

was not alone in his lack of knowledge concerning much discussed economic questions. The fact that twenty-eight students out of a possible thirty-three frankly acknowledged that they could not answer the question, was significant.

This is a time when it is the duty of every man and woman to take an interest in governmental affairs. There is a considerable element who, because they are taking such an interest, because they are devoting themselves to a study of economic questions, are making themselves felt in political circles. This class is described as socialistic, and so they are. The theories they study and propound are based upon false ideas of political economy. But, nevertheless, because they are students and can set forth their theories without hesitation, they are able to silence the protests of their less informed fellows, whose instincts are sound, but whose knowledge is slack.

Let us by all means have political economy in the schools. Let it be a fair presentation of the doctrines of all economic theories. Then let the student use his own judgment as to which is right. Is the *Chicago Journal of Commerce* willing to accept this method of doing away with "slack" knowledge?

A Permanent Official

THE *Municipal Journal*, of London, in a recent issue, devotes two pages of its valuable space to the discussion of a report compiled by the Town Clerk of Glasgow dealing with the subject of the Rating of Land Values, or as we should say, the Taxation of Land Values. The subject is of general interest because the agitation for the Taxation of Land Values has assumed greater importance in Glasgow than in any other municipality in Great Britain. The report is also of importance as showing with what utter insincerity the whole subject is treated under the guise of official impartiality.

It throws an interesting side-light on the attitude of the permanent official, whose absence from American municipal government is so often deplored by reformers. For the benefit of our readers who may not be familiar with British institutions be it said that the Town Clerk (pronounced "clark") of a British city is the real executive head of his municipality; Mayors and Provosts come and go, but he remains forever, during good behavior, which means as long as he serves the interests which procured his appointment. We do not know that there is any case on record of such an official developing radical proclivities. It is a part of the theory of the office that the Town Clerk should ignore political alignments and perform his functions with the strictest impartiality. In practice this works out much as does the American theory that Judges after election shall keep out of politics.

In the present instance the perpetrator of the report, which we do not hesitate to stigmatize as wholly biased and misleading, is one Sir John Lindsay. We have not the honor of his acquaintance, but all indications point to the probability that he has been Town Clerk so long that the mind of man runneth not to the contrary. Some time in the not remote past his distinguished services induced the political powers to honor Glasgow by making him a knight,

which would naturally intensify any proclivities he might have had toward radicalism. From being a person he has become a personage.

Upon this august official the Glasgow Corporation called for a report on "the Taxation of Land Values." The *Municipal Journal* calls this report one of "great interest and importance," and says it is "the only authoritative document, which, in an impartial manner,(?) deals with a question which is advocated with persistency by advanced politicians who make such wondrous claims for the possibilities of rates (taxes) on land." In this sentence the *Journal* convicts itself of incompetence or mendacity. The report is nothing but a hasty compilation of superficial objections to the obviously correct policy of compelling valuable land to bear a share of the cost of municipal government. The Single Tax is not an issue here. The policy condemned is the policy universally accepted by American municipalities. Even Sir John Lindsay must be surprised at the wholesale eulogy of the *Journal*. He says in his report, with a modesty which will not seem excessive: "As it was only the other day that I was asked to report at the earliest possible moment, I have not had the time to go as fully as might be done into some of the aspects of the proposal, or deal with others that have not been referred to, but the foregoing notes will probably be sufficient to enable the committee to appreciate the effect of the proposal, and to come to a discussion on the subject."

We would not wish to be considered as impugning the ingenuousness of Sir John Lindsay's explanation. In the short time at his disposal he was able to gather a pretty complete list of the arguments against the proposal (with none of which does he differ), and very few of the arguments for it, and all of these latter he attempts to refute. Some of his points can only be understood by persons familiar with British methods of rating, but it may interest our readers to know the general criticisms offered.

1. The failure of the Lloyd George Budget Scheme, which he knows or should know, had nothing to do with rating for municipal purposes.

2. "The advocates of the taxation of land values have no scheme in common." He attempts to prove this by showing that various bills introduced in or passed by the House of Commons, usually over the protests of the Land Value Taxation group, had various provisions.

3. The great difficulty of making a valuation.

4. The tenant will still pay.

5. Such a system might compel the owners of unoccupied land to improve it by erecting buildings for which there would be no demand. In support of this last contention Sir John Lindsay cites the fact that before the war, "the main feature of Glasgow was the number of vacant warehouses, shops and dwelling houses of every description." This view will come as a surprise to those who have been shocked by reading of the tremendous number of Glasgow families, each living in a single room.

