

Another curious fact was brought out by Count Tolstoi. The underlying principle of this Russian system of land tenure has been from the beginning the just distribution of the land among the peasants of the village community, with the purpose of setting up an equality of land holdings as between man and man. Now in order to realize this equality, thought had to be taken of the natural inequalities in the value of lands of varying productiveness and location. Thus, let us say, some dozen or more different qualities of land have been distinguished and differentiated. Thus it would be manifestly unfair and unjust for one peasant to have his holding consist of the prime, first quality, easily cultivated land, while his neighbor was given a parcel of rocky, unmanageable upland or a swamp undrainable and useless. No such injustice is attached to the system. There was the will to do what was fair and right. But the method of doing this was primitive in the extreme, and just here is one of the most interesting features of Count Tolstoi's remarks. What the time-honored procedure has been is this: The nature and qualities of the entire lands surrounding the village received the most careful study. All the dozen or more varying qualities of the soil were evaluated by the community itself under a system that, repeating itself year by year for generations, expressed the common opinion to a nicety. Nor was there any more room for dispute as to the difference in value of locations. Nearness to the village, nearness to the river, nearness to the highway, all these and other advantages of a like nature became common knowledge, bred in the flesh and bone of all. So that in the will to establish justice, of which mention has been made, what more simple and direct a mode could present itself to these primitive and righteous folk than to rule that every peasant should have his just share of every one of these several locations and qualities, share and share alike? By which method it is not difficult to see that a peasant instead of owning a simple tract of land (which would in all likelihood be of more value or of less value than the average), was the owner of a dozen tiny holdings located here, there and everywhere, according to the natural variations spoken of. Imagine the time and effort wasted in the endeavor to cultivate these widely separated "morcelements." In the endeavor to be just the system led to the utmost waste and inefficiency. So that while the Russian peasants are as near to being "saints" as any peasantry ever were, they are as backward in the simplest arts of modern civilized life as it is possible to conceive.

Therefore, according to Count Tolstoi, the will to justice being part and parcel of the peasant nature, the scientific mode to adopt in order to establish and safeguard a justice that can be enjoyed is the institution among them of the Single Tax. Count Tolstoi spoke of his father, Leo Tolstoi, as one who had long since adopted the idea of Henry George as the one best suited to the solution of the land question in Russia. For his father clearly saw and never failed to point out that the justice

which the peasants desired in the distribution of the land could best be obtained, not by the foolish parcelling out and minute subdivision of varying tracts, but the allocation of any serviceable tract to a peasant in quantity sufficient for his occupation and use, with, besides this, his common right and share in the entire ground rent of the lands held by the community, that is to say, his common right and share in all the advantages of location and quality of which we have been speaking. So that with labor freed from all taxation and the fair share of the common ground rent fund returned to every peasant in the shape of communal improvements and benefits of all kinds, with possibly a dividend or pension as well, the peasant would enter upon a new kind of existence and his "Land and Liberty" become to him a realization instead of forever being a dream.

E. YANCEY COHEN.

The Non-Partisan League In Minnesota

THE Non-partisan League numbers in Minnesota about 50,000 members—all farmers—each of whom has paid \$16.00 for his membership in good money of the United States; and many more thousands are coming just as fast as they can be reached by the League organizers, who are busily at work in nearly every county of the State, and thousands more who are not members, and never will be, will vote for the League candidates.

WHAT DOES THE LEAGUE STAND FOR?

So far as national matters are concerned, this question can best be answered by quotations from the official pamphlet which has been circulated by hundreds of thousands and has gone into every State of the Union. This pamphlet was issued in June, 1917.

THE WAR PROGRAMME

"Our country being involved in a world war, it is fitting that the National Non-partisan League, while expressing its loyalty and willingness to support the government in its every necessity, should declare the principles and purposes which we as citizens of the United States believe should guide our nation in the conduct of the war.

"Whatever ideas we as individuals may have had, as to the wisdom of our nation engaging in this war, we realize that a crisis now confronts us in which it becomes necessary that we all stand unreservedly pledged to safeguard, defend and preserve our country."

The war programme opposes annexations of territory or war indemnities, and recognizes the principle that every nation has the right to manage its internal affairs, all principles later indorsed by the messages of President Wilson

It declares against secret diplomacy, which also is in line with a recent message by the President.

