

it came to piloting the Fairchild raft on the treacherous Mahwah. At the time LAND AND FREEDOM goes to press, we are still uncertain how our wet friends made the journey back to town.

Washington Letter

THE twenty-sixth annual gathering of Single Taxers was held on Sunday, June 6, at the home of Mrs. Jessie Lane Keeley in Riverdale, Maryland, with about forty present.

Following the usual generous basket luncheon, the friends assembled in the living room, with the overflow on the piazza by the windows.

Mrs. Helene H. McEvoy as presiding officer, announced that at a meeting of the executive committee of the Woman's Single Tax Club, it had been voted to take steps toward a tentative effort to bring to life the National Woman's Single Tax League of somewhat more than a quarter of a century ago, the object of which step will be to help hold together and coordinate the activities of the hundreds of young women who are being graduated from the Henry George classes all over the country each year. Clarence Darrow was quoted as declaring that 94 per cent of crimes are committed as a result of poverty, and if Single Taxers could abolish this root evil, we should be doing a good work for the human race.

Messages of regret at their inability to be present were sent by Representatives Eckert and Bigelow, who had been called out of the city, and by Mrs. Alice Thacher Post, who was not well enough to come. Mr. Western Starr was reported as being in the hospital, and Mrs. Marie H. Heath is spending about a fortnight with her daughters in Winchester, Virginia, following a serious operation on her eye.

The programmes at these annual gatherings are always informal, with impromptu talks by the members, which usually bring up animated discussions after adjournment.

Mr. Walter I. Swanton called attention to an article by John Lear, Associated Press Staff writer, in the *Washington Post* of Sunday, May 23, entitled "Awakened Single Taxers to Face Test in 1938," which article he understood had been run in some 1,200 or more papers throughout the country. Reference was also made to President Roosevelt's efforts to prevent land speculation in the 1,200,000 acres in the region of the Coulee Dam. The civil war in Spain has its roots in the land question, Mr. Swanton declared, and distributed notices of a meeting of the Friends of Spanish Democracy to be held the following Tuesday, and also copies of Herbert S. Bigelow's bill HR 6872 "to provide in the District of Columbia, for the gradual abolition of the taxation of improvements upon land."

Mr. Francis J. Mooney of Baltimore, Maryland, declared one of Henry George's greatest statements to be that "nothing is property except that which is made by labor." And what is not made by man, must be made by God. Yet this annual profit on Nature amounts to something over \$20,000,000,000 per year and our object is to try to get rid of this handicap on labor. The way to bring about world peace is to give everybody an opportunity, but governments stand in the way of this. Thomas Jefferson said, "That government is best which governs least" and that "The earth belongs to the living." We ought to have a national organization, with headquarters in Washington, D. C., announcing our one object to be the abolition of monopoly, and ask all those who are in sympathy with this, to join us; then, after discussing tariff monopoly, patent monopoly, etc., we should show land monopoly to be the worst evil of all, and the remedy. Wayne B. Wheeler's tactics in the prohibition movement were cited as furnishing a good example for other organizations to follow.

Dr. Morton G. Lloyd called attention to the work of the People's Lobby, whose monthly luncheon programmes are broadcast over a coast-to-coast hook-up, and said that their principles were similar to those of the organization suggested by Mr. Mooney.

Mr. Joseph Danziger paid tribute to the heroism of Colonel H. Martin Williams, who had not hesitated to raise his voice in protest against our entrance into the World War in 1917, which fearless courage had led to the loss of his position as Reading Clerk of the House of Representatives.

Mr. John F. Du Comb compared the simplicity and accuracy in the matter of assessment and collection of a land-value tax, with our present combersome and expensive method which places a premium on dishonesty.

Mrs. Elizabeth M. Phillips told of her latest game, which she regards as an improvement on the principles which formed the basis of her "Monopoly" and "Landlord" games, and after the completion of this latest game, she hopes to resume the teaching of a Henry George class.

Mr. A. L. Colton said that the one phrase which had had the most influence in making him see the light, was that about "taking community value for the use of the community which produced it." The two pamphlets which he regarded as being the best for lending to friends whom he wanted to help "see the cat," are "The Story of My Dictatorship" and "Plain Talk on Taxation." The situation developing between capital and labor reminded him, he said, of the old question as to what would happen when an irresistible force meets an immovable object.

Mr. Henry W. Selah expressed approval of the principle of the land value tax, including the five billion dollars' worth of property held by the churches, but he believed that other taxes should also be included, as he doubted that the former alone would be sufficient to run the government, which objection was answered by Mr. Mooney with facts and figures to show that this revenue would more than meet the demand, if administered without waste.

Mr. Cyrus E. Cook, a graduate of the District Henry George class, declared himself in favor of a national headquarters in Washington. He believed in neighborhood gatherings at which members would bring in new friends and encourage free discussion and the answering of questions regarding the Single Tax, or objections that might be raised to it.

Among those who spoke briefly were Mrs. Minnie L. White, Mrs. Miriam M. Goodwin, Mrs. Jennie Knight, and Mrs. Joseph Danziger.

After a rising vote of thanks to our hostess for her generous hospitality not only on this occasion but for the preceding quarter of a century, the meeting adjourned, but the discussion was still going strong when this scribe left the scene at nearly six o'clock.

GERTRUDE E. MACKENZIE.

