

# The Public

An International Journal  
*of*  
Fundamental Democracy

## Why Congress Has Failed

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# The Public

An International Journal of Fundamental Democracy

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## Editorial

It is impossible to ignore the fact that the country is in a state of great uncertainty, that it is groping in the dark, that it must form judgments in ignorance of essential facts. The complaints recently voiced in Congress amount to an accusation that the Executive is secretive and making preparations for the war as if it were a private game. Is it possible that the foreign commissions have advised that to allow the people knowledge of their own business is one of the "mistakes" that we should avoid? Do they commend the methods of the British censor, the silencing of criticism in the House of Commons, the muzzling of *The Nation*, the repression of Bertrand Russell? Their experience should rather commend frankness to our administrators in the exercise of the great powers with which they are being endowed. There is no virtue and there is some danger in a secretive policy when the people are asked to travel an unaccustomed road. Nor is the case altered by the fact that the policy is usually a sagacious one. The counterpart of power is confidence, and the condition of confidence is a full knowledge of policy.

\* \* \*

The most conspicuous thing about the Kitchin revenue bill is its tendency to tax labor in preference to privilege. Rather than impose an unshiftable tax upon the monopoly privileges of the Standard Oil Company, the Ways and Means Committee proposes a tax on pipe line receipts which can be added to the price of oil. Rather than tax the rights of way and other land holdings of public service corporations it proposes to tax freight bills, railroad tickets, telegraph and telephone messages, express rates, etc., so that the public can be compelled to reimburse the corporations. In preference to taking unearned incomes for public use it proposes an income tax which makes earned incomes bear a large part of the burden. And rather

than discourage withholding of land from use by putting a tax on land values it proposes a host of burdensome taxes on useful industry and trade. Mr. Kitchin admits that the proposed tariff duties are unjust and unscientific. But why confine the admission to that one feature?

\* \* \*

Congress encountered one of many troublesome conflicts when it was asked to keep the rate on incomes low enough to protect citizens of Wisconsin and one or two other states that tax incomes for local purposes. This dual system of government raises many difficult problems. Will it withstand the strain of this war? It is a question seriously asked by Congressmen and executives who never before questioned the wisdom of our division of authority between State and Nation. Already in Washington there is serious talk of Congress resolving itself into a constitutional convention as soon as the business in hand is disposed of, and initiating sweeping changes in the organic law.

\* \* \*

In defeating the censorship clause of the espionage bill, the United States Senate has performed a public service. Credit for this is due Senator LaFollette and his colleagues who stood by him. It is surprising to note among the minority which wished to suppress freedom, some of whom something better was to be expected. But war and its alleged necessities have muddled many minds.

\* \* \*

The German Socialist organ *International Korrespondenz*, according to a press dispatch, facetiously compares Gompers' demand that war be continued until autocracy and militarism in Germany be overthrown, with a supposed demand of German labor leaders that "we continue to war with America until the latter rid herself of her trust magnates and restore Cuba and the Philip-

pires." It is a pity that the suggestion is not seriously offered. If destruction of kaiserism should be offered on condition that privilege in the United States be immediately abolished, prompt acceptance would be a boon to both sides. Why should not the people of all belligerent nations offer their predatory interests as a sacrifice to the cause of peace?

\* \* \*

Certain prominent Socialists should re-read Aesop's fable of the Cock who betrayed his rival to the Fox. Something very similar to this is the effort by a minority faction to invoke the postal censorship in order to prevent circulation of resolutions adopted by the majority at the recent convention of their party at St. Louis. The cock in the fable has been held up for generations as a horrible example, more on account of the despicable nature of his act than its unpleasant physical result. For the same reason these Socialists should remember that there are limits to the manner of conducting a fight within an organization, beyond which one cannot go without sacrificing the respect of all fair-minded persons, both within and without its ranks.

### The Army Bill.

The army bill has become law, the President has issued his registration proclamation and the controversy over conscription is closed. The most partisan advocate of compulsory service can now afford to count gains and losses. After the advisory commissions of our allies had labelled "the voluntary principle" as a mistake we felt confirmed in our resolution to discard it. Now that the right of coercion is established, President Wilson assures the country that this is not the intention of the act. He is wiser than some of his professional advisers and knows that what was kicked out of the front door must be induced to return through the back. The voluntary principle involves more than presentation at a recruiting office. An executive that believes himself secure in the right to take men and money as needed, and proceeds to act in accordance with that belief, is living in a fool's paradise. The will of the nation must put itself into the war or there will be no war, no army, no loan. The voluntary principle is still needed to give life even to conscription.

President Wilson will have a difficult task

to make the American people believe that the army act is not coercive in intent and effect. Because of our geographical position and the events of our history, a great army is to us an abnormal and extraordinary thing. Rightly or wrongly, many Americans do not yet believe that their nation will participate in European military operations on anything like a large scale. The feeling is abroad that the young men are to be taken and trained for some vague and merely contingent need.

It is only the shallowest judgment that would regard the use of the voluntary principle as a mistake in England. Britons will be proud to the last day of their history that this war was fought by volunteers, each of whom, in spite of the occasional constraint, brought his individual purpose to bear upon the objective of the nation, and gave to the war a personal justification and a personal participation. The "mistake" was on the part of the War Office which with foolish regulations curbed the great impulse by rejecting recruits that fell short of an arbitrary standard of height by a fraction of an inch.

This will to serve is exemplified also in the Russian army, the momentary disorganization of which is only a slight indication of the tremendous evolution that is going on. The voluntary principle is there receiving its first application in modern Russian history. Henceforth soldiers will not be puppets but men and Russians. Are they no longer formidable? Is not Germany holding her hand precisely because she fears the surge of this new national consciousness and the voluntary strength of all Russia concentrated into a war of liberation?

### A Helpful or Hurtful Revenue Bill.

Not even the exigencies of war can be cited to excuse the taxes on labor imposed by the revenue bill of the House Ways and Means Committee. Compared with England's income tax, inequitable and unscientific as it is, the income tax section of the Kitchin bill is monstrously unjust. This was made very clear by Amos Pinchot, representing the American Committee on War Finance, in a statement to the Senate Finance Committee on May 15, in which he said:

If Great Britain can raise \$1,000,000,000 from incomes without disturbing business, the United States ought to be able to raise \$1,500,000,000 or \$2,000,000,000 in that way without disturbing business. If Great Britain can put on a \$700,000,000 excess prof-

its tax without disturbing business, we ought to put on a \$1,400,000,000 excess profits tax without disturbing business. What is the matter with American business that it should be disturbed so much more easily than British business by income and profits taxes? And, on the other hand, why should we impose on American business an unscientific and haphazard horizontal increase in the raw materials that industry uses? . . . The public is going to be subjected to conscription. We are going to confiscate the lives of our young men for this war, and at the same time this confiscation goes on, the public is going to be pinched by poverty, probably by hunger, in the near future. . . . It is more for a man to give his life than it is to give all his money, capital as well as interest.

Considering how the constantly rising cost of living is burdening the poor, and even those in moderate circumstances, the effort to place upon them a needless additional load is deserving of most severe condemnation. Then let it be remembered that taxation could be so laid as to tend to reduce the cost of living. A tax on land values would force into use land that is withheld, and resulting increase in production would lower prices. Moreover, such a tax would fall on the source from which unearned incomes are derived. Why can we not have a revenue measure that will help the people, instead of hurting them?

### To Avert an Upheaval.

That "social and political upheaval threatens unless something is done" is the despairing comment of Boston's Federal district attorney, George W. Anderson, in reference to the soaring cost of living. It is quite possible that Mr. Anderson is right, and he might have added that if "something is done" the threatened upheaval will not be averted anyway unless the "something" happens to be the right thing.

The measure most frequently urged just now is fixing of prices by law. That might help temporarily, provided a considerable quantity of food is actually being withheld by speculators, and provided the prices fixed are what they would be naturally if there were no speculation in food. But even then the measure could not be depended upon permanently. It would be an added risk to food production, should the fixing of prices be continually at the mercy of government bureaucrats. And should it turn out that speculative hoarding of food is not as prevalent as popularly supposed, or that present prices are not far from what supply and demand

should make them, legal price fixing at different figures must prove disastrous. To do the wrong thing merely because "something must be done" will not help matters. Social and political upheavals result from persistent refusals of government to do the right thing.