The government is asked to prevent gambling in the necessities of life and federal food control is recommended.

This principle later was enacted into law at the request of President Wilson.

WEALTH CONSCRIPTION

The conscription of money as well as men is demanded.

All attempts to muzzle the public press are condemned and it is declared that "a declaration of war does not suspend the Constitution of the United States, and the unwarranted interference of military and other authorities with the rights of individuals must cease."

It is declared that "at the close of this war sound international standards must be established on the basis of true democracy. Our economic organizations must be purged of privilege. Private monopolies must be supplanted by public administration of credit, finance and natural resources."

FARMERS AND WORKERS CONFERENCE

On September 18-19-20, 1917, was held in St. Paul a three days' conference of farmers and laborers, representing farmers' organizations from 16 States and labor organizations from 11 States.

On the last night of the conference, in the presence of an audience of more than 12,000 people, all of whom were invited to express approval or disapproval, without a dissenting voice the following resolutions were adopted:

HOW TO FINANCE THE WAR

After calling attention to the dangers of piling up a great public debt, and advocating that tentative measures of taxation should be advanced to taxes on war profits, the resolutions say:

RESOLVED, that as a means of raising war revenue we earnestly urge the conscription of such wealth as it may be found possible to conscript without hampering the operation of industry necessary to the support of the civilian population as well as the maintenance of army and navy to the highest efficiency, and as regular war revenue sources we urge the levy of *a two per cent. tax upon the value of all unused or inadequately used land, whether in city or rural districts*, and income tax levied upon all incomes in excess of \$2,000 so that the total net income of any individual shall not exceed \$10,000 per annum.

WHEREAS, the only sure foundation for democracy both in peace and war is the establishment of justice and equality in the distribution of the fruits of labor, and

WHEREAS, we believe such a condition to be impossible of accomplishment with private ownership of the great basic industries such as mines, timber lands, water power and railways, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we declare for the public ownership of public utilities, and that all of the great basic industries are public utilities, and be it further

RESOLVED, that we do emphatically endorse the resolutions of the miners of Butte in favor of government operation of the copper mines.

Other resolutions were passed, but these are sufficient to indicate the kind of men that are back of the NATIONAL NON-PARTISAN LEAGUE, and the kind of doctrines all their speakers are spreading among the people.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE RED CROSS

Everywhere at our meetings contributions are asked for the Red Cross, and are freely given.

Recently Mr. A. C. Townley has addressed in the State of Minnesota about a dozen meetings of farmers with from 300 to 1,500 present. These meetings have averaged over \$125.00 apiece for the Red Cross.

All the other League speakers are doing the same. The writer of this article, at a recent meeting, where nearly every person present was of German descent, received \$45.08 for the local Red Cross, and ringing resolutions were passed supporting President Wilson in his policy of "no forcible annexations, no punitive indemnities, self-determination for all people," and the heavy taxation of swollen incomes and excess profits.

At all our meetings the same things occur—contributions for the Red Cross and patriotic resolutions.

HOSTILITY AND OPPOSITION

And yet we have the most stupid and uncompromising hostility of the *Old Gang Politicians* and the *Big Business Interests*. Sometimes our meetings are broken up and sometimes our speakers are arrested by petty officials who are the lackeys and super-servicable tools of the predatory and exploiting interests. But all these things only stir the farmers and workers to greater determination, and more members and more dollars come in to help make the fight.

THE MINNESOTA PROGRAMME

In Minnesota, the League in co-operation with the city workers will try to elect a majority of both houses of the legislature, all State officers, and members of Congress friendly to their aims.

The most important features of the legislative programme are:

1. A surtax on iron ore as it is taken from the mines, in order to secure for the State a larger revenue from the exploitation of our rich iron ore resources.
2. As far as possible the reduction of taxation on buildings and other improvements, household goods, farm machinery, crops and live stock; manufacturing materials, machinery and products; stocks of merchandise and fixtures, with heavier taxation on unused lots and lands.
3. Hail insurance on the Canadian plan, where if the farmers of a township decide they want it, a tax to meet losses by hail is levied on each quarter section of land, regardless of whether it is tilled or not.
4. Better marketing opportunities for grain and live stock, through State-owned elevators and packing plants.