6. Taxation of land values by relieving improvements will promote the erection of "skyscrapers." This is a

favorite argument in New York where even a 2.85% tax on buildings does not seem to appreciably reduce the height of buildings.

Sir John sums up his report in the following paragraphs:

THE DISADVANTAGES

"Whilst the Select Committee came to the conclusion that a new standard of rating based upon the yearly value of land, apart from the buildings, was sound and would prove advantageous, the Departmental Committee on Local Taxation, which later considered the question, reporting in 1914, came to a different conclusion, and reported that it could not be recommended. As to the disadvantages, I do not propose to deal with these beyond stating the grounds of objection of the Departmental Committee, which were as follows:

That the benefit derived by landowners (using the term in its broadest sense) from the general activity and expenditure of the community is not sufficient to justify the charge of the whole cost of local government, present and prospective, on this class.

That a large part of this benefit is due to other causes than the activity and expenditures of the persons living in the local government area or areas in which the land is situated.

That other classes of the community derive benefit from communal services, and that many of these would not contribute towards the cost of such services, either directly or indirectly, under the proposed basis of rating.

That we are strongly of the opinion that the primary criterion to be taken into account in distributing the burden of local expenditure is that of "ability to pay," and that the present rating system conforms more nearly to this principle than that proposed.

That a system of rating upon land values would, we believe, tend to increased congestion of buildings.

That the proposal, if adopted, to give the occupier the right of deducting the rate from his rent would dangerously reduce the number of ratepayers, and would tend to deplorable results in local government.

That the defects and inequalities of the present system—*i.e.*, its effect in discouraging the improvement of rateable premises—are unduly emphasized by those who support the change, while it is doubtful whether the alternative system proposed would give rise to fewer defects and inequalities."

If this be an impartial report, we wonder what kind of document Sir John Lindsay would have produced had he undertaken to refute the whole idea.

"None are so blind as those that will not see." If officials like Sir John Lindsay and his ilk are products of the permanent official system, we may well stop to ponder whether with all its evils, the system of rotation in office is not preferable to one which enables an official to "load the dice" with the weight of official dignity as Sir John

Lindsay has done in his insidious brief on behalf of landlordism, disguised as an impartial Report to the Glasgow Corporation.

Horrors of the Housing Famine

THE shortage of houses and apartments in New York is producing results most menacing to the future peace and well-being of the city. The latent hostility to landlords, agents and janitors is bursting into the open in the poorer districts. Rents are still rising while wages fall or cease entirely as the result of disemployment. Because the rent restriction laws and the laws depriving owners of the power of summary ejection have given tenants a temporary fixity of tenure a deceitful aspect of calmness seems to envelop the housing situation, but underneath the surface a bitter struggle is raging.

If anyone imagines that landlords are philosophically accepting the limitations put upon them by the legislature, he is much mistaken. Especially is it untrue of the horde of middlemen who in one guise or another have inserted themselves between the owners and the tenants. These people have contracted to pay the owners the full rental value of the houses that they have taken over; hence they must seek their profits by rack-renting the tenants. No device is too base to deter them from employing it, if it can only accomplish the result of getting out the old tenant whose rent cannot be raised, so that a new tenant can be put in at a rent which will be "all the traffic will bear."

The janitor is the usual instrument of oppression. His own poverty nerves and drives him to harry his kind. The owner is prevented by law from refusing tenants service necessary to the occupancy of the building in order to force them out, but he can and does retain a janitor who insults tenants and their visitors, cuts the wires of electric bells and door-openers and refuses to have them repaired, foments quarrels among tenants by circulating defamatory stories with the expectation that disorders will follow which will form a pretext for demanding writs of ejectment on the ground that the parties involved are disorderly persons, and in numberless other ways seeks to drive the tenants to desperation so that they may quit of their own accord. Only desperation will make them move, for there is nowhere to go.

A woman, the mother of a family, was rescued from the East River recently, whose mind had become temporarily unsettled by her inability to find a home for herself and children. The phycopathic ward at Bellevue has had many cases of similar dementia. The municipal courts all through the torrid spell have been filled with hundreds of landlord-and-tenant suits, and heartrending cases are of common occurrence. It is no exaggeration to say that the poorer sections of the city are in the grip of a reign of terror.

What is being done to relieve the situation? The answer must be, that little is being accomplished. The bill partially exempting new dwellings from taxation for ten years has given an impetus to new building, but the obstacles in the way of a big movement seem almost insuperable. Even