

burgh and Scranton, permitting a gradual reduction of the tax on improvements to one half the rate on land. This measure should make these two cities promising fields for Single Tax agitation.

In Great Britain, in spite of some things that give us cause for impatience at the somewhat hesitating attitude of the Prime Minister and his government, as well as the occasional deviation from correct principles advanced by Lloyd George, there is nevertheless much to partially reassure us in the utterances of both Asquith and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We can only wait.

In Scotland the war goes bravely on. Great meetings were held in December in Glasgow and Dundee at which the total audience numbered more than 7,000 persons. The object of these meetings was to spur the laggard government to more drastic measures on the supreme issue of the land, and their character may be inferred from the speakers, among whom were Messrs. Dundas White, M.P., R. L. Outhwaite, M.P., Francis Neilson, M.P., ex-Bailie Burt, W. R. Lester and others. Resolutions were unanimously passed at both meetings declaring that no policy of land reform deserved support that did not include the taxation of land values. These meetings are much needed if the report is true that the official party speakers have been warned to remain silent on the taxation of land values and lay stress rather on small holdings, land purchase, and other palliatives of government policy indicated in the speeches of the Chancellor.

It seems clear that the test of fealty to principle has arrived for the great Liberal Party of Great Britain. They are officially pledged to the taxation of land values. To abandon this principle for the abortive measures indicated will be to invite disaster at the polls. Nor in the event of a betrayal of the trust committed to them would such defeat be a matter of very grave concern.

LAND VALUE TAXATION VERSUS CONGESTION.

(For the Review.)

By **BENJAMIN C. MARSH.**

Seven years ago a group of social workers in New York City decided to have an Exhibit on Congestion of Population. It sounded harmless, but most of the people who initiated the movement were sincere and intelligent—and sincerity with even a modicum of intelligence is always dangerous to privilege.

These settlement and charity workers and labor leaders knew that during many years of hard work for the submerged, aspiring to emerge, they had been dealing chiefly, almost exclusively, with the results of what some termed "social maladjustments," others "ignorance" and still others "legalized graft."

In April of the following year, the writer was asked to organize the Congestion Exhibit. Right here, a confession may be in order. He has never read all of "Progress and Poverty," and doesn't agree as to all the benefits which it is claimed would result from the complete application alone of the Single Tax principle, i.e., the abolition of absolutely every form of taxation for all governmental purposes except the tax on land values. So far as this principle is applied, however, he agrees that it isn't a tax anyhow. However, it is difficult for one to understand the grounds for taxing the products of labor.

In the fall of 1907 the hard times came. The Exhibit Committee had practically decided to abandon the plan, when Miss Carola Woerishoffer rescued the plan from postponement by a gift of several thousand dollars. She was not a Single Taxer, but a clear thinker and unafraid to follow the trail of truth to a logical conclusion.

Naturally the land question was treated in the Exhibit, in March, 1908, not exclusively, nor exhaustively, but fairly. Just why it had never been treated similarly by earlier Committees, dealing with the housing problem, is a question I cannot answer charitably.

Two cubes, one five-eighths of an inch, representing the price—\$24.—paid for the Island of Manhattan in 1624, the other over four and a half feet, representing the assessed value of the same land in 1907, \$2,707,862,301, were the most conspicuous exhibit, with the disquieting and heart-searching questions on the latter, "Who created it?" "Who Gets It?"

Over seventy thousand people visited the Exhibit, in the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan, and in the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. To be sure it was only an Edition de Luxe portrayal of the burden of high rents, crowded rooms, high morbidity and mortality rates, and very high profits of ~~the~~ ^{land} speculation.

Real estate speculators, masquerading as philanthropists, saw in it an argument for subways at once, built at public expense into their vacant land. Typical old time charity mongers had a clearer vision of the need for more hospitals to care for the victims of land speculation, and a few more instructors to teach people how to need less fresh air and less food, so they could afford to pay high rents—all to be paid for, of course, by the victims.