The right thing to do is to remove the cause of increasing prices, whatever it may be. Hoarding of food products could not be a paying venture if artificial restrictions on food production were not tolerated. When we take note of the fact that values of farm lands doubled between 1900 and 1910, and have risen considerably since then, we need not wonder that production of foodstuffs has failed to keep pace with population. Speculation in farm lands makes possible profitable speculation in farm products. The war has only hastened a situation which from the beginning was inevitable.

So far little has been done outside of radical groups, to urge an end to land speculation. Those in authority, while concerned about the situation seem more eager to strike at little contributory agencies than to disturb the fundamental cause. But in the long run there can be no avoiding of the choice between removal of the basic evil or social and political upheaval.

### Expert Advice on the Food Question.

There would be less cause for worry over the nation's food supply if Congress would consider seriously the proposals of A. C. Townley, president of the Farmers' Nonpartisan League. Mr. Townley speaks for an organization which includes in its membership 80 per cent. of North Dakota's farmers, and is rapidly spreading through all the wheat-growing states of the Northwest. So his suggestions cannot be waved aside as those of an impractical doctrinaire, radical as they may seem. He urges that the Government take possession of the monopolized industries which control distribution of foodstuffs, and that it take over idle lands to enable working farmers to make productive use of them.

There is no reason why this suggestion should be considered too drastic. Congress is now considering unprecedented measures for arbitrary regulation of prices and distribution of necessities. Mr. Townley's proposal, though not perfect, is more nearly based on fundamental principles than the

Congressional measure. Although the arbitrary seizure of lands which he suggests is not as good a plan as heavy taxation of land values, yet, even as presented, the proposition would have such good results that its adoption without change would be welcome. It is probably no exaggeration when Mr. Townley guarantees that it "would make the cost of living lower during war times than it has been during the past four years in peace."

"There would be no labor shortage on farms," says this practical farmer and authorized spokesman for organized farmers, "if farmhands saw a chance to get farms of their own, and if farmers got enough for their production." Why should not Congress be urged to follow this expert advice?

### **Agricultural Incomes.**

In a pamphlet advocating bond issues in preference to direct taxation for war purposes, Professors Seligman and Haig of Columbia University say:

It must be remembered that the great mass of American incomes is derived from agriculture, and that of all incomes these are the most refractory. The only result of an attempt to confiscate might be the complete breakdown of the system.

But does it follow from this that those drawing the incomes are farmers? According to the census of 1910 only forty-two per cent of American farmers owned their farms unencumbered. So the great part of agricultural incomes must have been going to landlords and mortgagees, and has no doubt been going in the same direction at an increasing rate since. A direct tax that would take for public use the rental value of land would take nothing from agriculture. What it would take would be money which tenants must pay in any event to landlords, purchasers must pay as interest on purchase price, or those who have long held unencumbered possession draw as unearned increment, entirely aside from their functions as farmers.

A tax that would fall on such incomes and exempt all that is due to the farmer's labor and enterprise would not touch those described by the professors as "most refractory." Besides, their statement seems to contradict the statistics according to which 65 per cent of the national wealth is in the hands of a small percentage of the population. This small percentage must be drawing the mass of incomes.

If professional economists can present no stronger objections against the policy of paying war expenses out of present day incomes, there seems little reason why it should not be adopted.

### **Christian to Christian.**

Under the title, "A Message to Christians of All Lands from Christians in America," seven hundred "representative churchmen and other Christian citizens" have issued to the world a statement urging "the establishment of a League of Nations, with a provision for the limitation of armament;" the adjustment of territory and compensation on the "basis of righteousness alone, with due regard for the rights of nations, small and great, belligerent and neutral"; and the reconstruction and reconciliation of the warring nations for the common good.

This is well as far as it goes; but does it go far enough? Does it involve anything material beyond what Christians have been professing and teaching for centuries? To call for a righteous peace is all very well, but what is a righteous peace? Righteousness as a mental concept is one thing; righteousness as applied to human conduct may be an entirely different thing, according as Christians interpret human conduct.

Nations as well as individuals come into personal contact with each other; and like individuals their amicable relations depend largely upon the manner of this physical contact. It has been assumed that armies and navies incite to war. Doubtless they do, but what incites nations to armies and navies? War is already in the nation's heart before it sets out to build its great armament; but what placed it there? Why should one Christian nation wish to make war upon another Christian nation? Why should German Christians wish to war upon French Christians, any more than one set of German Christians should wish to war upon another set of German Christians? Why should the Christians of this country feel the necessity of warring against the Christians of Europe, any more than the Christians of New York should war against Christians of Illinois or of California?

This fighting propensity cannot be due to Christianity itself, for the Christians within the country do not fight each other. Why,

then should they wish to fight fellow Christians in other countries? May not this international quarrelsomeness be due to the different relationship? Christians within a country speak of each other as brothers, and conduct their business upon the principle of mutual service. Each Christian is free to buy of any other Christian within the country or to sell to any other Christian in the country. Every one feels that the success and prosperity of others means success and prosperity for himself.

But no sooner are national boundaries passed than a new relationship is found. The people may be of the same race, the same language and the same religion, yet they do not meet upon the same plane of equality and fraternity. If each of two Christians living in different countries wishes to give the other something that he can spare in exchange for something that he needs, he finds that he must pay a heavy fine for doing it. But it is not the heavy fine in and of itself that causes the mischief so much as the thought that accompanies it. Before the people erect a tariff wall about their nation they must bring themselves to think that a foreigner is different from a native. They must think that to aid a foreigner is to injure themselves. They must believe a foreigner's profit means a native's loss. And they must discard or hold in abeyance their Christian principles, in order to be able to treat a foreign Christian differently from a native Christian.

It was this feeling that led to the present war; if it be not removed it will lead to still other wars. Tariffs have their foundation in unchristian thoughts. The Christian who harbors the thought that it is right to fine a foreign Christian for sending goods to this country is in a state of mind that will lead him to shoot that Christian when a spirited difference of opinion arises.

### A Federal Land Tax.

Advocates of a tax on land values as the most equitable and intelligent method of raising war revenues have not been idle at Washington. Realizing the existence of an unequalled opportunity to promote sound taxation, a group of Singletaxers that includes many of the strongest men and women in the movement has devoted its energies to finding

ways and means of taking advantage of it. At the outset arose the difficulty of levying a Federal tax on land values that would be equitably apportioned without coming into conflict with the constitutional prohibition of direct taxes except such as are levied on the basis of population. This is the basis accepted by Mr. Warren Worth Bailey for the bill introduced by him at the last session of Congress and just reintroduced by Congressman Crosser of Ohio. Many Singletaxers, including Mr. Herbert Quick and Mr. Louis F. Post, believed that the Bailey bill could not be successfully urged because to apportion a Federal land tax among the States on the basis of population would be, in their opinion, so inequitable as to discredit the project and weaken the position of those who favor Federal action. Accordingly, the Washington group, of which Mr. Post and Mr. Quick were members, together with half a dozen others of unquestioned devotion to the singletax principle, gave its consideration to a campaign for a constitutional amendment that would untie the hands of Congress. They believed that war necessities would run counter to other constitutional provisions, and that the time would come before many months when a program to amend the Constitution could be drawn up and promulgated with every chance of procuring its adoption. Further consideration, however, led to the belief that many constitutional prohibitions might be weakened or modified in construction because of recent decisions of the Supreme Court and the critical national situation. But the proposal to disregard the constitutional objection to a land values tax apportioned among the States according to land valuation instead of population was met everywhere, outside of the immediate group, with skepticism and emphatic assertion that the Constitution stood squarely in the way of a Federal land tax apportioned on other than a population basis.

To reconcile these conflicting views and to create opportunity for a full investigation by an official body, the proposal was then advanced to ask Congress or the Ways and Means Committee of the House or the Finance Committee of the Senate to direct the Tariff Commission to inquire into additional sources of revenue and to report to Congress within three months, this report to be avail-

able in drafting the next revenue bill, which, we are told, must be passed before the end of this year. There is every reason to believe that the subject of a Federal tax on land values would receive fair and intelligent consideration at the hands of the Tariff Commission, and that its report on the subject would greatly clarify a situation that is now muddied with conflicting views and with doubts as to what can and cannot be accomplished.

Secretary Franklin K. Lane of the Interior Department has expressed himself in favor of this procedure, and it has the emphatic endorsement of Carl Vrooman, assistant secretary of agriculture.

Meanwhile, an active campaign has been

started in support of the Crosser bill for levying a tax on land values apportioned to the States according to population. This campaign will serve to stimulate interest as the more indirect program outlined above could not do. It will put squarely before the Tariff Commission the question of whether or not a tax apportioned on this basis is equitable and practicable. That it will make headway in Congress is more doubtful because of the widespread belief that the basis of apportionment would be inequitable. But such a campaign will in no way conflict with the endeavor to provide a thorough investigation by the Tariff Commission and a clarifying report from that body.

