

WILLIAM L. PRICE
(See frontispiece)

ON THE SUBJECT OF A NATIONAL
ORGANIZATION

William L. Price, founder with Frank Stephens of the Single Tax Colony of Arden, and one of the leading architects of Philadelphia, died Oct. 14 at the age of fifty-four.

Mr. Price was one of the oldest active Single Tax workers in Philadelphia, where he was born and educated. He had many friends in the movement and was devoted to those ideals he had learned at the feet of the master.

The following verses to his memories are the tribute of his old friend, Frank Stephens:

WILL PRICE.

Good by! a little Empty now and strange
The once familiar places that we knew,
Empty the day's dull round, the season's
change,
Thru which till now the sunlit hope could
range
That it might bring one—you.

It was so beautiful, that Land-we-Dreamed
Toward which we toiled together, you
and I,
So very near at times its hilltops gleamed,
So near and fair that pleasant country
seemed,
And now—good by—

That City of the Blest to which our feet
Trode the rough way, white-spined it rose
and high,
Such joyous, pleasant folk we looked to
meet
As we should wander thru its street by
street,
And now—good by—

Good By, but where to find you? may it be
Now, even now while darker grows the
way,
That you have found that Country-of-the-
Free,
And in the Wondrous City wait for me?
Good by—until Some Day—

Since the decision of the Niagara Single Tax Conference to effect a national Single Tax organization, two friends of the movement, H. P. Boynton, of Cleveland, and William Lustgarten, of New York have submitted to a few correspondents type-written plans of organization.

It is one of the tendencies of the human mind when projecting schemes of this sort to overload them with details, to seek provision for every possible contingency, and invent contingencies where they do not appear as ever having happened before. Even to provide for every reasonable need is manifestly impossible. The work of every organization develops as it goes along and in obedience to needs that arise from day to day.

Because of this, and other reasons contained in the very nature of our movement, a national organization should consist of as few parts and as few governing laws as possible, with work and responsibility apportioned to select committees, but with little or none of the complex regulations to which we are prone in our love of detail.

Because our chief work must be done through the States, which may include forty-odd different kinds of activity and policy, there is little for a national organization to do beyond the following: Maintain a national headquarters, with a national secretary whose duties shall be to take charge of lecture work and the distribution of literature, to answer correspondence, and to take cognizance of such national legislation as may affect, favorably or unfavorably, the movement to untax industry and secure equal rights to land. He should avoid rigidly all interference with affairs that are the concern of States, leaving State activities, whether these be of the political or propaganda kind, to the State organizations. If it were thought desirable to help with funds of the national organization some State-wide movement, that should be decided by postal card vote of all members of the national organization.

The national organization should consist of one committeeman from each state elected to such committee by the State organization members, by postal card vote. This national committee should determine the nature and extent of all national activities, in the absence of instructions from the national convention; should determine the time and place of national conferences, and should constitute one of their number a national treasurer to receive contributions for national activities only, and dues from dues-paying members. Nothing should be done by this national committee to restrict the usefulness of individual activities now being carried on, nor to undertake the duplication of work now being done by individuals with a view of improving on such work.

Thus in this connection it is suggested by Mr. Lustgarten that the organization publish an organ to take the place of the present organs, and he mentions the *Public*, the *Ground Hog*, and the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW*. His objection to these periodicals is that they are "one man" papers, though of course this the *REVIEW* among the three mentioned never has been, but has rather prided itself on being an open forum for the Single Taxers of the country. Nor can this objection be made against the *Public*, thought it is perhaps a little difficult to determine just what Mr. Lustgarten means by a "one-man paper." But in so far as a paper must borrow something of the individuality of the one who conducts it, the objection, if it is one, would hold against a paper sent forth from national headquarters, since it would have to be edited by somebody. Organizations do not edit papers, nor could organized action be expected to improve upon what is already being done by the *Public*, the *Ground Hog*, and the *SINGLE TAX REVIEW*, each in its own way and in its own field. Mr. Lustgarten confesses that such a periodical would circulate chiefly among Single Taxers. As the *Public* and the *Ground Hog*, and the *REVIEW* in lesser degree, have some circulation among non-Single Taxers, in addition to the convinced Single Taxers, it

would seem wholly inadvisable to start another periodical to "take the place" of these.

