

FROM THE SECRETARY AMERICAN  
SINGLE TAX LEAGUE.

OUR FRIENDS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND  
IRELAND—THE PEACE CONFERENCE AND  
THE FREE TRADE CONFERENCE—FREE  
TRADE "STAND-PATTERS."

The work of the American Single Tax League, except for such efforts as our indefatigable champions in Rhode Island, Governor Garvin and Mr. Liddell, have put forth, was suspended during the summer. The Secretary found an opportunity to gratify a long cherished desire of visiting Europe, and of meeting our fellow workers in Great Britain and Ireland. He was a delegate to the International Peace Congress and to the International Free Trade Congress, meetings which brought him in contact with many of the leading minds of Europe. It may be of interest to members of the League to know how conditions in the British Isles look to one of ourselves.

In Ireland where the Secretary disembarked, he was prepared to find little interest in the taxation of land values as a remedy for the social evils that afflict the people, but was surprised to find that so few of the persons with whom he talked seemed to have heard of it. The nearest approach to our idea was a hazy recollection of Davitt's Land Nationalization scheme, which was understood by many to be merely a visionary form of what is now being slowly accomplished by the Land Purchase Acts.

In talking with some municipal officials, of course, I learned that the cities favored the bill to give municipal authorities power to tax land values for local purposes, but even there it was regarded merely as a revenue measure with no suspicion of its ulterior social consequences. The support which the Irish party has given to the bill, for which we have reason to be grateful, has been given, as it would seem, without any comprehension of the deeper meaning of our reform. In a word, the Irish mind is quite unaware of the bearing which the taxation of land values would have upon the Irish situation.

Only in two cities, Dublin and Belfast,

did the Secretary find any interest in the question. In Dublin, the Town Tenants League, under the able leadership of Mr. J. M. Briscoe, a young man of great energy and courage, joined with a splendid audacity, has incorporated in its platform, a demand for the taxation of land values. It is true that this feature of its work has not been given much prominence, but I feel sure that when it realizes the importance of this principle the Town Tenants League will be a valuable factor in the agitation in Ireland.

Dublin should be a most promising field for land values taxation propaganda. As nearly as I could ascertain, their system of assessment for the purpose of taxation is as follows: when a piece of property is improved by the erection of a building, a valuation is made and this remains unaltered through all vicissitudes, unless the unhappy owner is insane enough to alter or improve the property further, when his valuation will be raised, not merely to the extent of his improvements, but to include any additional value which may have accrued to his property by advance in the value of the site. To all intents and purposes, the Dublin of 50 years ago is architecturally the Dublin of to-day. The wit of man could hardly devise a more ingenious plan for keeping mechanics idle. And still Dublin stands amazed and aghast at the size of its army of unemployed.

To the existence of such great numbers of unemployed in the leading cities must be attributed the vitality recently shown by movements which seek to exclude from Ireland articles of foreign manufacture by encouraging the development of Irish manufactures. Indeed, the feeling in favor of strong protective tariff is very general throughout Ireland to-day. In the rural sections, the people would like to exclude foreign food stuffs: in the manufacturing sections of the north of Ireland they would exclude foreign manufactures. Few seem to be aware of the fact that international trade is an exchange of commodities, and not a sale of goods for money. It seems to the unthinking a self-evident proposition that a country with a large number of unemployed people which

is importing large quantities of manufactured goods every year would be better off if it could have its unemployed engaged in some kind of production, and that the way to employ them is to shut out imports. But I feel quite certain if it were not for the discouragement which the present system of taxation of improvements gives to enterprising investors, there would be no serious difficulty in employing the entire idle population. There are enough people in Ireland with means to do so who are willing to improve their homes to give steady employment for many years to come, but they refrain from that sort of investment because of the penalty which it entails in the form of increased taxation.

I found in Belfast a Mr. A. R. Metcalf who has been doing more than one man's work extending the knowledge of the Single Tax in the northern capital. Persistency and diplomacy such as his are bound to tell in the long run, even though the initial progress be slow. Belfast impresses the visitor as a thriving wide-awake city, and its system of taxation is better than Dublin's, but the people are still beset with the idea that whenever a citizen improves a site, he should be compelled to pay an increased tax. This policy keeps many tumbledown buildings on sites facing even the magnificent Municipal building which is justly a great source of pride to the citizens.

In spite of its erroneous economic principle, there is no disguising the fact that the Land Purchase Act has so far had the effect of putting renewed heart in the people in the rural districts; for the first time they feel that they will benefit by labor and energy which they put into their holdings and the result is apparent. If the government would now follow up this act by another exempting improvements from taxation, a new era would begin for the small Irish farmers. Of course, it should not be overlooked that rise in prices of recent years, due perhaps in large measure to increased gold output, has made and may continue to make it easier for him to pay his installment. If an adverse movement should set in he would find his position very difficult.

