

The Party of One Big Tax

(Editorial in *Christian Science Monitor*, July 14)

OF thousands of people who have been accustomed, in recent years, to hear the words "Single Tax," it is probably safe to say that mere hundreds of them have ever taken the trouble to learn what the words really stand for. The phrase is not exactly of a sort to allure those of casual mind. It suggests a problem, something which easy-going humanity dislikes to tackle, something of which a perhaps well-merited consideration may be put over until another day. So it is that the Single Tax movement has gathered momentum only very slowly. There was at first what Louis F. Post calls the literary stage, following the appearance of Henry George's book, "Progress and Poverty." Then, in 1886, when Mr. George offered himself as a Labor candidate for the New York mayoralty, there was the Labor stage. This, in turn, was followed by a third stage, marked by the separation of Single Taxers and Socialists in 1888, and enduring until the beginning of the European War. With the end of the war came, for Single Tax as well as many other things, the opening of a new era.

Single Taxers are now convinced that their proposed reform, more obviously than ever, will solve the economic problems facing the country. They are therefore going into politics as a means of making their nation-wide effort positive. Already they have had a convention, they have mapped out their programme, and organizers are presently at work in many parts of the country setting things in motion for a national campaign which, they intend, shall result in the appearance of a Single Tax ticket for national and State officers in 1920, and the election of as many as possible of its candidates to positions in the government. Fifteen States were represented in the first national convention of the Single Tax Party, and it is significant of the new attitude of the promoters of this reform that they decided to abandon certain other issues for which their following has been concerned in the past, pledging their whole attention to the main idea. This idea is that a tax upon land values, or natural resources, will be sufficient to meet the government need for revenue and will have the effect of obviating other forms of taxation, of saving for the worker the use of the products of his work, of removing the burdens that now weigh down industry, and of securing private ownership of land and other property under conditions that shall be equitable for all. The specific pledge which Single Tax candidates for political office will be expected to subscribe to will embrace the doctrine that 100 per cent. of the rental value of the land of the nation belongs to the people of the nation, and that there shall be no taxation or other restrictive regulation on the private enterprise and industry of the people.

Of course the change here proposed is a radical one. But it appears conservative when compared to that which is openly advocated and fought for by the Bolshevik and I. W. W. groups. Intelligent, sober-minded, conscientious

elements of the American populace have been for years studying and advocating the adoption of the Single Tax, and many who have not advocated its adoption have admitted its essential justice and beneficent potentialities. That the proposed reform is now to be put forward politically, therefore, is, on the whole, a welcome development. If the plan can do what its advocates insist that it will do, the nation can hardly refuse to accept it. And one need only point to the Prohibition Party for evidence to show that advocacy through political action, if persisted in, will be one of the surest methods of bringing the question, in time, to the point of a comprehensive national decision.

The Government Makes Confession

THE *Reclamation Record* issued by the Reclamation Service of the Department of the Interior, tells us that 31,000 of our gallant fighters have attested their interest in the soldier settlement plan (of Secretary Lane) by making inquiries for details. 31,000 out of 4,500,000, or about two-thirds of one per cent.! Is it possible that in spite of Mr. Lane's camouflage, the honey with which the proposition to sell land to our returning heroes on the installment plan is smeared, the boys appraise the scheme at its true valuation?

Here are a few items from the *Reclamation Record* which give some insight into this precious scheme:

"Montana.—Many owners of excess lands on the Milk River project have listed their properties with the project manager, who will be glad to correspond with land settlers. Personally we are of the opinion that there are genuine bargains to be had in this valley which has never been boomed." (The Milk River owners will now look after the boom!)

"Washington.—There is active building in the new Grandview irrigation district, adjacent to Grandview, and there is a bigger boom in farm lands than in any time in eight years."

"Wyoming.—The same lands I wanted to get quickly away from in 1905 were settled on in 1908 and a whole lot of it has since changed hands at \$200 per acre."

Secretary Lane is engineering the prettiest little land boom in the interests of the land speculators ever undertaken by a Federal official.

Another item in the *Reclamation Record* attracts our attention. In this issue for June it says: "It should be said that of our remaining public lands but a small portion is desirable for purposes of cultivation, being better adapted for stock growing and similar uses."

This confirms the general impression that our "national patrimony" is now exhausted. The public lands were long the regulator of wages, especially farm wages. We are now confronted with the condition where our public lands are no longer a factor.