

cerned, the Singletax proposal would not turn real estate investments away from Seattle; it would draw investments in real estate improvements to Seattle.



The investment tendency of the Singletax charter amendment, if adopted by the people of Seattle next March, would be to check speculative investments in vacant lots and to invite investments in buildings and other improvements. It would *discourage* the kind of investments in Seattle that would profit nobody but land speculators, that would employ nobody but land brokers, and that would have no public effect but to retard the city's growth; it would *encourage* the kind of investments that profit producers, that employ workers, and that promote the city's growth.



Let the "P.-I." analyze its ambiguous term "real estate" so as to be able to consider the two kinds of "real estate" separately—sites and improvements. Then let it consider the effect of the Singletax upon investments in so much of what that term expresses as is only *mother earth*, and distinctively upon so much as is *improvement*. If, having thoughtfully done that, the "P.-I." continues to think that the Singletax, which exempts improvements from all taxation and places taxes only upon mother earth *ad valorem*, would discourage desirable investments in Seattle, its explanation of why it thinks so would make one of the most illuminating and interesting editorials it has ever printed.



Congressman George's Land-speculation Bill.

A bill of national importance, though directly applicable only to the District of Columbia, which has been introduced in Congress by Henry George, Jr., the member from New York who, at the elections of 1910, turned a Republican constituency of 7,000 majority into a Democratic one of 2,000 majority, is now under consideration by the committee on the District of Columbia, of which Congressman George is a member. The importance and beneficial purpose of this measure has been explained in a statement by Mr. George which we quote from the Washington press. He says:

I have introduced a bill to check land speculation in the District of Columbia. The circumstances here are different from those existing in any other part of the country. The General Government pays one-half of the expenses of the District government. It has, moreover, erected the most magnificent government buildings here and has projected a group along the Mall that will, when completed, make the most

superb collection of marble structures ever erected outside of ancient Athens and imperial Rome. These facts have excited very active land speculation. Fortunes have been and are being made merely by buying and selling land in the District of Columbia. The taxation laws have long fostered this speculation. Personal property is assessed annually and at its full value; but land is assessed only every third year and then at two-thirds of its value. The tax rate is on its face but one per cent—one and one-half per cent on a two-thirds valuation. On the very valuable land in the heart of the city and on the large speculative areas where home-building booms are about to develop, the tax rate is much lower. This is not chargeable to the assessing authorities, but to the very bad system under which they have had to work. The miracle is that the assessment and taxation results in respect to land values in the District of Columbia are as good as they are under such a poor system. My bill provides for an annual assessment and the increase of the valuation of land to the full market value. The rate of valuation will be gradually increased and at the same time will entirely exempt all improvements. The bill is intended to encourage improvements and discourage land speculation. It will benefit home owners and cause the owners of valuable land to pay more revenue into the District treasury. I expect it to get the opposition of many of the land speculators in Washington; but, on the other hand, I believe it will get the hearty support in Congress of members who have awakened to the fact that a comparatively few men have been availing themselves of the assessment and taxation laws to exploit the District of Columbia and the treasury of the United States, for their own pockets.



In form the George bill is a revision and codification of the laws now in operation at the site of our national capital for the taxation of real estate. It provides for the assessment of all real estate in the District, except such as is specifically exempt, and upon a sliding scale annually, so that in 1917 and thereafter all the real estate taxation of the District will have been concentrated upon land values. For this purpose the bill is a model for use by State Legislatures and city councils where the policy proposed is not un-Constitutional. It provides that—

the true value of each separate lot or tract of land shall be determined, and the true value of the land shall be shown separately from the true value of the improvements.

This having been done, the scaling process begins in 1913 when—

the land shall be assessed eleven-fifteenths of its true value, and each year thereafter the assessment shall be increased progressively as follows: In the year 1914 the assessment shall be twelve-fifteenths; in the year 1915, thirteen-fifteenths; in the year 1916, fourteen-fifteenths; in the year 1917, and each year thereafter, fifteen-fifteenths, or the true value.