## Pauperizing Citizens.

By Stoughton Cooley.

Persons who have wondered why the science of taxation should be the least developed of our social and political activities may receive some light by giving a moment's thought to the recent utterance of Dr. Charles W. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard. For more than a generation Dr. Eliot has stood in the forefront of movements looking to the advancement of much that is best in our civilization. It may be doubted, indeed, if there is another man who quite so completely fulfills the American ideal of a scholar. Profound in erudition, he yet retains the wholesome democratic impulses that have kept him in touch with the practical world, and enabled him to exercise great influence over the moral and intellectual life of his countrymen. Yet he appears to have failed to grasp the newer thoughts on government.

It is because of Dr. Eliot's surpassing merits in other fields that his failure to sense economic truths becomes so striking. He is right in saying that men seeking, under democratic forms of government, to avoid payment of taxes will lose their self-respect. "By their own selfish and mean action," he says, "they become morally pauperized." He stands upon equally firm ground in claiming that "another grave injury to national character is wrought whenever the mass of the people get their luxuries and pleasures out of the public revenue, instead of paying for

them themselves." But he becomes confused apparently as to individual identity when he says of the poor who "get their comforts and luxuries out of public expenditures" for schools, parks, libraries, and playgrounds: "If they have not knowingly contributed to the public income, they are getting these comforts and luxuries out of an income which is not their own and to which they have not contributed."

That any man or woman who receives service from society or government without rendering an equivalent service in return suffers moral injury is as certain as the law of gravity. And the moral obligation of every citizen to contribute toward the support of the government in proportion to the benefits derived from that government is equally certain. It is the minimum requirement of democracy. But Dr. Eliot's confusion has arisen from his failure to consider with sufficient care the incidence of taxation. He has, in short, failed to note the fact that government service is reflected in land values, and that the owner of the land where the service is rendered is able to collect from his tenants the full value of that service.

It is a matter of common experience with all persons who have attempted to buy or rent a place in which to live that the owner never failed to enumerate the advantages, in the shape of parks, schools, and the various public utilities that were at the command of

the user of that land. And present tenants are forcibly reminded by a rise in rents when any public improvement is made. This was dramatically demonstrated when the City of New York attempted, a few years ago, to relieve congestion in the overcrowded tenement district by converting certain blocks into parks and playgrounds. What was the result? Was there the slightest confusion or uncertainty as to rents? Were the learned economists of Columbia, Yale or Harvard consulted in determining the values under the new conditions? There was nothing of the kind. The result was as certain as the movement of the falling apple and the earth toward each other.

Before even the rubbish of the razed buildings had been cleared away there was a movement of tenants toward the rooms of the houses facing the newly cleared space. It was not necessary for the landlords to raise the rents. The tenants outside voluntarily offered to pay more than the occupants. And this competition for the right to live in rooms facing the park continued until the price had risen to a point far above the former rents; until, indeed, all the advantage of the improvement was reflected in the new rental. So great was the advance in the rents of rooms fronting on the park that the original poverty-stricken tenants whom the city government had thought to relieve were forced back into other congested districts to make room for better-to-do tenants who crowded them out. The net result was that tenement congestion had been shifted from one point to another point, while the advantages of the improvement were enjoyed by a class who were able before to live in better neighborhoods, and the owners of the surrounding land reaped the whole financial benefit in increased rents.

This concrete application should not be lightly dismissed. It is worthy of the consideration even of those learned economists who have confused such men as Dr. Eliot by stringing out their analyses so far that they are unable to draw a conclusion. It should be noted that neither the parks created in the tenement district, nor the schools erected, nor any other government service rendered, added one cent of value to brick or stone, house or furniture, meat or groceries, or any other product of labor. It was the space only, the land, that increased in value.

And that increased value was paid by the users of the space to the owners of the space. But the owners themselves did not pay all the cost of the improvements. They paid for only so much of the cost as was laid upon the land value. All the taxes that fell upon goods, that is, upon products of labor, were paid by the consumers of those goods.

Accepting, therefore, as sound, Dr. Eliot's contention that a "grave injury to national character is wrought whenever the mass of the people get their luxuries and pleasures out of the public revenue, instead of paying for them themselves," we should look for this defect among those of our citizens who have thus benefited financially by receiving revenue from lands made valuable by services paid for out of taxes laid upon property that was not made valuable by such service. And is not the evidence of this deterioration of character as plain as the fact of the unearned incomes? The nation faces a great crisis that must be met by the sacrifice of life and property. Men by thousands have placed their lives at the disposal of the Government, and millions more will make the same offer. But how many of our enormously rich have made a similar offer of their wealth? There are many thousands who have incomes that they cannot possibly spend in legitimate ways. There are many incomes from which a million dollars—or even several million dollars—could be taken without depriving their owners of a solitary comfort or pleasure. If they made a free offer of their entire fortunes their sacrifice would still be less than that of the man who gives his life. But they do not offer so much as their surplus income—the part they cannot spend, but must re-invest. Instead, they haggle about the rate of taxes, and send lobbies to Washington to have Congress tax the necessities of the poor, rather than levy upon their own incomes. And when a few rich men recently appeared before the Ways and Means Committee offering their incomes to the Government, and begging the Members of the Committee to incorporate their offer in the new law they were looked upon as curiosities.

This is not to say that all large incomes are unearned, or are derived from values created by government service. But so many have their origin in the private ownership of valuable city lands, in forest and mineral lands,

in waterpower and rights of way—all community-created values—that they have given color to all the rest. Their owners, living as they do upon unearned incomes, and receiving service from their fellows without rendering an equivalent in return, are without the fine edge of self-sacrifice, and have lost, as Dr. Eliot so well says, “the self-respect and those sturdy, independent, honest and just qualities which alone befit freemen.”

These qualities must be restored. If our country is to survive, if America is to make the contribution to civilization that she has so fondly dreamed of making, her citizens must return as quickly as possible to that condition wherein each contributes to the support of the Government in proportion to the benefits derived from the Government. And the present system of taxation that first levies upon the citizen for the cost of a pub-

lic improvement or service, and then requires him to pay a second time for the service in higher rent, must be replaced by a system of taxation that covers into the public treasury the annual values created by the public. That done and there will be ample revenue, without taxing labor products, for all ordinary expenditures. And when that has been done, can any one doubt that our people will take on those fine qualities of citizenship extolled by Dr. Eliot, which will enable the rich to meet a national crisis such as the present by offering their fortunes on the altar of their country as freely as the poor offer their lives. Dr. Eliot is absolutely right in warning his countrymen against the enervating effects upon moral character of receiving service without rendering an equivalent; but he is slightly in error as to which are the victims and which the beneficiaries.

## Mechanics and Farmers

By John Willis Slaughter.

The thesis advanced by Dr. Walter E. Weyl in his “American World Policies” is a welcome simplification which helps to bring the terms of the world problem within grasp. It is that the European nations have upset the balance between agricultural and industrial production, have taken up very definitely the character of industrial nations, and that the war means ultimately a great thrust outward toward the sources of food. If Dr. Weyl’s generalization is accepted, expansion on the part of these nations has a reason beyond national vanity. The case is not altered by the fact that England with characteristic practical sagacity had already pre-empted enough of the world to secure her own needs. Perhaps she overreached. The industrial revolution set her eyes toward future necessities long before her neighbors began to see the limit of their agricultural resources. It is well known that Russian expansion in the East has been primarily due to her extensive method of agriculture rather than the self-glorification of the autocracy.

There are two methods of securing food or raw material from other countries. One is by taking it for relatively nothing through holding the people in subjection, which constitutes crude imperialism. The other is by more or less fair exchange. England has found on the whole that the second method

is the healthier, particularly since large regions of her empire came to be peopled by elements of her own population who would not tolerate economic oppression.

It is natural that an industrial nation without sufficient agricultural resources of her own and without territorial possessions to insure her future, should regard any restriction on trade as a national danger. She must be able to sell her manufactured commodities in exchange for food as advantageously as other nations in order to give her people a reasonable standard of life. What gave focus to German policy was undoubtedly the protectionist movement in England which threatened to make the British empire a closed trade ring. The United States is a non-expansionist nation for the simple reason that her agricultural resources have more than adequately met her industrial needs. The balance is just being reached under existing methods of tenure and tillage.

The point of view here presented assists to clarify many war problems and affords suggestions toward their solution.