Passing from Belfast to Glasgow, I

had the pleasure of meeting Peter Burt, James Busby, who succeeded John Paul as Secretary of the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values, W. D. Hamilton, Mr. Cassells, Mr. Waddell and other active workers for the cause. To this group, and to the late "Bailie" Ferguson every Single Taxer owes a debt of gratitude for it is undoubtedly due to them that the taxation of land values has come to occupy its present commanding position among political questions in Great Britain. At Edinburgh the Secretary spent a pleasant afternoon with Mr. Edwin Adam. On his way to London he stopped at a little station named Elvansfoot to call on the man who enjoys in an extraordinary degree the affection and esteem of every British Single Taxer—John Paul. Excessive assiduity in the fulfillment of his duties, as Secretary of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, induced a nervous attack, which has compelled him to take a prolonged vacation. It is the hope of every Single Taxer that he may soon be able to resume the duties of the office which he fills so acceptably.

In Liverpool, it may almost be said that the Single Tax movement can be summed up in two words—Edward McHugh Ever on the alert to seize an opportunity for effective work, he is now organizing the Crofters of Barra on behalf of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Value. The influence which Edward McHugh has exerted in behalf of our doctrine is tremendous and his family is as enthusiastic as himself.

In London it was my good fortune to be present at the Annual meeting of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values. It was a most impressive gathering both in members and personnel. The president elected for the coming year is Mr. Josiah Wedgwood, M. P., third in descent from the founder of the celebrated potteries which bear his name. Mr. Geo. Trevelyan made an interesting talk, as did a labor member from one of the northern manufacturing towns. It was an inspiring and business like gathering. Mr. Outhwaite, of Australia, a splendid specimen, both physically and mentally of the Australasian Briton, gave a most

encouraging report of things in New South Wales. Mr. Jos. Fels offered as an inducement to subscribers to contribute to the funds of the League, a sum equal to the amount subscribed at the meeting.

In London Mr. Lewis Berens is a unique figure among our workers. His private means enables him to devote as much time to Single Tax work as others do to their business, and his practical helpfulness is invaluable. Fred. Verinder,—whose amazing juvenility of appearance, is apt to cause doubts to arise as to his identity among strangers who have been hearing of him for nearly a quarter of a century—Crompton Ll. Davies, W. R. Lester, and others make up a company of which any movement may well be proud. No list would be complete that would exclude Fred Skirrow, of Keighley, one of the leading spirits in the work in the English midlands, a man whose personality at once enlists friendship and wins esteem.

In the office of the United Committee there is a young Scotsman of whom much more is likely to be heard. In John Orr the movement has a man of keen perception philosophic temper and intense conviction. He is acting as Secretary in the absence of Mr. Paul.

Of the two Congresses which the Secretary attended a few words will suffice. The Peace Congress seemed in spite of its splendid purpose, to be a body crying for peace in a state of society where so large a proportion of the social conditions make for war, without even having had its attention directed to these conditions.

The Free Trade Congress merely proved that there are "Stand-pat" free traders as well as "Stand-pat" protectionists. Free trade in England has been carried to the point where it serves the interests of the manufacturing element, but not to the point where it would really free the worker. The "breakfast table" duties operate inequitably, as do all taxes on consumption, but no proposition advocating their abolition was admitted.

The poverty of Great Britain and Ireland, in spite of the splendid successes made in municipalization of public services, and in spite of a system which seems to us frees trade, shows how ineffective even

those great principles are to solve social problems so long as land values remains the property of some of the people instead of being the common heritage of all.

JOHN J. MURPHY.

---

#### A WELCOME HOME.

---

To Louis F. Post, editor the *Public*, and John J. Murphy, secretary of the American Single Tax League, who returned from Europe almost at the same time but in different steamers, in the latter part of August, was tendered a welcome not unworthy, in spontaneity if not in numbers, of the esteem and affection in which both men are held by the Single Taxers of this city and vicinity. This welcome took the shape of a dinner at Pecks, in Fulton street, near Broadway, and about 150 sat down, after which they listened to speeches from Messrs. Post and Murphy, in which they recounted their experiences at the Free Trade conference in London to which both had been delegates, their estimate of the probability of an early triumph for our principles, and the personalities of many of those whose names have become familiar to us as leaders of the movement in Great Britain. To some of these Mr. Murphy made graceful reference. We regret that stenographic reports in full of these speeches taken for the Single Tax REVIEW, by Mr. W. E. Heady of the *New York Times*, were lost by that gentleman in the car on his way home, and have not been recovered.

At this dinner Hon. Robert Baker, to whose initiative it was due, and who in company with a few others had sailed from Brooklyn in a motor boat to meet the incoming steamer on that Sunday morning of the day before when it sailed into harbor bearing the man whom next to Henry George we have learned most to love and honor, made the speech of welcome. Chas. Frederick Adams followed, and a few shorter speeches concluded the night.

The next morning Mr. Post had departed for Chicago, carrying with him the heartiest good wishes of those who know how big-hearted and big-brained is this man