Some other folks saw some other things, and so the Congestion Committee continued its work—to impress upon the greatest metropolis, save one, of the world, that it is impossible for the poor to lift themselves out of the mire of poverty with the exploiters on their backs, even by the most vigorous tugging at their boot straps. Not one of the large charities of the city has openly endorsed this proposal to strike at the most important cause of poverty, land speculation, although the Secretaries of two of the largest ones have personally endorsed and spoken or written in favor of it.

Probably the President of the Charity Organization Society of Jericho also asked the highwaymen, who in the good old Bible days held up wayfarers, to give that Society part of the proceeds to relieve the families of their victims, or to give the victims a decent burial.

In the spring of 1909, the Congestion Committee, in conjunction with the Municipal Art Society, presented an Exhibit on City Planning and Municipal Art, in which the profits of land speculation were shown together with foreign methods of land increment taxation.

Immediately following this Exhibit, a movement was started for the appointment of a City Commission on Congestion of Population.

As a result of this agitation, Mayor Gaynor, in pursuance of a resolution of the Board of Aldermen, appointed such a Commission on May 17th, 1910, composed of ten members of the Board of Aldermen and nine private citizens. The Chairman of the Commission was former Borough President, Jacob A. Cantor; the Chairman of the Committee on Taxation, Prof. Frank J. Goodnow, of Columbia University, who was at that time Chairman of the Congestion Committee; while Mr. Allan Robinson, President of the Allied Real Estate Interests, was a member; and the writer was Secretary.

The resolution declared the purpose of the Commission to be to "Prepare a comprehensive plan for the present relief and future prevention of congestion of population in the City of New York."

Most of the real estate interests of the city vigorously opposed the creation of the Commission and they prevented any appropriation for the expenses thereof, although the Secretary served without compensation, hoping to kill its work in this way. The expenses were advanced by the Congestion Committee and refunded by the city two years later.

Prof. Goodnow's Committee on Taxation held many hearings at which men like Prof. E. R. A. Seligman, Dr. F. C. Howe, Mr. A. C. Pleydell and Mr. William E. Harmon appeared; and as a result of almost unanimous approval of the proposal, advocated a reduction of tax rate on buildings in the city to half that on land. After considerable discussion, this recommendation was adopted by the Commission, and a bill was prepared for carrying this reduction into effect by five equal changes in five consecutive years. The life of the Commission expired March 1st, 1911.

The private Congestion Committee, of which Mr. Raymond V. Ingersoll has been and is Chairman, undertook the task of carrying the taxation recommendation and other recommendations of the Commission into effect.

A bill providing for the reduced tax rate on buildings was introduced in the Legislature in March, 1911, by the late T. D. Sullivan and Assemblyman Short. It was killed in Assembly Committee and let out from Senate Committee only to be killed in General Orders—or to be more exact, on general orders from the land speculators, on the floor of the Senate.

During the first fight, the proposal was endorsed by the three largest labor unions of the city: The Central Federated Union, the Central Labor Union of Brooklyn, and the United Hebrew Trades, together with numerous allied labor unions, and also by the Metropolitan League of Savings and Loan associations and many civic and taxpayers organizations.

In the session of 1912, the bill was reintroduced by Senator Sullivan and Assemblyman Franklin Brooks. It was this time also killed in Committee by

the machinations of land speculators, including some of our "first citizens," despite the fact that in answer to the claim of the opponents that the people didn't want the change, the advocates agreed to submit a referendum. Money and influence were the unanswerable arguments at Albany that year, and the advocates were not bribers, direct or indirect, nor had they influence.

This year the bill was introduced early in the session by Assemblyman Michael Schaap, Progressive Leader, and by Senator Henry Salant after Robert Wagner, Tammany Hall's leader, and two other Democratic Senators, refused to have anything to do with it.

A Lower Rents Exhibit was held by the Congestion Committee in Union Square and Harlem, in Manhattan, and in Brooklyn, during February and March, with daily meetings, and attended by nearly 100,000 visitors, at which thousands of signatures, in favor of the referendum on halving the tax rate on buildings, were secured.

