

## Ohio's Tax Pool Muddier Than Ever

ON January 8, Governor A. Vic. Donahey recommended to the legislature of Ohio that every taxing district be given "full control over increases in tax levies, debts and sources of revenue." He wants complete home rule in taxation, and denounced the present system as a "hodge-podge." He also appears to be opposed to levying any new taxes unless they are first approved by a vote of the people.

During the first four days of the legislative session, 21 tax measures were introduced, and this, it was intimated, was only a taste of what was coming.

Although the State already has nearly 100 sources of revenue, the rural members are eager for more. They ask for all sorts of license taxes, and loudly call for a special tax of one cent a gallon on gasoline, the revenue to be used in repairing roads.

Big bus owners ask for an annual special license tax of \$1,000 on every bus, their object being to keep out competition. Bus companies already pay a corporation tax, a property tax, and local licenses.

Not many of these proposed measures will be adopted. A shrewd observer remarked: "About all the Solons at Columbus will do is to tax our patience."

It is impossible to arouse the women members of the legislature to take any interest in how revenue is raised. They are eager to spend more, and are quoted as favoring measures which would add \$20,000,000 to the annual cost of the State government, although the expenses of that institution have been growing by leaps and bounds without any corresponding benefit to the people.

## Private Enterprise

H. G. WELLS, in his "Outline of History," blames "private enterprise" for our economic ills, and, without giving any proof, mentions the housing shortage as an example. Mr. Wheatley, a Labor party member, also blames "private enterprise" for failure to build enough dwellings; but, in a parliamentary speech, he goes into details. The amusing feature is that Mr. Wheatley's facts go to prove that it is not private enterprise which failed, but government enterprise. He gives the experience of Glasgow, which, he said, needed 57,000 new houses immediately, but erected only 1,500. The building bureau was delayed for many months by disputes with another government bureau over such trivial questions as the kind of nails to be used, the shape of windows, and the classes of timber. Had not private capital been crowded out by government competition and land monopoly, local builders would have had the houses up and in use before the two branches of government settled their nail and window quarrel. And Mr. Wheatley exhibits curious confusion of thought regarding what "private en-

terprise" is. He thinks that when a landowner like Lord Newlands demanded \$12,500 an acre from Glasgow for vacant land, it was "private enterprise." It was, of course, parasitism and blackmail, legalized by government. And there are other obstacles raised by government in the path of private enterprise, but Mr. Wells and Mr. Wheatley, thinking in terms of Karl Marx rather than of Henry George, overlook them entirely, and bark up the wrong tree. Truth is, government building enterprise in England prevented private capital from engaging in the business, and proved an enormous loss to the treasury; the tax system drove capital into speculative enterprises; and landowners were encouraged by Lloyd George to charge high prices. No wonder government, rather than private enterprise, failed to supply enough houses.

## An Interesting Debate

THE Yorkshire (England) *Observer* of Nov. 29th, 1922, contains two letters to the editor, one from F. Skirrow and the other from J. K. Musgrave in response to one from a Mr. Drake, who attacked the Henry George doctrine on various grounds, the principal objection being the impossibility of valuing the land.

Mr. Skirrow says:

If land can be fairly valued when landlords take the economic rent, why can't it be fairly valued when the values are to go to the public to whom in equity they belong?

Mr. Skirrow further says:

Speaking of the Land Act, 1909-10, Mr. Drake says that it failed "because it was not only unjust but unworkable." I agree, but Mr. Drake ought to know, and probably does know, that it was not a Single Tax Bill, nor was it engineered by Single Taxers—"cunning" or otherwise.

Mr. Musgrave says:

Suppose Mr. Drake, shaking off his parochial limitations, took a trip to New York, he would there find every single yard of that city systematically valued and indexed at least once every year.

Let me give him a few figures from the 1914 report of that city. The number of the sales of land for 1913 was 2,977, the consideration being \$69,183,729. The assessed value for taxation of the same properties was \$70,112,972, the assessed value therefore being 101.3 per cent. of the actual sale price. The sales in 1915 numbered 5,003, and the assessed value of the same 103 per cent. of the sales value. The report for 1915 contains this significant remark: "The evidence indicates that assessments of real estate in this city are at full value."

We challenge the Real Estate Board to give reasons why citizens should be taxed on their buildings, furniture, food, clothing, money, etc., to make public improvements, which add to the value only of land. H. M. H.

GOVERNMENT statisticians have gathered figures about housing in U. S., but that doesn't help you to figure your rent.—H. M. H.