In this relation the comments of Mr. H. P. Boynton are very much to the point:

"His (Mr. Lustgarten's) "regular" association organ might be better or worse than the "one man" publications which he proposes summarily to drop, regardless of the wishes of those now conducting them. I can hardly believe that he thinks the mission of the proposed organ is to interest Single Taxers almost exclusively. We are not calling the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. The news of the Single Tax family can be disseminated to Single Taxers in a mere leaflet, like the present *Bulletin*. The real task of publication is to stimulate magazines and weeklies that carry the Single Tax message to a general public."

That the organization should issue a monthly or weekly bulletin—not necessarily any larger than the *Fels Fund Bulletin*—is a suggestion of Mr. Boynton, and this would serve a useful purpose in keeping the members of the national organization in touch with one another. It should contain the news of the movement in brief review, as well as national and state organization happenings, etc. The gathering of such news for such bulletin at headquarters might be the appropriate work of a national secretary.

Here we have all of a national organization that is needed, with no cumbersome details, and none of the curious tendency to provide for every contingency. It is of course assumed that the sole aim of such organization activities as may be entered upon will be the popularization of the truth as it is in Henry George without abridgment or equivocation, and this should be included in the declaration of principles, acceptance of which should be the condition of membership.

It may be said that State organizations should be less loosely organized than a national organization. In the States better work may be done by close organization. Especially is this true of political work, which must, after all, be confined to the States for

years to come. And because the States may effect closer organization, this looser form of organization is recommended for the nation.

It would take more space than we can give to review all of Mr. Boynton's and Mr. Lustgarten's recommendations. But to revert to a few of the suggestions of the first: Our own criticism is in brackets.

A president. (An unnecessary office, serving only to magnify the importance of some individual. The secretary is the really important office, and when we recall the wonderful service of Daniel Kiefer for the past six years, we can form some notion of what an ideal secretaryship demands).

Graded membership. (Not advisable. Membership dues should be one dollar; all above that to be considered purely voluntary contribution).

General charge of the movement in unorganized sections. (Objection is to the word "charge." To assist in the forming of State organizations where none exist, and then to withdraw, is all that the national organizations should do).

Measures for less fundamental but approved tax reforms should be pushed. (Objection: As these movements would originate in States the national organization should keep its hands off. Nationally we should not commit ourselves to the advocacy of anything but the full Single Tax).

The federated plan not immediately feasible. (This seems to be sound. But Mr. Boynton proceeds to suggest steps toward the building up of the national organization by the federation of State organizations, a move which on his own showing is premature).

A proposed national Single Tax amendment. (Useful as an objective and to be introduced in every session of Congress).

Many of Mr. Boynton's suggestions, elaborately presented, are concerned with smaller details, which even if they were entirely ignored would not seriously affect the scheme of organization.

As to Mr. Lustgarten's plan of organization, he too suggests the separation of State from national activities, and favors a scheme similar to the one which I have outlined, though in advance of a national conference. He would have a representative from each State meet in conference and then and there organize a National Single Tax Association. He is doubtful of the federated plan, but inclines to it, as against the individual membership plan. He says the national organization can be supported by levying upon the State associations dues equal to one dollar for each member of the State association. We think this plan unwise. It is desirable that all Single Taxers should be enrolled in the national organization. But it is not well to adopt a plan which may act as a deterrent to the increase of membership in State organizations. Most Single Taxers are poor, and this plan calls for an enforced double sacrifice. Some Single Taxers might prefer to be members of the national organization, others of the State organization. The State organization may be doing work which at a particular juncture is more important than the National work. No such levy should be made. It might work to the injury of the State organization, or the prejudice of the national organization. Curiously, Mr. Lustgarten sees this objection as applied to another phase of past administration, but fails to see it as equally an objection to his plan of federation. Single Taxers, members of State organizations, should be left free to join or not join the national organization. State organizations should be the active working units everywhere.

What is needed is a plan for coordinated work, with as little "organization" as possible. As to the further suggestions of Mr. Lustgarten, the same may be said as we have said of Mr. Boynton's recommendations, that they may be adopted in the manner suggested, or amended and then adopted, or rejected altogether, leaving the presentation of a simple, workable plan of organization for about one-third the number of words.