these are enrolled it seems a loose organization that will permit 35,000 persons to vote away funds contributed by practically 1,000.

The fifth section of the constitution provides that "The National Committee shall elect a national chairman, each national committeeman voting the number of proxies which he holds." This provision was criticised at the Conference as being similar to the old scheme whereby mutual life insurance companies were controlled for the benefit of a few. The last paragraph of the leaflet, issued by the Provisional Committee embracing the new constitution with explanatory notes, states: "If you are in doubt as to the person to represent you, the names of the advisory committee on the accompanying letter-head may suggest someone whom you may desire to favor with your vote." This seems to suggest that the criticism was not ill-founded.

Another provision of the constitution is that the votes shall be in the form of continuous, assignable, transferable proxies. This provision was criticised by the writer at the Conference as having the tendency to lull the voters of the organization to sleep. If there were annual voting, every member would have to reconsider once a year the acts of his representative, and to change his vote to another would not imply personal dissatisfaction to the same extent as a change of an individual proxy. Under the present provision of the constitution a change of vote would seem to imply a personal criticism and one person would hesitate to change his vote.

Even in a just cause, a member will hesitate to seek the change of proxies by 199 other voters because of the almost insuperable difficulties of getting in touch with them. But if changes are sought the organization will be kept in a turmoil because of the constant opportunities to voters to change their proxies.

In order that the members may be represented at all times, it will be necessary for the committee to report every action in detail, as well as constantly print the status of the votes,

even of those persons who have not 200 votes. This will necessitate big printing bills. But, if it is not done, the organization will not be truly representative.

The plan suggested by Mr. Post at the Conference was a much better one, in that once a year the members would decide who should represent them from their State and they would be inspired to choose their representative from persons who would more likely be known to them personally and familiar with conditions in their State. This would tend to create an active interest in the League. Under the present plan, isolated Single Taxers will vote for names because they have heard of them in the movement rather than because of the particular representative's ability to represent them.

In general, the plan of organization is a new and untried one and should not be given preference over the usual method of election until after full and deliberate consideration. Geographic representation would have been more truly representative and would have engendered local pride in the National Organization. If the working out of the present plan places a majority of the voting power in one person or a small group, interest in the organization will subside and apathy will kill it.—WILLIAM RYAN.

Aropagilica, a Periodical of Pragmatism, for January contains a truly admirable Single Tax "Sermon." This little magazine of thirty-two pages is the work of Robt. D. Towne, of Scranton. Mr. Towne was formerly editor of *Judge* and writes English that possesses a real quality of distinction, in which there is thought as well as style.

THE annual meeting of the Single Tax League of Western Canada took place on December 22. Rev. S. G. Bland was elected president.

DETROIT'S Open Forum under the leadership of F. F. Ingram is attracting wide attention. Among the speakers from New York have been such men as Hamilton Holt, Max Eastman and Frederick C. Howe.