

Weeks, on "Independent Political Action—Our Duty," I read with a great deal of interest. He certainly puts the argument for independent action in a very strong light, but it seems to me that at present the wisest thing to do is to endeavor to make the Democratic party more truly radical and prevent its falling into the hands of the conservatives. Should the Democratic party be captured by the "re-organizers," for which I am not looking, affairs would, I think, take such a turn as to give us an opportunity to secure the acceptance of our ideas by a new radical party which would undoubtedly arise to meet the occasion. There is a lesson for us, I believe, in the parable of the leaven which was placed in "two measures of meal" and which continued working quietly until it had "leavened the whole lump." The foregoing is the position I am inclined to take with reference to national political action. So far as local independent action is concerned, I am frank to say that my views have been somewhat changed by a visit which I made to Chicago four months ago. There I found that the Single Tax party had succeeded in a very considerable measure in bringing our proposition to the attention of the masses of the people and in securing for it a very fair consideration. I spent almost a month in the city, and was surprised at different times to hear our cause endorsed in places where I had least looked for it. The opportunity which the party movement affords during campaigns of putting everybody interested to work is an item which must be taken into account in any consideration of this question. Before going down there and investigating it somewhat I had been opposed to any and every kind of independent action on our part but, from my experience while there, I am led to believe that, for purposes of agitation and education, local independent action may be made use of to advantage. In other places where the conditions are different it might not, of course, work so well and is largely a matter to be determined by those on the ground.

J. EDWARD TOTTEN.

Chicago, February 14th, 1903.

Editor, *Single Tax Review*:

I was pleased to see in the Winter Number of the Review the good editorial called forth by Mr. Weeks' strong argument for independent single-tax political action. I believe his contribution about three years ago to the symposium held by the National Single Taxer on that subject was partly responsible for the decision to start a Single Tax party here in Cook County; and as that party has since carried on four campaigns, and, as the experiences of those engaged must on a smaller scale be similar to the experiences which will follow ac-

tivity in a National Party, a letter from me may not be out of place.

When the resulting schism in the Chicago Single Tax Club occurred, I was in great doubt as to the course I ought to pursue. My closest single tax friends; the men in whose judgment I had most confidence; and nearly all who could be called either representative single taxers, or monied men, were among those who seceded; and I was in full accord with their opposition to the project. As the trouble was over a mere question as to the wisdom or foolishness of a proposed move, and in no sense over a matter of principle, and as I realized that whether I wished it so or not, our cause was going to get the credit or the discredit of a party movement, I finally determined it my duty to remain with the old club and do my little toward making the action creditable. Upon more intimate acquaintance with the party leaders, I was surprised to find that few, if any of them, looked upon it as a way to elect single tax men to office, or directly bring about a single tax regime; but favored it solely as a method of propaganda, by which the truth we hold could be thoroughly advertised; all sorts of single taxers, even the half-fledged, the luke-warm and the timid could get to work; more people could be reached in their stores and homes in a few weeks than could be gotten out to lectures in years; papers and tracts could be distributed broadcast; much newspaper notoriety obtained; many unknown sympathizers discovered and more complete and classified lists compiled, while we were becoming better acquainted among ourselves and more familiar with election laws and practical politics. That idea has been persistently ignored by the seceders, and has never been thoroughly considered, perhaps, by opponents to party action, but it caused me to become an active member of the party; and, while I still firmly believe that from a purely political point of view, the arguments against such a movement are sound, and while matters have not always gone my way, I have never for an instant had cause to regret my choice. I have been a single taxer since 1888, and have taken part in all kinds of schemes to awaken interest in and gain converts to that plan, but my practical experience during the past two years has fully proven to me and also to every man of the score or two who have worked with me, that independent political action offers greater propaganda opportunities than all the other devices combined. The political aspect is the very thing that affords the excuse which encourages the average single tax man to become aggressive, and at the same time gives the voter enough interest and patience to listen. In a local campaign at least, (because the tariff question is eliminated) we have proved that as single taxers we minimize prejudice and can reach the ears of

