

ation League, is, on purely fiscal grounds, preferable to our existing tax system in that it is simpler and that it can be more efficiently and more equitably administered.



No better tribute to the Singletax could be paid than this, by business interests that might be expected to avoid it if they could, fearing its democratic effects in industrialism, and from able experts who, though they balk at broad principles of communal readjustment, are forced by the logic of circumstances and their own common sense and sincerity, when confronted with the question practically, into the pathway of those very principles. To the Singletax movement this report should be all the more welcome from the manifest reluctance of its assent to radical Singletax doctrines. It is not a profession, the motives of which might be questioned outside the business circles from which it comes; it is a concession, the good faith of which it would be absurd for any one to question even in the absence of the deserved reputation of its authors for probity and ability.



### THE SINGLETAX PROGRAM.

When any man of good intelligence, good conscience, a civic mind, and the courage of them all, begins investigating the Singletax, he is on the road to becoming a convert.

His investigation will sooner or later bring him to these conclusions: (1) That the Singletax is just; (2) that the Singletax is the most efficient, unescapable and easily collected tax that can be devised; (3) that the public income from the Singletax will be sufficient to defray the expense of vast government improvements of great utility, which cannot be attempted under the present system of taxation; and (4) that the Singletax will bring about a great equalization of industrial opportunity.



The first objection that rises in a conscientious mind, and in some minds that may not be so conscientious, is the thought of confiscation.

Here, for example, is our friend, John Smith, who has just bought a \$10,000 lot in our town and paid for it with good money of his own, which he has himself earned. Wouldn't the community steal that money from him if it adopted the Singletax?

The case can be disposed of logically in a manner that will doubtless suggest itself to any one at all conversant with human history, human

law, and the natural laws of human association. Smith's lot never was real wealth; neither Smith nor the fellow he bought of ever produced or owned it; its value does not come from either, but from social growth. It cannot be unjust, then, to deprive him of it. He has never owned what any one can claim just title to.

Any attorney of experience will tell you that stolen property belongs to the owner, no matter how innocent the purchaser was at the time of purchase. If John Smith bought of Bill Brown a \$100 horse which Bill Brown had stolen, any court in the land would restore the horse to its original owner regardless of Smith's loss of his own good \$100 of money. In the same fashion, when the people of one generation discover that their planet has been stolen by an earlier generation and is now held by purchasers, they would be perfectly justified in taking it back, willy nilly. This procedure would be, as Kipling puts it, to—

. . . push the logic of a fact

To its ultimate conclusion in unmitigated act.

The daily confiscation from the community of community values, seems to excite no remonstrance from the ordinary citizen. For instance, a friend who purchased a vacant lot last month sells it today for \$1,000 more than he gave for it. Its site-value had increased \$1,000 in one month. Why? Because of the number of new people who had come into the community. Site-value in this instance depends largely upon the number of people who daily pass by the site. If, for instance, it is worth \$1,000 when five hundred people pass it daily, then it may well be worth double that amount when 1,000 people pass it. (I make no effort to be accurate in figures; I use them merely to illustrate a principle.) Since the community, not the purchaser, has created this value—this increment, this premium—does it not belong to the community and not to the purchaser? Is it not clear that our present laws allow our purchasing friend to confiscate just that much of the community's earnings?

As a community grows, it needs more money to conduct its business; what more natural or equitable, then, than that this increased expense be met by increased premiums for sites, by those ground values which directly result from community growth?



If the Singletax were put into effect all at once, it would certainly work a hardship on our friend John Smith, and on all others of his class; but under our present system daily confiscations occur by those in the class with our other friend, and on

such a stupendous scale as to stagger the imagination.

Let us bear in mind, also, the iniquitous confiscations of the tariff. Mr. Wood is allowed to appropriate about ten of my hard-earned dollars every time I buy a suit of clothes, which ten dollars he uses in oppressing the mill-workers of Lawrence, Mass.

Why, speaking of confiscations, we have a government of confiscation. It is the rock upon which our whole system of taxation at the present time is based. What is the much heralded income tax but confiscation so far as it affects earned incomes?

Besides, the confiscation which the Singletax would work would have compensations in which John Smith would participate. They would come from the abolition of all other taxes, and from the throwing open of all natural resources and prohibiting their monopolization forever.



Thus far I have pursued this line of thought merely to show that if the Singletax had to stand or fall upon the question of whether it should or not be put into full force instantly and without warning, still it would have the justification of reason, still it would meet the demands of the severest logic and morality.

But that is not the method which Singletaxers are advocating at the present time in any place in the world. They are the most sweetly reasonable people on earth. They are not urging revolution, but progression. As the present system has grown up gradually, so let it be abolished gradually, without jar or jolt, without working hardship upon anyone—its great beneficence unfolding as a rose opens, petal by petal.

Singletaxers are working now to secure the permission of legislatures in various States for local option in taxation. That secured, then the community can experiment at will, just as the communities in Canada and the west coast are doing. They begin, not by abolishing all other taxes at one swoop and substituting the Singletax therefor. It is not in their power to do that. You find them increasing taxes on ground values gradually, and proportionately reducing taxes on improvements. This process can be continued and expanded as long as it promotes the general welfare, and be stopped whenever it hurts the general welfare.