(a) The farmer after all has a place in the world. The whole cast and character of modern political thought has left him out of account. Its attention has gone almost exclusively to problems of industrial organizations. We think in terms of the factory, not

of the farm. Labor is always industrial labor. Business must be protected from every restriction. Those successful in business are our great men. And yet the farm is the ultimate market of all industry. It is curious that the farmers of America have so long tolerated and even supported that gigantic conspiracy against their interest, the tariff wall. They have to buy all their commodities except food at ridiculously inflated prices. They have to sell their own products at the dictation of industry. No wonder wool is the very crown of a tariff scheme. Sheep farmers seem to be protected and therefore assist to pull the wool over the eyes of other farmers. In a few years cotton will be in the same position. On the other hand, any restrictions on the food supply is howled down as a crime. Public opinion is made in the industrial centers. Newspapers express the views of those who buy them. The farmer in truth constitutes a subject race dominated by the race of efficient mechanics. Now it is discovered that the efficient mechanic is not endowed with an unlimited food supply. The factories of Europe are organized and fighting each other to see who will dominate the world's farmers in the future.

(b) The farmer counts in another way, little understood because he so seldom rises to political self-consciousness. Democracy is a farm product. Our nation is historically what it is because it is essentially a nation of small working agriculturalists. Individual values can never be lost in a farming community. All farmers are at bottom rather badly co-operating anarchists. Mechanics, on the other hand, are either Prussians or socialists. What is called National Organization is a fusion of the two. It has nothing to do with the farmer; his political alternatives are feudalism and democracy. Every intelligent farmer must be having a laugh at the talk of extending industrial methods to agriculture. On a farm things grow, they are not made. In countries where domination of one group by another through force is obsolete, farmers and mechanics cannot maintain themselves in conflict. They may hate each other but they must adjust their differences. English farmers of the Midlands, nearly all Tories, blocked the prohibitionist plans of their own party by demanding that the principle be extended to farm products. The industrial

community would not tolerate a tariff on foodstuffs, so Chamberlainism fell, divided against itself.

(c) If it is true that western nations were beginning a protoplasmic flow toward the sources of food, met on the way, jostled each other and stopped to fight, then a clear grasp of the objective may assist in working out a "permanent peace." Every good farmer arranges either his trough or his pigs, so as to keep their scramble within the limits of healthy activity. There is at present enough for little and big if each can be restricted to a reasonable share. Intensive feeding is only a preparation for ultimate killing.

Let the question of food supply take front rank in international policy, let Argentina have a high seat in the council chamber, which will consider ways and means. Argentina will always buy her manufactured commodities from England and Germany and will always sell them beef and wheat. The policy of the European countries is to encourage in every way the production of these foodstuffs, to regard with disfavor Argentine feudalistic land system, to facilitate the growth of a populous and civilized community, which will be in need of manufactured articles. It is the policy of Argentina to remove every restriction upon the importation of industrial products, to keep the avenues clear for competition, so her agricultural surplus may buy as much as possible.

(d) Food, or rather the lack of it, has a curious effect on the social mind. The hungry man, or the man with hungry children is unsparing toward anyone he can hold responsible for his condition. The Russian bureaucracy went like chaff before the wind when it proved incompetent to distribute food. Day by day, the danger point approaches in Germany. British workingmen develop strong political convictions only during unemployment. Charity and the Poor Law are an insurance against revolution. The truth is that the class or persons who hold land out of its fullest production face a sure condemnation when hunger invades the community. Junkerdom always thinks to evade its own destruction by imperialistic expansion. It fails to see that the population of wheat and cattle zones are no longer capable of being held in subjection. Famine is the touchstone which shows that there is no room in the world for landlords who take toll of necessities and give nothing. This

war may collapse in universal revolution.

We may expect agriculture to come again to its own. It is primary and industry depends upon it. That constant drain of the countryside which the superior rewards of industry have effected is a national and international danger. Factory communities and factory nations have tried to run away with the world, and stumbled to disaster. To work the land is now suddenly a patriotic

duty—to entrench one group of industrial powers against another. Is the reward of the farmer to be only the feeling of a duty discharged? Is it the patriotic duty of manufacturers to supply the world with an abundance of cheap shoes, cheap clothing, cheap print paper and cheap steel rails? If the industrial world now finds itself hungry, it is because "business is business" and farming a patriotic duty.

## Why Congress Fails

By George P. West.

Evidence piles up in Washington that we are in for a most thorough internal shaking-up in the process of marshalling ourselves for a united stand against an outside enemy. Congressmen who very recently extolled our institutions from Independence Day platforms as the last word in popular government, are today resorting to profanity to condemn the dual system of state and federal control or the irresponsibility of the executive branch. There is no national budget. Because pork-barrel methods of appropriating public funds in peace times would not stand the light, unheard-of amounts for war needs are being voted in a darkness now futilely protested. No agency exists in Washington for co-ordinating national needs in terms of money, and because it blindly voted three and one half billions last week, Congress will be likely to economize this week by crippling the mediation work of the employment bureaus of the Department of Labor at a saving of a few hundred thousands. Nor will Secretary Wilson be permitted to tell Congress why these things must not be crippled, any more than Secretary Houston or Secretary Baker would be permitted to urge the needs of his department before the final vote on a bill vitally affecting its work. True, he could go before a committee and there talk to half a dozen members, who might or might not be sufficiently impressed to become his competent spokesman on the floor of the Senate or the House.

But while the executive departments suffer from the lack of direct contact with the legislative branch, Congress suffers more. Cabinet officers and their advisers initiate and carry out programmes with the smallest pos-

sible measure of consultation, and with none at all once the money is in their hands. War's necessities have increased the executive power so that bribery under the spoils system becomes unnecessary, and Congress thus far has acquiesced in executive decisions, limiting itself to angry conversation and sulky delay.

The time may come when it will accept responsibility for possible disaster by asserting its rights and rejecting the programmes ready-made for it by the men in charge. If so, it will not be intelligent opposition, for Congress is not sufficiently informed to be intelligent with regard to details of conducting the war. It will be the blind and peevish opposition of a body jealous of its rights and powers but deprived of the knowledge required for their intelligent assertion.

The ignorance existing in Congress with respect to the prosecution of the war is dangerous in two directions. It robs the people of an agency to which a continuous accounting can be rendered by the executive power, and it threatens the executive with uninformed and ill-natured obstruction. So long as President Wilson continues to enjoy the full confidence and support of the people, Congress will continue to do as it is told. Congress will be awed by a vague feeling that the President and his ministers are in possession of great secrets and responsibilities that cannot be shared.

It was this feeling that made possible the enactment of conscription. But let doubt arise, and Congress will suddenly discover its own voice. It will then be as apt to throw a shoe into machinery that is running smoothly as to correct an executive mistake.

Executive irresponsibility is dangerous for

other reasons. It was never more necessary that Congress should be vocal and articulate on every issue. Yet Congressmen feel so keenly their lack of knowledge that today they are apt to smother misgivings and trust to those who know. To talk with administrative officers in Washington these days is to realize how far they are from the man on the street, how engrossed and exalted in their obsession with the successful prosecution of the business in hand. There is a considerable minority group in Congress of men who feel that we may be rushing on to something very close to disaster; that serious internal disorders may at some not-distant date startle official Washington into a realization that there are undernourished children and sullen discontent in this country as well as patriotic business men and enthusiastic wavers of flags. Today these Congressmen nurse their fears in silence and utter their protests like so many Achilles sulking in their tents.

Mr. Creel as Chairman of the Department of Public Information is doing his utmost to break down the wall between executive departments and the man on the street. But Mr. Creel finds himself a part of the executive organization, and insist as he will on the fullest publicity, his cannot be the impudence backed by authority that alone can extort information from harassed and overworked executives.

President Wilson's personal appearances before Congress constitute a fine gesture toward the sort of co-operation between executives and popular representatives that is demanded by the situation today. It is a precedent that could be followed and a procedure that should be extended. Cabinet officers and the chairmen of important advisory boards are busy men. But they could not spend time to better advantage for themselves and the country than by giving from their other duties an hour each week to appearing before Congress to answer questions and report progress. Such appearances would silence criticism and suspicion based on ignorance.

It would forestall those blind acts of obstruction in which Congress occasionally indulges when, after sitting through days and weeks of ignorance and impotence, it suddenly loses its temper and maliciously throws stones at the nation's executives. Opposition in Congress would not be overcome by such

means. It would be made more intelligent, more sure of its ground, and more effective. That kind of opposition is needed. The disaffected minority would cease uttering dire predictions in the seclusion of private offices and become instead a medium through which the voice of the man on the street, in the factory, on the farm, would make itself heard in every executive office in Washington.

