

Taft's verdict, under those circumstances, is not to acquit Mr. Ballinger. It is only to bring Mr. Taft himself into the case as possibly an accessory after the fact.

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Another British War Scare.

On the eve of the Parliamentary elections in Great Britain the Protectionists and the Tories see again great danger of a war with Germany. The more reason, then, for adopting the land clauses of the Budget, so as to lay the foundations for making the landed interests pay for preventing German trespasses on British estates. For all British wars heretofore the common people have done all the paying, as well as nearly all the killing and getting killed, while the landed interests have reaped most of the benefit. If only for the novelty of the thing, it would be interesting to see the British landed interests do at least some of the paying for the next British war.

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UNPAID OFFICIALS.

The commission plan of city government is becoming so popular in American municipalities that it may be interesting to consider one of the probable reasons for its success—adequate payment of the commissioners.

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Is this payment an innovation or merely an extension of an already prevalent policy?

The government of a New England town by selectmen, or of a Western county by commissioners, resembles the new municipal scheme in that the governing body in each case is few in numbers and has both legislative and executive functions which have to be performed in the responsible manner that generally insures good conduct. The remuneration of selectmen or county commissioners, while not large, is generally as much as they could earn in the same time, and is usually sufficient to secure competent men for the simple duties required.

But it is the large class of really unpaid or underpaid officials to which attention is here especially invited. Among unpaid officials may be classed trustees of State or local institutions, such as asylums, hospitals or schools; while State legislators and city aldermen may be considered as underpaid when the ability and knowledge properly required for such service is taken into consideration.

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The argument that the honor of the position

is a sufficient reward for the energy gratuitously expended (as in the case of church or lodge service) has not accorded with the results of experience, as the volumes of testimony recording the corrupt acts of underpaid officials clearly indicate.

How does it happen, then, that we attempt to conduct public business with unpaid officials? Why should certain citizens be asked to perform gratuitous service for the government? Is the custom a survival from the different conditions of a former epoch, as is generally true of the political evils of mankind?

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Pursuing the last query we find that though the Græco-Roman influence was strong in our national Constitution, it played little part in our local polity, which was mainly transplanted from England. In the mother country we find even now not only the same unpaid official classes as here but also such other unpaid and underpaid groups as members of Parliament and army and navy officers.

As is familiar to even a tyro in history, the English political organization descends from feudal times. The feudal officials belonged to the class of landed gentry who held their lands on condition of returning certain payments to the hierarchy above them who were really trustees for the community. Not only did the gentry pay from their rents the expense of local government and make contributions of money and men for the national service, but they rendered much gratuitous service to the state. This service was only nominally gratuitous, as the gentry were really compensated by their land rents. Even today they fill most of the unpaid English offices, though many of their other feudal obligations have long since been thrown on the landless class through the device of indirect taxation.

The new world reflected the customs of the home land, and unpaid officials were a feature of the English colonial administration. It was only natural that the same class should continue in the subsequent independent United States.

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As long as life remained rural, there were two reasons why our unpaid service was satisfactory. First, the officials were generally chosen from the American counterpart of the English gentry, the farm-owner; and second, they were well known to their constituents and performed their comparatively simple duties in the full light of rural publicity.

With the growth of cities the similarity in the personnel of American and English unpaid officialdom vanished, and with it the efficiency of the system. Unpaid appointments ceased to be perquisites of prominent farmers, and began to be filled by the unprivileged or landless class who had already secured most of the adequately paid government positions. With the growth of the spoils system after Andrew Jackson's administration, unpaid offices became desirable even to the honest, as a means of keeping in the public eye, while they yielded large profits to the dishonest through the graft on payrolls, contracts or franchises.

However such a condition may be deplored, any community which accepts unpaid service from its politicians may expect no better return.

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If we wish to abolish the chief temptation to peculation, extinguish feudal relics and make our system consistently democratic, we must adequately remunerate all public servants from the proceeds of taxation. And here is one of the advantages of the Des Moines idea. While it would be ruinous to give to each of a large aldermanic body a sufficient salary to secure competency, the Des Moines system, with its small governing commission, renders it not only feasible to obtain an honest but also a trained personnel.

Lack of training is often as disastrous to efficient administration as is positive dishonesty, and the failure to sooner recognize this fact in American public life may be explained in this way: Until recently it has been assumed that any intelligent American could not only turn his hand to any occupation, but could fill any official position without special training. Under the simple conditions of the rural office-holding of previous generations, this doctrine seemed true, especially as frontier conditions had produced great versatility and resourcefulness in the national character. The fallacy of the doctrine as of general utility was only demonstrated by its attempted application to the complex needs of industrial cities and States. Though it is now well understood that the success of a youth in private business requires special preparation; the old idea still largely holds as to public life.

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Passing from city to State government, we find the situation similar. Whatever may be said for the bi-cameral system in the national Congress, its application in State legislatures not only fails to add to the representative character of those

bodies, but greatly increases their size and irresponsibility. It is only by greatly decreasing the number of legislators, so as to increase their pay and responsibility, that we can secure the beneficial results of municipal commission government.

A small body of well-paid and trained legislators, subject to the initiative and referendum and controlled by the recall, will not need to be fettered by a voluminous constitution, or prevented from enacting a plethora of foolish laws only by the present device of holding short sessions as far apart as possible.

In the case of philanthropic State institutions, a central board of paid experts, giving their whole time to the service like the civil service employes of any other bureau of administration would be in every way preferable to retired business men seeking this kind of intellectual recreation without pay.

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The proper payment of officials would do away with one of the last survivals of an undemocratic administrative system. The way should then appear clearer for the attack on that perverted feudalism which still controls industrial life, and which can only be abolished by the collection of public revenues solely from land values, instead of confiscating private earnings through indirect taxation.

ROBERT B. BRINSMADE

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

PROPOSED LAND VALUES CONGRESS.

Filopstad, Sweden, Oct. 27, 1909.

According to the secretary of the Cobden Club the second international free-trade congress will be held in Antwerp (Belgium) from the 9th to the 12th of August, 1910.

At the last conference of this kind in London, last year, several radical land-values reformers were present; but if I am correctly informed—I was in Australia at that time—their views did not have a hearing. At the next congress there will, I hope, be a greater number of followers of the Georgian philosophy, not only from English-speaking countries, but also from other European countries, attending the conference, and that these most consistent free traders will organize.

We should not miss the opportunity. The free-trade policy, even in the limited British idea of it, is a promising step towards land-values socialization. And as free trade cannot successfully be kept up without land reform, the followers of Henry George have much to tell the average free trader.

No doubt they have something to tell themselves too, and will find pleasure and encouragement in