Several scores of real estate speculators appeared against the measure at a joint hearing of Senate and Assembly Cities Committees. They granted, with few exceptions, the claims of the proponents, that under this system, rents would be lowered and taxes on small homes reduced, but claimed that rents were already too low and land ownership not sufficiently profitable in New York.

The plea of privilege prevailed, and how it was re-enforced may be left to the imagination, but the sworn statement of campaign contributions to the Secretary of State, shows that many of the most vigorous opponents of the bill made contributions to the Democratic party of Manhattan and Brooklyn of from \$250. to \$2,500. The bill was killed in both Committees.

During the past summer, The Business Men's Association to Untax Industry, having among its officers John T. McRoy, Frederick L. Cranford, Charles Hartman, A. Augustus Healy, Byron W. Holt, Charles H. Ingersoll, John Moody, Amos R. E. Pinchot, Charles T. Root, Fred R. Seeman and E. Vail Stebbins, was organized, and the Society to Lower Rents and Reduce Taxes on Homes, with Frederic C. Leubuscher as President, and well known Vice-Presidents from all the boroughs.

As the result of the activities of the Business Men's Association, about 1,100 business men of the city have endorsed the proposal, while at the 147 meetings held under the auspices of the Lower Rents Society, the signatures of nearly 24,000 voters have been secured in favor of the referendum on halving the tax rate on buildings, making the total numbers of voters definitely committed in favor of this proposal, approximately 36,000, that is nearly 6 per cent. of the enrolled electorate.

All candidates for the Assembly from New York City, except the Socialists, have been asked to state in writing whether they "will favor and work for" this referendum. Nearly half of them have replied that they will. The Socialist Municipal Platform advocates taking all the land increment by taxation.

As the measure is a charter amendment, the signature of the Mayor is

essential. Mr. John Purroy Mitchell, Fusion candidate for Mayor, had stated he would sign such a referendum bill, if submitted to him. Mr. Edward E. McCall, Tammany Hall candidate, had declined to answer any of the several communications addressed to him from these two organizations, asking his position. Mr. Mitchel was endorsed by both organizations.

Relatively few of those endorsing the halving of the tax rate on buildings are Single Taxers, probably not over five per cent. They are, however, keenly alive to the moral iniquity of taxing rents high and homes dear for the benefit of land speculators, as at present. This sentiment and conviction is growing with marvelous rapidity in New York. The gradual untaxing of buildings will begin very shortly, despite the opposition of the land speculators of the city, who have debauched many of our "charities," corrupted our legislature, prostituted our churches, and secured control of many of our pseudo reform, and civic and commercial organizations. Were the proposal submitted to a referendum next year it would doubtless be carried by a large majority. This the land speculators know, hence their unseemly and frantic efforts to prevent the referendum, by every trick and method not legally indictable. The referendum is the death of the privilege of land speculation. It is at hand.

FRENCH CAPITAL AND ITS PROPER FUNCTION.

By ERNEST MANSUY, (Bookkeeper).

"Our fundamental error consists in treating land as private property."—Henry George.

Translated for the SINGLE TAX REVIEW by F. W. Garrison.

(Continued).

We know that in the warlike origin of all nations lies the cause of the absurd social state in which we find ourselves, but this cause is to-day far distant enough for us to ask why its effect perpetuates itself indefinitely, and why the injustice and inequality which form the basis of the system are still supported by a population whose intelligence has developed in every sense for centuries, and who have acquired a feeling for natural law profound enough to make them carefully write the words Liberty and Equality, which sum it up on all the walls belonging to the community. How can this population, whose intelligence is manifested so brilliantly in all the arts and sciences, support the stupid and degrading despotism which hems it in on all sides?

There is here a phenomenon of mental suggestion which is found in many other circumstances. The human mind in developing assimilates not only the true ideas which are accepted in the moral and intellectual circle in which the child finds itself; it absorbs also prejudices incrusting on the public mind,