## AN IDLE DIALOG

By Ellis O. Jones.

An Idle Poor Man met an Idle Rich Man and asked him for assistance, but the Idle Rich Man was impatient. He tried to brush the other aside and pass on.

"Out of my way, you lump of uselessness. It is not right for you to solicit alms. Why don't you go to work?"

"Why don't you give me work?"

"There isn't any work that I want done."

"But there is work that I want done," retorted the Idle Poor Man, "and I am willing to do it myself if I only had the opportunity."

"Oh, yes," contemptuously replied the Idle Rich Man, "I have heard all that before. There is plenty of work if you would only do it. I don't believe you want to work."

"Of course I don't."

"Ah, ha, I thought so."

"Do you want to work?" inquired the Idle Poor Man.

"I don't have to work," evasively replied the other.

"Ah, ha, I thought so," mocked the Idle Poor Man.

"I have an independent income," said the Idle Rich Man.

"Did you work for it?" asked the Idle Poor Man.

"No, but I came by it honestly enough. It was left to me by my father."

"So. So. You're no better than I am."

"My poor deluded friend," responded the Idle Rich Man in a fatherly tone, "I am really doing you a great favor in thus arguing with you, but I must say your knowledge of political economy is exceedingly limited. It may be true that I do no work myself, but by spending my money I make work for others which is of great social value."

"Yes, you make work for servants and bootblacks and chauffeurs and valets and gardeners and diamond-cutters and many others, but you take good care that none of them shall make work for you. Your theory is all wrong. There is no virtue in making work for others to clean up. But even if that

were the test, I still maintain that you are no better than I. I, too, make work."

"Perhaps you do, but of a different kind."

"Work is work. It is impossible to place certain values upon different kinds of work," said the Idle Poor Man. "As a matter of fact, the workers I create are quite as much honored and respected as those arising through you. I am a problem, I am. A regular problem. As such I require the attention of real thinkers, or at least those who think they are thinkers. I give employment to academicians and learned sociologists and settlement workers and charity organizations and reformers and politicians and policemen and orators and writers and goodness knows who all. I am sure you have no monopoly on making work. It seems to me that the only difference between us as shown by this argument is a difference in the matter of honesty."

"And of course you are the more honest," declared the Idle Rich Man sarcastically.

"Honesty is so largely a subjective matter," responded the Idle Poor Man, "that I am quite sure we could never agree on that point."

## NEWS OF THE WEEK

Week Ending May 22

### Congressional Doings.

The House in Committee of the Whole on May 17 voted to amend the Kitchen war revenue bill by increasing surtaxes 25 per cent. on incomes between \$40,000 and \$1,000,000, and making the surtax 45 per cent. on all above \$1,000,000. These increases it is estimated will add \$66,000,000 to the revenue. Other schedules have been left practically as introduced in spite of many protests. A proposed amendment putting a tax of \$2.50 a bale on raw cotton was defeated on May 21. [See current volume, page 481.]

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The Army bill with the Conscription clause was further amended in the House by increasing the pay of enlisted men to \$30 a month. The Senate accepted the amendment and the bill passed both Houses on May 18, and the President signed it. The law provides for conscription of all men 21 years of age and over up to the age of 31. The President immediately issued a proclamation designating June 5 as the day for registration of all subject to the draft. They are to register at their voting precincts. The penalty of failure to appear is imprisonment at the discretion of the court of not more than one year. The person convicted will then be registered regardless of his consent, and his name will be placed in the wheel with others to be drafted. The President stated in part in his proclamation:

The nation needs all men, but it needs each man, not in the field that will most pleasure him but in the endeavor that will best serve the common good. Thus, though a sharpshooter pleases to operate a triphammer for the forging of great guns, and an expert machinist desires to march with the flag, the nation is being served only when the sharpshooter marches and the machinist remains at his levers.

It is in no sense a conscription of the unwilling; it is rather, selection from a nation which has volunteered in mass. It is no more a choosing of those who shall march with the colors than it is a selection of those who shall serve an equally necessary and devoted purpose in the industries that lie behind the battle line.

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Senator Sheppard of Texas introduced on May 11 a bill for a Federal land settlement and homestead commission. The bill recites "the passing of the home owner" and decrease of citizens engaged in agriculture and provides for a commission to consist of the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior and Labor. The commission is to inquire as to methods and results of unregulated private settlements, need of more favorable terms of purchase by tenants, feasibility of the settlement and loan schemes of other countries, feasibility of co-operation between State and Federal authorities, methods of keeping home owners on the soil, methods of regulating land speculation, absentee landlordism, of preventing concentration of land ownership in the few, and kindred evils, other methods as the commission may find advisable to arrest growth of tenantry and spread of landlordism. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Public Grounds.

### Control of Coal Mines Urged.

Declaring that coal mine operators and brokers are charging exorbitant profits, sometimes several hundred per cent., the Federal Trade Commission on May 21 urged Congress to establish control by governmental agencies. The commission blames the railroads for failure to furnish sufficient car space and diversion to ocean traffic of coastwise and lake shipping. Although there was considerable increase in production, demand has also increased enough to absorb the supply as fast as it could be shipped.

### A Food Dictatorship.

In a public statement on May 19, President Wilson declared that he has asked Congress for special power to deal with the food situation. He said further:

The objects sought to be served by the legislation asked for are: Full inquiry into the existing available stocks of foodstuffs and into the costs and practices of the various food producing and distributing trades; the prevention of all unwarranted hoarding of every kind, and of the control of foodstuffs by persons who are not in any legitimate sense producers, dealers or traders; the requisition, when necessary for public use, of food supplies and of the equipment necessary for handling them properly; the licensing of wholesome and legitimate mixtures and milling percentages, and the prohibition of the unnecessary or wasteful use of foods.

Authority is asked also to establish prices, but not in order to limit the profits of the farmers, but only to guarantee to them, when necessary, a minimum price, which will insure them a profit where they are asked to attempt new crops, and to secure the consumer against extortion by breaking up corners and attempts at speculation when they occur, by fixing temporarily a reasonable price at which middlemen must sell.

He then stated that Herbert C. Hoover has agreed to undertake administration of the matter without pay. He also declared it to be absolutely necessary that unquestionable powers be placed in his hands.

#### Tax Reform News.

Hyattsville, Maryland, voted on May 19 to raise all local revenue by taxing land values only. The vote was 75 to 26. Although nominally but an advisory vote, the mandate is sure to be carried out by the town council. This is the second time in its history that Hyattsville has taken such action. In 1892 the citizens gave similar instructions to their council, as the result of a campaign led by Jackson H. Ralston. The ordinance was passed but was contested in the courts and finally declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court, which thereby reversed a former decision upholding the right of the city of Baltimore to exempt improvements. Tax reform in Maryland thus remained blocked until in 1915 a constitutional amendment was adopted allowing classification of property and giving cities and towns home rule in local taxation. The legislature in 1916 passed an enabling act and under this act action was taken. Mr. Ralston led the campaign this year also. Hyattsville is the third place to vote under this law. Capital Heights voted favorably by a large majority, and Somerset defeated it by a tie vote. [See current volume, page 483.]

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Denver, Colorado, defeated on May 15 by a vote of 20,566 to 5,453 a proposed Singletax amendment to the city charter. Local Singletaxers were divided concerning putting the measure on the ballot this year, many of them holding the time inopportune. The vote was light, the city's total registration being 96,000. Two years ago the vote on the same proposition was approximately 27,000 to 8,000.

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A petition to the Rhode Island legislature "to abolish all taxes except a singletax on land values" is being circulated by the State's tax reformers under the leadership of ex-Governor Garvin. Singletax speakers living outside of the State are urged to spend their vacations there to help in the campaign.

#### Ireland.

Premier Lloyd George announced in the House of Commons on the 21st that the Government proposed to summon immediately a convention of representative Irishmen in Ireland to submit to the British Parliament a constitution for the government of Ireland; and he promised that if a substantial agreement was reached the Government would take steps to enable Parliament to give legislative effect to the convention's findings. The Government is to name the

chairman, and the convention is to be held behind closed doors. The proposal was received with enthusiasm by some, and distrust by others. The Nationalists are cordial, but Ulster is in doubt. All factions, including the Sinn Fein party, are to be represented. [See current volume, page 447.]

