

## 42 POLICE INTERFERENCE WITH SINGLE TAX MEETINGS.

ileged classes being the first, and those who pay no tax at all the next to follow. So that this class are very likely to be saddled with the new burden and yet not enjoy at once the corresponding relief from the old ones. The bungling and confused way in which the law has been prepared, the difficulty of determining just what an income is and just what is liable, for a person who does not receive enough income to employ skilled lawyers to interpret it for him, is not going to create any increase of sentiment in favor of direct taxation among this class.

On top of all this, for the purpose of national taxation, we have the disheartening condition that such sentiment as might have been mustered in favor of removing taxes upon industry has been frittered away on a constitutional amendment providing only for the narrowest form of income tax; and as such amendments are always difficult to carry through, an additional argument is thus afforded to those who oppose real progress, to say that broader measures are unnecessary.

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## POLICE INTERFERENCE WITH SINGLE TAX MEETINGS.

*(For the Review)*

By JOSEPH H. FINK.

In 1908 the New York police undertook to stop street corner meetings at 125th Street and 7th Avenue. The method of procedure was to ask the speaker for his permit. On being informed that none was needed, the police officer would direct the speaker to go with him to the station house.

At the station he would be advised that meetings could not be held without a permit and that permits would have to be procured at Police Headquarters.

At Headquarters we were told that no permits would be issued. They knew very well that a permit was not required; their purpose was to tire us out, but a Single Taxer who is willing to tell his story does not allow such trifles to stand in his way. After many discussions with police officers we decided to make them show their hand. The police captain informed the writer that he had received orders from Chief Inspector Moses Cortwright to stop all street/ corner meetings and that he intended to do so until further orders.

Mr. F. C. Leubuscher, President of the Manhattan Single Tax Club, called on the Chief Inspector and wanted to know by what right, under the law, street corner meetings were being stopped by the police. The inspector replied that the charter gave him the right, but Mr. Leubuscher, who is a lawyer, knew better. The inspector not being able to point out the section which gave him the alleged power to stop free speech, made another guess. He then

decided that he would stop all meetings on complaint. This is always possible, as the police can get some one to complain that meetings are a nuisance.

But the inspector's little trick was too thin. He was told that our meetings would cease, but that when the political campaign opened we would have a man stationed at every meeting and complaint would be made to the officer on post, and then if the meetings were not stopped charges would be preferred against the Chief Inspector. The inspector looked wise and said, "Go ahead and hold your meetings."

The Single Taxers were never placed under arrest, but requested to call and tell their story to the captain. On one occasion a policeman appeared at a Socialist meeting and asked the speaker for his permit. The speaker informed him that he did not have any; the policeman thereupon placed the speaker under arrest and took him to the station house. At the station house the lieutenant at the desk said to the officer, "What is the charge?" and the officer replied, "Violating the law without a permit!!!" This will give the reader an indication of how much the policeman on post knew about enforcing laws. The charge was changed to violating the law, and the Socialist speaker was haled before a magistrate and fined \$5.00.

The writer at one of the meetings was asked by a policeman for his permit; he answered, "We don't need any." The officer then informed him that he could not speak without a permit. The speaker asked the officer if he ever read the Constitution of the United States. The policeman said, "Are you trying to kid me?" The speaker said, "No, but have you ever read the Constitution of the United States?" He said "Yes—what about it?" "Well," answered the speaker, "don't you know that the Constitution guarantees to every citizen the right of free speech?" The officer with a smile on his face answered, "Of course it does, but it doesn't say anything about 125th Street and 7th Avenue." The speaker was at once escorted to the police station. There being no charge, the speaker was allowed to go his way.

After several stupid blunders on the part of the police, orders were given by the captain of the precinct that Single Tax meetings were not to be interfered with. Some time later a new patrolman appeared on the scene, and asked the speaker for a permit. He was again advised, as in the former case, that no permits were necessary. He immediately ordered the speaker from the stand and took him to the station house. By this time the captain had become well acquainted with the speaker, owing to his numerous calls at the station house. The captain addressed the speaker: "What is the trouble now?" The writer, who happened to be the speaker of the evening, told the captain to ask the policeman who had invited him to the station house. The captain then asked the officer, "What is the charge?" and the officer said, "Running a Mormon meeting without a permit." This made the captain smile, and he said, "Mr. Fink, how did the policeman mistake you for a Mormon?" Mr. Fink told him, "that he had his hat off and he was bald, and because he was short on hair the officer concluded that he must be long on wives." After a hearty laugh by those around the captain's desk, the speaker was allowed to

go his way. The officer must not be blamed too severely for this last interruption. About 1905 the Board of Aldermen had passed an ordinance to the effect that if religious meetings were held on street corners a permit would have to be procured from the Alderman in the district in which the meetings were to take place.

Some of the policemen were very friendly to the Single Taxers. An attempt was made at one time to "job" the speakers. While the writer was arranging the stand, a gentleman called him aside and informed him that he was a Central Office man, showing him his badge; he told him that three plain clothes men were to appear in the crowd; after the meeting got under way some one was to be jostled and a fake fight was to start. The speaker was to be arrested for conducting a meeting that would tend to create disorder. The meeting started and a crowd gathered rapidly. The speaker noticed three men in the crowd who, to him, looked like plain clothes men. He stated the story to the crowd and suggested that if there should be any jostling and hard words to walk quietly away, that it was only a job of the police. The three men who were suspected quickly edged their way from the center of the crowd.

When Mayor Gaynor was inaugurated in 1910 he issued his famous order forbidding policemen to interfere with free speech. This put an end to our troubles.

## SINGLE TAX WOMEN OF THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT.

*(For the Review.)*

[ By AMY MALI HICKS.

*(Concluded.)*

Much has been recently written about Grace Colbron's place in Single Tax work, but not much has been said about her work with other women. Miss Colbron was born in New York City, her early influences and associations being entirely conservative. It was not until she had lived abroad and while studying dramatic art in Germany, that she became more interested in the radical things of life, and on her return to New York was eager and ready to undertake its more serious business. Her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Lawson Purdy, had given her a volume of Progress and Poverty before her departure for Germany, but she confesses that at the time of her first reading of it she was not receptive of its philosophy.

She was stirred, she says, by George's picture of our social wrongs, it awoke her emotionally, but did not interest her on its economic side. It threw her rather in the direction of that emotional radicalism which was then the ideal of the younger literary set in Germany, and indeed at that period of her life she frankly called herself a "social democrat." But being in reality a radical and rational as well as an emotional person, on her return home after