The California Campaign

SINCE last reporting to your readers I have to note a decided improvement in the California situation. The legislature has adjourned. In the matter of the sales tax, its various positions were negative and will work to make the tax more odious than ever. While the lower house voted to reduce the tax and also to take the tax off foodstuffs sold in restaurants, the Senate took the opposite position and both propositions were rejected by a large majority. The truth must be recognized that in practically every state in the Union popular government is nullified to a great extent, because the country rules the city as to the Senate, and in no state is this more decidedly so than in California.

Thus we have to thank the enemies of our movement for resisting the slightest move to relieve the people from the payment of an odious tax and making them the more ready to accept our way out.

However, everything the legislature did was not without its value. You will recall probably all too vividly that last year by an artificial construction of the subtitle of our petitions for the initiative ("captious and hypercritical," said the dissenting judge), the Supreme Court prevented our measure for the relief of the people from remaining on the ballot. This cannot again occur. An act which passed the legislature and was signed by the Governor provided that, instead of a subtitle in twenty words supplied at their peril by the advocates of a measure, every page bearing signatures shall have at its head only a repetition of the summary made by the Attorney General and which appears on the first page. This was the simple and natural thing to do and should have been that required by law in the first place.

In addition by another act if the proponents of a measure are not satisfied with the Attorney General's summary, they can at once appeal to one of the district courts of appeal and have his action corrected. It is therefore to be expected that the Attorney General will at all times play fair.

Thus the ground work has been laid for the future. Now as to the amendment for which we are mainly indebted to Clarence E. Todd, of San Francisco. For several months a good sized group has been meeting usually once a week to thrash over the form the new amendment shall take and to guard it at every point. In addition we have carried on very considerable correspondence over this subject-matter with people all over the state and in other states. We have now reached a point where we can speak of the approximate results, although much we have done will have to be reviewed by various legislative counsel and others whose advice will be sought.

We may say that the essentials of the prior proposition will be preserved. All budgets and appropriations in California are arranged according to the biennium period, and the sales tax will be abolished at the end of the biennium which will close about eight months after the election or June 30, 1939.

Bearing in mind again the biennium, all taxes on improvements and tangible personal property will be abolished as to state taxation at the end of eight years or four bienniums, and all such local taxation within a year later. The progression will be made by a reduced rate on improvements and tangible personal property of 20 per cent per biennium or 10 per cent per annum as compared with the rate on land values if taxes are levied annually, as they are locally.

There are a number of other provisions, as for instance, forbidding assessing officers from raising the value placed on improvements, preventing tax moratoriums except as to homesteads, granting immediate exemption of \$1,000 in value for homesteads, permitting continuance of taxa-

tion as now when required by contract obligations, expressly not interfering with any taxation not directly involved in our proposal, etc.

Of course we cannot speak of the impression which the new initiative will make upon the public mind. My own feeling is that we have more than a splendid chance for success. The sales tax is as much of a nuisance or even more than it has been in the past. People are inquiring how it happens that with advancing wages the costs of living grow more rapidly, and we can furnish the plain answer.—JACKSON H. RALSTON.

BOOK REVIEWS

HOW SHALL BUSINESS BE TAXED?

(Published by the Tax Policy League, N. Y. City. 12mo. 175 pages. Cloth, price \$2.50)

This is the title of a work in the making of which have gone many hands, eminent professors from the universities and teachers of economics, all "experts" on the subject.

We have made little progress in the theory of taxation since Hobbes—(we think it was Hobbes) who advocated heavy taxation on production because it would spur the "victim" to greater effort and thus increase the sum total of wealth. Little importance would be laid on this theory of Hobbes by any of the present day authorities on taxation. It seems to be accepted generally today that taxation is an evil, but a necessary evil and inescapable.

Throughout these discussions there are no principles which have obtained or are likely to obtain any general agreement. It is all a hideous mess. We quote from one of the contributors to this volume, Noel Sargent, Secretary of the National Association of Manufacturers, who says, "When the imposition of a relatively inequitable tax is necessary (?) the inequities may be corrected by a proper balancing of the tax system as a whole."

That is to say: The whole can be made by some legerdemain more equitable than its parts!

Mr. Sargent says: "It is our belief that both income and sales taxes can be combined in a sound taxing system." And he advocates a general manufacturing sales tax. This should be welcome news to those engaged in manufacturing. A special tax of this sort adding to the cost of manufacture and reducing the sales of the articles will hardly find favor in the organization which Mr. Sargent misrepresents.

In the contribution of Prof. Groves of the Economics Department of the University of Wisconsin, we come to the following gem: "Ability to pay, however, is mainly a personal idea which cannot very plausibly be associated with a distinctly impersonal association like a corporation."

Here we have another instance of a combination resulting in a strange modification of its associated parts, where the less is greater than the whole, or when you take from two or three or a thousand you somehow avoid the mulcting of the individual. Can you beat it?

This confusion is inevitable in defending a process of "taxation by seizure." The moral objection to taxation in accordance with ability to pay, which is accepted by these writers—the John Dillinger method—leads to more than one difficulty. If there are no principles to be considered the way is open for a variety of blundering into a number of holes.

Professor Groves says: "It is probably impossible and perhaps inadvisable to use taxation as a means of preventing monopoly, but it may be used to recapture monopoly gains. This is the reason why