#### Russia.

Order appears to be coming out of chaos. The formation of the coalition cabinet, in which representatives of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates have accepted responsibility of government, has been followed by a return to order, and a renewal of military discipline in the army. The new cabinet is composed of the following:

Premier and Minister of the Interior, Prince Lvoff; Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Tereschtenko; Minister of Commerce and Industry, M. Konovaloff; State Controller, M. Godneff; Socialist; Minister of Labor, M. Skobelev; Minister of Justice, M. Perveizeff; Minister of Food and Supplies, M. Pieschenonoff, Socialist; Minister of War and Marine, M. Kerensky; Minister of Finance, M. Shingaroff; Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, M. Tseretelli; Minister of Ways and Communications, M. Nekrasoff; Minister of Education, M. Manuiloff.

Professor Miliukoff, the former Foreign Minister, refused to accept a place in the Cabinet because of a difference of opinion in regard to foreign policy. [See current volume, page 484.]

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All thought of a separate peace is denied by the Russian Government, but its proposal of "peace without annexations and contributions" has aroused contradictory thoughts as to its meaning. The case of Armenia is submitted as an example, and the Russian Socialists will be called upon to say whether or not they favor a peace that would leave that country under the domination of Turkey. It is reported that the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates, which has heretofore attempted to run the Government without assuming responsibility, and which caused the overthrow of the former Cabinet, has in turn been overawed by the Cossacks, who demand that the army be put in fighting order, and that Russia fulfill her obligations to her Allies.

#### European War.

Action on the western front has been intensified during the week. Heavy cannonading has been continuous, supplemented at frequent intervals by infantry assaults that have resulted in large casualty lists, if not in great advances. The Allies report futile attempts of the Germans to retake their lost positions as a heavy draft upon the men of that country. The British have at last taken Bullecourt, and report that they hold ten miles of the famous Hindenburg line, with the exception of 2,000 yards immediately before Bullecourt. It was in the repeated attempts to recapture this line that the Germans suffered such heavy losses. The French have made similar advances from the south, which they have held against the desperate assaults of the Germans. Berlin official reports, which rarely admit defeat, announce small losses before both the British

and the French. No definite military action has been announced on the Russian front aside from a stiffening of the military discipline on the part of Russia. In Macedonia the Allies continue to make small gains in the Vardar region. Italy is attacking in full force on the Isonzo front from Tolmino to the sea. They have successfully crossed the Isonzo River north of Goritz, and are advancing toward Duino on the coast. They report the capture on the 16th of 3,375 prisoners. No definite announcements are made from Mesopotamia and Palestine. [See current volume, page 483.]

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The report of the submarine activities issued by the British Admiralty for the week ending May 16 shows a still further decrease in losses. Eighteen British merchantmen of more than 1,600 tons were sunk, as against 24 of the week before; and 5 merchantmen of less than 1,600 tons, as compared with 22 of the preceding week. The loss of fishing vessels decreased from sixteen to three. There appears to be a growing conviction that the submarine menace is on the decline. A fleet of American destroyers is now in British waters, and it is announced that Japanese gunboats have arrived at Marseilles to aid in fighting submarines in the Mediterranean, and to convoy French merchantmen.

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Honduras and Nicaragua have broken off diplomatic relations with Germany, leaving only Salvador and Costa Rica of the Central American countries on friendly terms. Brazil's relations are strained to the breaking point. President Braz has recommended to the assembling Congress that the decree of neutrality be revoked. The message declares that the order enjoining neutrality was intended to have effect only until Congress should assemble. Spain has been making vigorous protests against German submarine depredations, and Sweden, which has been very friendly, is now resentful of German treatment.

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No definite peace proposals are heard from any quarter. The long expected address of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg to the Reichstag proved to be non-committal. The Chancellor declined to state any terms upon which Germany would be willing to make peace. She was neither fighting for conquest, he said, nor prepared to surrender. The Reichstag has adjourned until July 5th. The Socialist conference at Stockholm appears to be making little headway in shaping a program.

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American activities so far as announced are still confined to work of preparation. A fleet of American destroyers is reported to have arrived in British waters ready for action on May 4th. It is reported that the general understanding arrived at between the British Foreign Minister, Balfour, and Secretaries Lansing and Redfield and the foreign and American trade experts is that this country will contribute its resources first to the Allies and allow vital necessities to go to the neutral nations, where leakage into Germany can be prevented.

## NOTES

—A fire in Atlanta on May 21 devastated 100 blocks and caused a \$2,000,000 loss.

—By a vote of 19,331 to 9,605 Denver rejected a proposition on May 15 to repeal the preferential voting provision of the city charter.

—A resolution asking the Secretaries of Agriculture and of Labor to try to stop exodus of Negroes from the State was adopted by the Georgia Council of Defense at Atlanta on May 16.

—A bill to compel every able-bodied male citizen between ages of 16 and 60 to work at least 36 hours a week passed both houses of the West Virginia legislature on May 19.

—The headquarters of the American Conference for Democracy and Terms of Peace, called to meet in New York City on May 30 and 31, have been removed from the Holland House to 289 Fifth avenue.

—E. Stuart Hinton, known as a devoted advocate of Singletax in New York City, died at the home of his sister, Mrs. Richard Le Gallienne, on May 20, aged 51. He was an artist by profession and had made busts of Thomas G. Shearman and William T. Croasdale.

—In spite of the exposure of the frame-up against Thomas Mooney in San Francisco, his wife, Rena Mooney, indicted with him for complicity in bomb throwing at the preparedness parade last July, was put on trial on May 21 before Judge Emmet Sewell. [See current volume, page 483.]

—President Mario Garcia Menocal was inaugurated President of Cuba on the 20th. In setting out on another four year term the President announced the suppression of the insurrection, and the restoration of law and order throughout the island. He called upon Cubans to forget rancorous feelings, and to present a united front with the United States against Germany.

—A jury in the Federal Court at New York trying members of the Labor National Peace Council accused of conspiracy to interfere with the munition trade returned verdicts of guilty on May 21 in the cases of Franz von Rintelen, David Lamar and Henry B. Martin. It disagreed concerning Jacob Taylor, Herman Schulteis, ex-Congressman Frank Buchanan and Robert B. Fowler.

—The Singletax party of New York City nominated a ticket for all municipal offices on May 19. The candidates are George Wallace for Mayor; Antonio Bastida, Controller; Benjamin Burger, President of the Board of Aldermen; Gaston Haxo, President of Manhattan; James Dangerfield, President of Brooklyn; James P. Hansen, President of Queens; William J. Lee, Sheriff of New York; Walter J. Triner, Sheriff of Kings.

—Rumors that the National Educational Association would not hold its annual meeting as announced for July 7-14 in Portland, Oregon, are set at rest by the statement of the secretary, Durand W. Springer, who gives the positive assurance that the meeting will be held as originally announced, and impresses upon the public the fact that there is all the more need of a good attendance and live interest because of the distraction of the war.

## PRESS OPINIONS

### Why Mexico Is Neutral.

Modesto C. Rolland in *El Grafico*, May.—We, the Mexicans, who have long been victimized by commercialism; who have been attacked and exploited by all Europe and the United States; who have had to suffer invasion of our territory and violation of our sovereignty by England, France, Spain and the United States; who are convinced that Germany, had she had the opportunity, would have done the same: we, the Mexicans, who have had our most sacred rights violated by all the strong nations of the world; who have been exploited, absorbed and crushed by all modern influences, Germany included: we, the Mexicans, weakened by the fight against an underhand enemy, against the forces of organized commercialism and against our own religious-feudal problems at home, cannot locally adopt any other attitude than that of strict neutrality toward all those war-involved nations, which have long been endeavoring to appropriate our riches and obliterate our rights. Not only from a provoked spirit of resentment, but also from a commercial standpoint, we feel that we can justify no other trend of action. What have we to gain by joining ourselves to either side? The act of warring in a spirit of commercialism is repugnant to the Mexican race. Whoever knows Mexico, whoever has studied that country even slightly, must be convinced that the nation feels an absolute detachment from the present world struggle. We are not lacking in ideals, but we know only too well that it was not pursuit of ideals that led these nations into the abyss of war. . . . Perhaps in any other kind of war—a war of invasion of the United States in a conflict with Japan, for example,—Mexico would define her international attitude and take sides with one or the other of the belligerent countries. Then, for convenience's sake, perhaps we would side with the United States in continental politics, because we see clearly that we have nothing to gain from Japan, with whom, despite all the talk in the papers, we have no ties, no affinity. We would gain little by being on the side of the United States, but perhaps we would lose less. . . . The contemptuous policies pursued toward Mexico by American commercialism, have been little conducive to sympathy and respect. A constant and wide-spread insulting attitude toward our people, a juggling with our internal dissensions, have not been, and never can be, conducive to friendship between these two countries. The editorial columns of the *New York Times*, April 17th and 18th, 1917, state in effect, that because we do not accept certain conditions covering the payment of damages incurred during the revolution, the United States will offer no opposition, should those countries which have exploited us, once more intervene, violating our rights. . . . We believe that the *Times'* editorial does not really express the opinion of the majority of the American people. We appeal to this majority, expressing very frankly, but truthfully, our feeling as neutrals; and we dare to hope that the people will understand and appreciate our position in this matter. We especially address the many broad-

minded Americans who have always stood for justice to Mexico, and for whose fair and kindly attitude we are deeply indebted.