While this progressive increase in the assessment of land values from two-thirds value, as now, to full value, as proposed, is under way, a like progressive decrease will be under way in respect of improvements, thus:

In the year 1912 the improvements on land shall be assessed nine-fifteenths of true value, and each year thereafter the assessment shall be decreased progressively, as follows: In the year 1914 the assessment shall be eight-fifteenths; in the year 1915, seven-fifteenths; in the year 1916, six-fifteenths; in the year 1917 and each year thereafter, improvements shall not be assessed.



This bill runs little or no risk of defeat except from indifference or misunderstanding on the part of members of Congress. That, and that alone, will afford land speculators an opportunity to fool Congress into letting them hold fast to their "graft." They can be deprived of this "graft," and the public service be improved morally and administratively, by getting Congressmen to see the importance of the George taxation bill. We suggest, therefore, that every Congressman be asked for a copy of this bill by his constituents, and that these constituents, if they favor the bill after examining it, thereupon canvass their Congressional districts as fully as they can, to the end that their respective Congressmen may be urgently advised from home of the merits of the bill and its importance.



Is This a Big Business Pull?

To the Esch bill for putting a prohibitive tax upon the use of white phosphorus in the manufacture of matches,* queer things have happened. Every motive for obstructing the enactment of this necessary health law would appear to have been removed, but the law hangs fire. Foreign competition might have been urged, poor as that excuse would be, for ignoring the terrible "phossy-jaw" disease which the handling of white phosphorus causes; but the United States is the only important country in the world which has not taken steps to protect its people in that regard. Another basis for opposition to the law at first was the fact that the best and cheapest of the harmless substitutes for phosphorus in match-making was monopolized by the match trust through its patent on "sesqui-sulphide"; but the match trust placed that patent in trust a year ago upon terms designed and with trustees disposed to make its general substitution for phosphorus commercially desirable, and a little later the patent was sur-

rendered altogether. Yet the Esch bill hangs fire, phosphorus is still used in match manufacture, and the horrible "phossyjaw" disease continues to make victims of boys and girls and men and women—of living and breathing human creatures just like the wives and daughters and sons of members of Congress. Why? There seems now to be nothing political in a partisan sense about this secret pull. Last year it was a Republican Congress under the lead of Congressman Dalzell of Pittsburgh that stood for "phossyjaw"; this year the job has apparently been undertaken by a Democratic Congress. What is the meaning of it all? What interests are intervening? Where is the pull?



In Memory of "a Kindly Country Doctor."

In our news report of the opening of the Ohio Constitutional Convention* we quoted from the Cleveland Plain Dealer its account of a presentation of flowers to one of the delegates, Thomas Fitzsimons, by the Washington Reform Club of Cleveland, of which he was an original member. Cleveland progressives of nearly twenty years ago will recall the activities of that club with the keenest interest, and remember its founder with much the same affection and honor its surviving members have shown for Mr. Fitzsimons. Its founder died just at the time when Cleveland was passing out of its period of deadly inertia and indifference, which Tom L. Johnson regarded as a greater obstacle than opposition, to overcome in any fight in which fundamental moral issues are involved. Telling of this period Mayor Johnson says in "My Story"† that although the people of Cleveland "were quite contented to let a few agents of special privilege attend to the details of the city government," there were nevertheless "a few agitators who had raised the voice of protest upon occasion." He names Peter Witt, but "before Peter," he adds, was "Dr. Tuckerman, who was responsible for Peter;" and Dr. Tuckerman was the founder of that Washington Reform Club of twenty years ago whereof both Peter Witt, now city supervisor of the traction system, and Thomas Fitzsimons, now a delegate to the Constitutional convention of Ohio, were live-wire members. A splendid tribute to Dr. Tuckerman is this which Johnson pays to his memory in his own posthumous autobiography: "When Cleveland shall ultimately have become a free city, she will trace the beginnings of her struggle against Privilege back to the days when that

*Public of January 19, page 58.

†B. W. Huebsch, publisher, 225 Fifth Ave., New York.

*See vol. xiv, pages 83, 109, 207.