The League also stands for Initiative, Referendum, and Recall, and all the necessary machinery for real democracy in government.

For many years all town and village, city, county and judicial officers in the State have been elected without party designation and the last two legislatures were also elected on a non-partisan ballot. Desperate attempts have been made by the gang politicians and the special interests to get back to a partisan legislature, but every attempt has fallen flat.

This fact is very helpful to the League as most voters in the State are pretty well emancipated from the bonds of party superstition.

For educational purposes the League maintains a great publishing plant that issues weekly to each member a twenty-four page magazine, with special editions for North Dakota, Minnesota, and Idaho, also an edition printed in German, and a National edition that goes into such States as have no special edition. They also publish the Minnesota *Leader* which is sent to each member in the State and seventy thousand sample copies to farmers who are not yet members. Besides this hundreds of thousands of pamphlets are printed and circulated.

With a wonderfully intelligent and efficient organization and with financial resources, the League is growing in all the western States as no great farmers' movement ever grew before. All previous farmers' movements have lacked financial means. The National Non-partisan League secures the means through the small membership fee of \$16.00 for a two-year period—a smaller membership fee than any labor organization in all the United States.

On Feb. 22, 1918, the members of the League in each rural township in the State met at their usual voting place and chose one delegate to a senatorial district convention. At many of these township caucuses from 50 to 90 voters were present, every one a paid-up League member. On this day about 3,000 new members joined and paid in their \$16'00 each in order to be able to take part in the caucuses.

During the next three weeks the senatorial district conventions were held—48 of them—each convention made up of the township delegates chosen Feb. 22nd.

At each of these senatorial district conventions three things were done:

First, a candidate was named for Senator.

Second, as many candidates were named for the House as the district is entitled to House members—only one in some small districts—two in most of the districts—three in five districts, and four in two large districts.

Third, each convention chose one delegate to the State convention at St. Paul, to choose candidates for State officers. These forty-eight men met, and in the most democratic manner possible selected a State ticket to be supported at the June primaries.

At the same time a great conference of farmers and city workers, lasting three days—three sessions each day—

came together to consider vital public questions and to listen to speakers of national reputation. Among them Mrs. Bain of California, Judson King of Washington, Secretary of the Popular Government League, and Wm. Kent of the Federal Tariff Board.

This conference was a tremendous success, many thousands being present at some of the sessions and large audiences at every session.

C. J. BUELL.

Equal Taxation and Opportunity

THE present tax system is comic-operatic. Nobody ever does contribute to the support of the State in proportion to his means, but our plan assumes that everybody should and will. According to that all wealth should be taxed. If so, then the present system of taxation should remain unchanged except for still more legislation against evasion. But if taxes ought not to be levied according to the wealth of a man, representing his ability to pay, then we should adopt a system based upon right principles.

Taxes, as the law requires them to be levied, though not as they are actually levied, are an enforced contribution apportioned according to the individual's supposed wealth. This is done under the wrong theory that such an apportionment is natural.

All benefits conferred by government increase land values. Other things being equal land values are higher where government is good, than where government is poor. The tenant in a well governed place will pay more rent than for a similar location poorly governed. As he can better afford to pay it, he pays his landlord in rent for the benefits conferred by government. Having paid once why should we make him pay a second time for the same service by taxing his chattels or his business? Since he has paid to his landlord what was created by the community and should belong to the community, the community should require the landlord to turn this amount into the public treasury. That would be fair taxation, for the only just taxation is that taxes should be levied according to the benefits received by the individuals paying. Whatever the renter would be required to pay under taxation according to benefits, he pays now, besides taxes on personal property and other taxes in addition.

How would this affect the farm owners? They are of two kinds; the farm owner who owns farms that other men live on and cultivate, and the working owner who owns the farm he lives on and cultivates it himself. The working owner is a national asset. Special interests with axes to grind have buncoed this working farmer into the belief that the increase of the tax on land means placing all the taxes upon him; the fact is that it would relieve him.

The farmer may be excused for not recognizing that the value of his farm, exclusive of all improvements, is much less per acre than the value of unimproved land in