### New Tariff Iniquities.

*New York Times*, May 16.—The additional tariff duties imposed in the Ways and Means Committee's Tax Bill upon raw materials now on the free list are objectionable for several reasons, the chief of which is that the tax paid would be greatly in excess of the revenue received by the Government. The excess, a burden upon consumers, would not go into the Treasury. Free imports in the last fiscal year amounted to \$1,492,663,000, and \$816,653,000 or 54 per cent., was the value of crude materials for use in manufacturing. There was also \$258,096,000 for materials partly manufactured. . . . While nearly \$150,000,000 would be paid on raw materials and other imports now free, our people would pay very much more, and not to the National Treasury. Cost of production for all goods in which the imported raw material is used would be increased, and consumers would be required to pay the increase, but at the same time they would also pay the higher price demanded for similar goods made of domestic material. Such is the course of trade. . . . The Government would get its tax, and consumers, as has been said, on account of the new price level fixed by the tax, would pay much more than the revenue received. The addition of 10 per cent. for many things in the dutiable list is objectionable for the same reason. The value of crude materials and materials partly manufactured, in the list, is \$198,000,000. A prominent refiner estimates that while the 10 per cent. on sugar would give the Government \$19,000,000, it would increase by \$42,000,000 the cost of sugar to consumers. Our people must pay heavy taxes, but all of these should be equitable and in accord with established economic principles. When a citizen pays a war tax rate he should know it and be assured that it goes into the National Treasury.

### Sound Economics From an Economist.

Professor H. J. Davenport (Cornell) in *The American Economic Review*.—I believe that the principle at the heart of the Singletax agitation—that the fiscal revenues should be derived from the social estates—is right and vastly important. The rents of mines, forests, waterfalls, franchises, town lots, and also, if practicable, of agricultural lands, should be retained as fiscal properties. Not a society singletaxed, but a society free from all taxes of any sort, is the logic of the principle, a goal well within the reach of a wise and provident public policy. One needs in this connection to recall only the school land properties of the West, the salt mines publicly owned in Germany, the royalties which Canada is collecting from every considerable portion of its mineral wealth. As ethical basis, whatever other bases there may conceivably be for private property, the Singletaxer logically finds nothing but the right of the individual to himself and to the results of his activity. Nothing, therefore, which is natural bounty can rightly have been allowed to serve as a source of individual income, to fall into the category of individ-

## CORRESPONDENCE

## THE MENACE OF HIGH WAGES.

ual ownership. I believe also that all times have been propitious times, the present a right time no less than any earlier time, for establishing the provision that future increments of earning power from natural resources shall not be permitted to fall into the hands of private owners. I am, for example, sure that, when the purpose is to appropriate for society a certain rental, the only wise method is to proceed directly against the rental as such, rather than by an ad valorem tax upon the value derivative from the rental. For the purposes of the Single-tax program the ad valorem policy is singularly inappropriate, not so much that to take the rent leaves so far no value to tax as that it strikes at the very heart of the equities involved.

## A Doubled-Edged Sword.

Johnstown (Pa.) *Democrat*, May 18.—A whole lot of people who a short time ago were wildly advocating a censorship for moving pictures are greatly disturbed by reason of the fact that the administration has sought to impose a strict censorship upon newspapers. And yet both ideas come out of the same pigeonhole. In this connection it is interesting to note that the good people who have been greatly concerned lest public sentiment prove itself unable to censor moving pictures are being menaced from a wholly unexpected quarter. The direful rum interests of the country are credited with a desire to get control of the various moving picture censors. It seems that recently a great many films that depict the sad fate of the drunkard have been suppressed by the censor. The movie has, to some extent, become a part of the temperance propaganda. The saloon is frequently filmed from the point of view of its most undesirable angles. The liquor interests, it is reported, imagine that if they could control the censor they could stop some of the damaging films. Since there is a censorship all that it is necessary to do is to get control of the censor. That is a view that may be new to a great many very excellent people. Censorship depends upon the censor and sometimes the censor cannot be reached by public opinion.

## Income Taxes Compared.

*Copper's Weekly* (Topeka, Kans.), May 19.—Under the British war tax, incomes of \$1,000 (exempt under our act) pay \$45. English incomes of \$5,000 pay \$625, compared with but \$120 under our schedule. An English income of \$25,000 pays \$7,021, or nearly 33 per cent., while one of \$50,000 pays \$16,396, and of \$100,000 pays \$37,646. The last named is nearly 38 per cent., whereas such a rate is not to be collected under the law proposed by Congress on any incomes, and 33 per cent. only on excess when incomes over \$500,000 are reached. Under our bill incomes of \$500,000 will pay something like \$80,000 tax, but the same incomes under the British law pay \$207,646. It is seen that great American incomes get off lightly, compared with the same British incomes, and this is true also of the "excess profits" taxes on corporations. These we have placed at 16 per cent., but in England the ratio is 60 per cent. Wealth is much harder hit in aristocratic England than in democratic America to carry on the war.

The financial and business papers in all parts of the country are alarmed over a new menace—the most serious one that has confronted the American business world since the outbreak of the war. Business men everywhere are profoundly concerned over the prospect of a big increase in wages.

The ordinary sources of labor supply have failed. Immigration has practically ceased. The birth rate is being cut in all of the belligerent countries. Meanwhile there is a far greater demand for labor, a demand that will become particularly acute at harvest time. Unemployment, which in a "normal" year might have gone to 15 or even 20 per cent., did not get much above 7 or 8 per cent last winter. At the present time it is probably well below 5 per cent. The general labor shortage with its intensest pressure during the harvest season cannot but result in an increase in wages such as men have not known in modern times. If the law of supply and demand is permitted to operate in this case as it has operated during the past few months in the case of potatoes, pork, shoes and steel, wages might double in a month.

Once wages are raised they are reduced with difficulty. Workers become accustomed to a high return and resent any cut in the wage scale. Hence the seriousness of a situation that promises widespread wage advances.

During the past 40 years the bulk of American wage earners have worked for a wage that represented bare subsistence or less. Therefore millions of them lived in poverty. The present situation promises a living wage and more for even the humblest worker.

"There's many a slip," however, and it now looks as though business would find a way. From all sides come proposals that the prisoners of war, taken by the allies in battle, are to be brought to the United States and set to work. In this way the threatened labor shortage with its inevitable wage increase may be forestalled.

Incidentally, the increased cost of living alone, since 1912, would justify a wage increase of from 50 to 80 per cent. Quite as a matter of course, farmers who were glad to get a dollar for wheat a few years since are now indifferent to three dollars, while other business men have doubled, trebled or quadrupled their profits since the war begun. The huge fortunes that have been made in the handling of food, and the other necessities of life are "all in a day's work". They cause little comment and almost no excitement. It is taken for granted, in business circles, that profits should increase many fold in this crisis, but the possibility that the wage earners who received 30 cents an hour in 1912 are to get 60 cents in 1917 or that the five dollar a day minimum of 1914 will become a ten dollar a day minimum in 1918 is too terrifying to contemplate. "Such a situation contains alarming elements that cry aloud for redress" and they may be redressed in the future by the importation of involuntary (slave) labor from war-torn Europe.

The suggestion that European prisoners of war be imported to work for American employers is welcomed in many business circles. It is promising. Thus the danger (of high wages) may be met. Thus the plague (of wage increases all along the line) may be stayed, and the (business) interests of America may be protected and safeguarded against the menace of high wages.

SCOTT NEARING.

Toledo, Ohio.

## BOOKS

### LAND VALUE TAXATION.

*The Taxation of Land Value.* By Yetta Scheffel. Published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston. Price \$2.00.