It has the obvious advantage of discouraging land speculation, which nearly any well-informed man will concede is a bad thing, and of encour-

aging improvements, which any man, whether informed or not, knows is a good thing. The community that adopts it is at an obvious advantage, then, over the neighboring and competing community which does not adopt it. Sooner or later the competing community realizes this and goes into the Singletax business on its own account. And so the gospel and its practice spreads. The change is gradual, and everybody has ample warning.



Now let us see the position of our friend John Smith, who lives, let us say, in Oklahoma City.

Suppose we get from the Oklahoma legislature a law authorizing local option in taxation. Suppose we agitate the question in Oklahoma City to the point where a majority of the citizens believe in trying the matter out. At that point our friend John Smith, if he is a speculator, may become panicky and sell the vacant lot which he purchased recently, to someone who wishes to erect a building on it. He sees that the city shows signs of rebellion against his business of appropriating community values; so he takes his money and goes to El Reno, which we will suppose is *safe and sane* from the speculator's standpoint. Is Oklahoma City thus driving away productive capital? Not by a jugful. It is banishing capital which is used not in promoting but in *preventing* development. To El Reno, Oklahoma City can say, "Take him and welcome."

As community after community adopts the Singletax in some form or other, pickings for the speculator get leaner and leaner. Let us suppose that a manufacturer is then investigating the comparative merits of Oklahoma City and El Reno as a place to locate a large manufactory. He finds that improvements are taxed in El Reno more heavily than in Oklahoma City; that Oklahoma City instead of allowing speculators to appropriate community wealth takes it herself and uses it to conduct the affairs of the city, to improve streets, to build parks, to strengthen schools and the like. On the other hand, he finds El Reno bearing heavily upon capital productively employed, taxing it for money with which to run the government and allowing the land speculator to make off with local unearned increment. He sees Oklahoma City developing symmetrically and naturally, he finds El Reno distorted in its growth by the pulling and hauling of land speculators. Which of the two cities will he choose for the establishment of his plant?

Isn't it plain that Oklahoma City would have swapped John Smith the speculator, for a man

who desires to invest his money in productive enterprise?



When a sufficient number of communities have pushed the Singletax far enough, testing it step by step, and have found it good, then will be the time to attack the national problem.

But the change will be so gradual, the agitation will be so general, the public conscience will be so aroused against land speculation and landlordism, that most of the speculators will have been driven into using their money in productive enterprises, most of the land monopolists will have released their immense holdings, and those remaining will have had sufficient warning that the people mean to recapture their heritage.

R. BEDICHEK.

## NEWS NARRATIVE

The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of *The Public* for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Tuesday, June 25, 1912.

### Republican Presidential Nominations.

At a late hour on the 22nd the national Republican convention nominated President William Howard Taft for President, and Vice-President James Schoolcraft Sherman for Vice-President. [See current volume, page 581.]



After Elihu Root had been chosen as temporary chairman on the 18th, the important procedure of the convention was in the committee on credentials, which did not complete its work until the 22nd. It sustained the national committee's report in every particular and was itself sustained by the convention. Thus the temporary roll was made the permanent roll without a change. Upon the completion of the roll the report of the committee on permanent organization was adopted. It made the temporary officers of the convention the permanent officers. Henry J. Allen of Kansas having then made a statement in behalf of Roosevelt and Roosevelt delegates (the character of which will be given farther on), ex-Vice-President Fairbanks presented the report of the committee on platform, of which he was chairman. Walter C. Owen of Wisconsin presented the La Follette platform as a substitute, but this was promptly laid upon the table. The Fairbanks report was thereupon adopted by roll call vote. When California was called, and Meyer Lissner of the California delegation responded, "California declines

to vote," evoking a storm of applause, Chairman Root announced that the vote of California had been challenged and ordered the roll of the State to be called. This resulted in two votes for the platform (two Taft delegates) but silence from the rest of the delegation. The same question arose later on the vote for Presidential nomination when Massachusetts refused to vote both on call of States and on call of delegates. Chairman Root ordered the alternates to be called, but as only four responded this experiment was not further tried. Wisconsin voted "No" unanimously. The adoption of the platform was by the following vote:

Aye .....	666
No .....	53
Present (but not voting).....	343
Absent .....	16
Majority for adoption.....	254



Immediately upon the adoption of the platform the roll was called for nominations for President. Ohio was the first to respond. Warren G. Harding of that State nominated President Taft. The nomination was seconded by John Wanamaker and Nicholas Murray Butler. Michael B. Olbrich of Wisconsin nominated Senator La Follette, and Robert M. Pollock of North Dakota seconded the nomination. No other nominations were formally made. The voting began at once, 8:23 in the evening of the 22nd, and the result was as follows:

Taft .....	561
La Follette .....	41
Hughes .....	2
Roosevelt .....	107
Cummins .....	17
Absent .....	6
Present (but not voting).....	344
Taft's majority .....	44

Having nominated Vice-President Sherman for Vice-President, after Governor Deneen of Illinois and Governor Hadley of Missouri had refused to consider the honor, the convention adjourned at 10:30 p. m.



### Third Party Possibilities.

Signs of a new party movement were plentiful from the moment when it became evident that all the contested seats would be awarded with a strong hand, by the Taft managers of the Republican convention, to the Taft faction. One of the first important statements definitely along that line came, however, from Governor Johnson on the 22nd. Governor Johnson was then reported as saying:

Developments since the convention opened have convinced me that there will be a new party in the field, headed by Col. Roosevelt, and that party will carry California by 120,000. The principle in-