democrat and republican alike, and I am certain that single tax has become better known in Chicago since 1900 than during all the preceding years. Club meetings have been kept up as usual and a significant feature has been the fact that we are never so easy financially, as when carrying on campaigns. The general public has treated us remarkably well, and a large part of the assistance given us has come from new converts and persons who became friendly. It goes without saying that much more could have been done if the local single taxers had put up a united front, for the only serious obstacle has been the apathy or the sarcastic opposition of acknowledged single taxers. And therein I think lies the rub. As long as an appreciable proportion of the single taxers, will, because they cannot have their own way, act in such a manner over any question that does not involve our principle, results will naturally be small; for while the propaganda possibilities of a party movement are very great there must be something like unanimity if those possibilities are to be made the most of. As yet anything like unanimity along this line seems impossible to me, and I confess I have lost much of my former confidence in single taxers and possess a growing belief that comparatively few of them want the single tax badly enough to even deserve to get it.

If that is the case how can we expect the public to desire it? If the time of single tax is to come before events absolutely force it we have got to earn it. Single Taxers are numerous enough in Cook County, and probably in the United States to make a fairly creditable party, and if after a thoroughly representative conference at which, *for educational purposes*, a majority voted for a National Party, every single taxer would loyally do his part to carry on the campaigns exactly as though political victory was fully expected, great good would certainly follow regardless of the size of the vote. Our vote, as counted, has been small and all who looked upon the movement as political quickly dropped out of sight.

A large vote should not be looked for. The people cannot yet be trusted to vote right on a party ballot, but they have shown in many places that they can be trusted to vote about right on measures. Our propaganda (of all kinds is preparing them to vote YES, when, while voting their old straight party ticket a single tax proposition shall be submitted to them on a separate referendum ballot. To effectively propagate, we must reach the people, and I am now positive that through political action that can best be done, and that if a single tax national party, with that end in view, had been started in 1886 and continued to the present day the single tax would now be the burning issue between the two great par-

ties through one or the other of which in all probability it must ultimately come.

Very respectfully yours,

GEORGE C. MADISON,  
698 Orchard St.,  
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New York, April 3, 1903.

Editor *Single Tax Review*:

In the Winter Number of the *Review*, Mr. Edward T. Weeks, of New Iberia, La., has advanced some very cogent and forceful reasons why the Single Taxers of the United States should organize into a political party. I, for one, consider all his points well taken, and some of them exceedingly so. Of course, Mr. Weeks' proposition will not be favorably received by those among us who aspire to be recognized as the "conservative element." Now, conservatism may be ever so honest, and sincere, and well-meaning, but it is after all only the tangible evidence of that timidity which inclines men to bear with the ills they have, than fly to others that they know not of. It may, therefore, justly be regarded as narrow-mindedness, for to be broad in one's views requires courage above all else. No great reformer was ever conservative in the sense that he was apprehensive of possible consequences. As all of human endeavor is relative in its nature there is nothing absolutely certain until proven so, and the man who never experiments is the man who never demonstrates anything.

Why should any single taxer balk at the engine of political action? If we had some little, petty, picayune issue to go before the people with—like one of those over which the two old parties are everlastingly splitting hairs—this aversion could be accounted for. But we have the grandest moral issue to back us and compel success that any political party ever had. The single tax proposition is the greatest of economic truths, and when once seen can never again be obscured. Truth of whatever kind will sooner or later force recognition and compel action. Evidently then our first duty as single taxers is to show those of our fellow-men who have not yet seen it, the truth as we see it. This can best be done by forming a national party because in that way we can reach the greatest number with the least effort.

How can we consistently ask men to join in a movement which is as devoid of unity of action as ours is? I, therefore, sincerely hope that a national convention will soon be held as proposed by Mr. Weeks and other single taxers. Sooner or later we must enter the field of active politics; why not sooner rather than later? It is all nonsense prating about the people not being ready for the single tax. They are. Just watch them. They are clutching at