To those students of economics who are possessed of a keen appetite for facts and statistics and a digestion capable of converting these into intellectual nourishment, this book will be welcome. Five chapters, each of considerable length, are packed with useful information as to the special aspects of the land and taxation problems as they present themselves under such widely different conditions as prevail in Australasia, Germany, Britain, Western Canada, and the United States. In each case an account is given of the progress that has been made up to date, in meeting the world-wide demand for some kind of interception in the interests of the community, of the constantly-increasing rental value that is created by pressure of population, and which still filters into the pockets of private owners. The present reviewer can testify from intimate personal knowledge as to the accuracy of the details given in respect of the progress of the movement in England and Scotland. It has generally been assumed that none but a Scotsman could grasp the infinite complexity of the land-tenure system in Scotland with its Feu-duties, ground-annuals, tithes and teinds, and antiquated land burdens; which resulted under the 1909 compulsory valuation, in the curious anomaly of a considerable "minus-value", in thousands of building sites. It is pleasantly surprising therefore to find an author whose name does not suggest a relationship with that country, whose understanding of its land system is substantially sound; and this gives sufficient guarantee that the information conveyed as to the other countries named, is equally reliable.

Some philosophic radicals, however, have an instinctive conviction, that if right theories can be laid hold of, statistical facts and difficulties may be left to look after themselves; and to these the book seems to offer some vulnerable points for criticism. In the first place it cannot be said that the author has succeeded in what the publisher's note on the wrapper announces as "the first attempt to differentiate between the tax on land-value and the Single Tax"; and for the very good reason that there is in reality no difference in principle. The moment we take land-value out of the category which contains all the forms of taxable wealth and earmark it for special taxation, we have asserted the underlying principle of the Singletax and will find ourselves without a logical halting-place short of concentrating all public burdens on the socially cre-

ated value of the land. The same argument that will justify a special and exclusive land-value tax, however small, will justify its yearly or quinquennial increase, and so ad-infinitum.

It is to be feared, that while recognizing the value of the book as a compendium of information, and while appreciating fully its literary quality, genuine Singletaxers will be compelled to affirm that the author does not fully understand the vital principle underlying the Singletax theory, and which alone can justify the singling out of land value for special taxation. On page 304 we read: "It is evident that the tax on land value belongs to the genus property-tax, and to the species real-property-tax." If that were so, where can justification be found for burdening this form of property and unburdening other forms? It is precisely because land value does *not* belong to the genus or species of property or real property, but stands at the head of a category named *Privilege*, that opinion in every country is converging on the belief that a tax on the privilege of rent-collecting is the natural source of public revenue. The Singletax means the taxation of privilege, and of nothing else. The taxation of land value means the first step in the taxation of privilege.

In referring to the two theories of taxation on which economists have differed, i. e., "benefit" and "ability", and the obvious fact that "a great deal of ingenuity must be employed to prove existent taxes in harmony with either", the author seems to miss the fact that the tax on land-value is the only one that harmonizes with both. The annual rental which, capitalized, constitutes the value of land, is contributed to by all the citizens exactly in proportion to the benefit each receives in social service; while the payments made by the landowners to the government will be proportional to the amount of their collections, i. e., to their ability to pay. (Under the full operation of the Singletax, the earnings of both owners and users of land, from services or interest on capital, will be left untouched with perfect impartiality). Some recognition of the fact that privilege carries with it a peculiar kind of "ability to pay" is discoverable in the sentence "the tax on land value is class legislation, an attempt of the dominant party to place an extra burden on landowners; the excuse of course being that this particular group or class fails to contribute to the public budget in proportion to its ability"; but the weakness in the book's chain of argument lies in the failure to take land-value out of the category of property and to classify rent-collecting under the heading of privilege.

Some exceedingly interesting discussion is to be found on pp. 305, 306 as to the comparative suitability of a land-value tax for local and national revenue respectively, though it is not made quite clear why site values should not be made a basis for both, remembering as we must do, that the activities of a national government create land value just as the services of local authorities do. A few valuable suggestions are also given on the important question of the comparative preferabilities of a tax on gross rental and ad valorem tax on land, and these, too, are worthy of careful consideration. Two chapters are devoted to the tax "in its fiscal aspect", and "as

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a social reform" but in neither do we find anything more than the time-worn antitheses of expediency and justice, which most of us now believe is a false opposition, nothing being in the long run expedient that is not just, and nothing that is just being impracticable or inexpedient.

A tired reader may perhaps be pardoned the wish that writers on economics would condense, boil down, or otherwise shorten the lessons they wish to convey—so much there is to read; so short a time to do it in! With the qualification herein suggested, we commend "The Taxation of Land Value" to the attention of all earnest students.

ALEX MACKENDRICK.

\* \* \*

Popular Government for May, published by the National Popular Government League, whose headquarters are at Washington, D. C., is the first number of a periodical devoted to the cause of direct legislation and popular government. It is under the editorship of Judson King, with Paul E. Switzer, associate editor. The present number contains articles by Senator Robert L. Owen, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, Congressman C. C. Dill, Charles Edward Russell, Ray McKaig, Judge R. M. Wanamaker, and the editor.

\* \* \*

The land around these populous centres is rated not in regard to its prospective value, which, as you all know, is derived entirely from the proximity of places where enterprise and activity are—while the owners of the surrounding land were asleep in their beds—adding every day, every hour, to its value. . . . Large municipalities and small municipalities will not endure that their extension should be throttled and the condition of their growth checked by the assertion of privileges or, may be, of legal rights by owners of land hostile to the welfare of those who give to that land its real value. It is unendurable, that great increments, great additions, that have not been earned by those to whom they accrue, and have been formed by the industry of others, should be absorbed by people who have not contributed to that increase.—John Morley at Brechin, February, 1896.

\* \* \*

When I look into the question of the land tax from its origin to the present time, I am bound to exclaim that it exhibits an instance of selfish legislation secondary only in audacity to the corn law and provision monopolies. . . . Remember that the land-owners have never had their land revalued from 1696 to the present time, and are now paying upon a valuation made 145 years ago. . . . I exhort the middle classes to look to it. It is a war on the pockets that is being carried on; and I hope to see societies formed calling upon the legislature to re-value the land, and put a taxation upon it in proportion to the wants of the State.—Richard Cobden at Derby, December, 1841.

\* \* \*

A gloomy religion is far from God. A sad gospel is a contradiction in terms, like a black sun.—Henry Van Dyke.

A tortoise was a domestic pet in an English house. As his time for hibernating drew nigh, he selected a quiet corner in the dimly-lit coal-cellar, and composed himself to sleep. A new cook knew not tortoises. In a few months the tortoise woke up and sallied forth. Screams soon broke the kitchen's calm. On entering that department, the lady of the house found the cook gazing in awe-struck wonder, as she pointed to the tortoise: "My conscience! Look at the stone which I've broken the coal wi' a winter!"—*The Spectator*.

\* \* \*

Little sister and brother had quarreled. After supper mother tried to establish friendly relations again, and quoted to them the Bible injunction: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

Turning to Edward, the older, she said, "Now, Edward, are you going to let the sun go down upon your wrath?"

Edward squirmed a little as he looked up into her pleading face.

"Well, how can I stop it?" he asked.—*Harper's Magazine*.

\* \* \*

"Us fellers at Crimson Gulch decided," remarked Broncho Bob, "as how we're fer peace. The general sentiment was that we'd be more peaceful if we'd disarm."

"But you are carrying a gun."

"Yes. Everybody is waitin' fur everybody else to disarm first. I'm kind o' 'fraid this reluctance an' suspicion is goin' to start some hard feelin's."

"I say," remarked Jones, "how ever did you use such an enormous quantity of pears and peaches?"  
 "Well," replied Smith, "we eat what we can, and what we can't we can."  
 "Indeed!" said the other. "We do about the same in our business."  
 "How is that?"  
 "We sell an order when we can sell it, and when we can't sell it we cancel it."—*Sacred Heart Review.*

Passenger (after first night on board ship).—I say, where have all my clothes vanished to?  
 Steward.—Where did you put them before you got into bed last night?  
 Passenger.—I folded them up carefully and put them in that cupboard over there.  
 Steward.—I see no cupboard, sir.  
 Passenger.—Are you blind, man? I mean that one with the round glass door to it.  
 Steward.—Gracious me, that ain't no cupboard, that's the port-hole.—*Sacred Heart Review.*

"And now, Jimmy, why is it that lightning never strikes twice in the same place?"  
 "Because," said Jimmy, confidently, "after it hits once, the same place ain't there any more."—*Sacred Heart Review.*

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