

prohibition question to the people for their decision. It was merely in the nature of a request to the people from the ministry for advice. Had the vote been large and the majority decisive, the ministry could have refused to pass a prohibition bill only at their political peril. They would have realized in those circumstances that refusal would have resulted in a change of government as soon as the people could get a chance at them. But with only a small majority for prohibition, in a small vote, the ministry may rest secure in ignoring the question. Prohibitionists themselves do not feel that the vote was decisive enough to be regarded as a mandate.

It must be plain that the Canadian plebiscite was very far from being an example of the initiative and referendum. Under the initiative and referendum an affirmative vote for prohibition, no matter how small the number voting nor how small the majority, would have been imperative. No discretion would have been left to the legislature. Everybody would have known that as the vote went so the law would be. And that is vital. People won't play at voting. It is only when they believe that their vote is either to effect or to prevent something in which they are interested, that they turn out in large numbers. Yet there are those who point to the small vote in the Canadian plebiscite as an indication that if the people had the initiative and referendum they would not use it. But let no one be deceived. The real though unexpressed objection to the initiative and referendum is not that the people wouldn't use it, but that they would.

In two states on the Pacific coast, political campaigns are now in progress, in which the burning issue is the single tax. They are California and Washington. In California, as we have heretofore explained, the personality of the democratic candidate for governor, Congressman James G. Maguire, precipitated the issue. Since he is one of Henry

George's followers, of international fame, the republican managers thought it would be a neat bit of political strategy to make the farmers fear that if he were elected all taxation would be concentrated upon farms. They accordingly denounced the single tax as a measure calculated to make farmers bear a larger share than ever of public burdens, and to exempt the rich man and the corporations of cities altogether. To say nothing of the absurdity of the anxiety the Pacific railroad ring—which is identical with the political ring of California—thus showed for the interests of farmers, this objection to the single tax was about the weakest, because the most easily controverted, of any that could possibly have been selected. But of that the members of the ring were ignorant; and they have not yet discovered it, or else they are being victimized by shrewd single tax men. For they are advertising Maguire far and wide through the state, as a man who would abolish all the taxes that farmers now pay, except a comparatively trifling one to be estimated in proportion to what their land would be worth if it were totally unimproved and unused. The ring try, of course, to make it appear that this would increase farm taxes; but the very quotations they publish so abundantly from Maguire's speeches, expose their error. That rampant republican paper, the San Francisco Chronicle, has become a veritable broadside of luminous single tax literature. Its extracts from Maguire and Henry George are excellent tracts. And Maguire himself, while he insists that the single tax is not in issue, since he as governor could not put it in operation, makes a point in all his speeches of explaining just what it is, and how it would affect farmers. Then the small republican papers of the state and the republican speakers who have not yet begun to "smell a mice," are making the single tax for the first time a subject of discussion and thought in thousands upon thousands of republican homes; while a host of democratic, populist

and silver republican papers, following Maguire's lead, have more or less willingly become exponents of the single tax reform. In that way the farmers of California are learning, as they could not learn so easily in any other way, that the single tax would reduce their taxes from something like 50 or 60 per cent. of total taxation, to about 10. This gives some idea of the splendid work of Maguire's campaign, for the disinherited and plundered, not only of California, but of the world. While we hope and believe that Maguire will be triumphantly elected, it were better that he should be defeated in such a campaign, than elected under circumstances that obscured his single tax principles. For having thus forced the single tax question to the front, something Maguire could not possibly have done himself, the republican managers of California have earned the gratitude of single taxers everywhere. Posterity, too, will remember them kindly for this, when all their other acts shall have been buried in oblivion.

In Washington, also, the single tax issue was forced by the republican machine, but not exactly in the same way as in California. The fusionists of Washington — democrats, populists and silver republicans — have made a demand in their joint platform for "the submission to the people of the state of Washington of a constitutional amendment that will permit exemptions from taxation of personal property, and of improvements in and upon land." Of course, this is not a demand for the single tax. It simply aims to enable the people themselves to decide the single tax question. Any genuine democrat would vote for such an amendment, even if he were opposed to the single tax; and so would any republican who does not blindly bow to the plutocratic domination under which his party has fallen, but truly believes in republican government. The republican managers of Washington, however, were not superior to temptation.

They saw that by pretending that this simple demand for a popular vote on the single tax is a demand for the single tax itself, they would make an opportunity to attack a reform which they took it for granted would be unpopular among farmers. So they plunged in as wildly as did their California confreres, and, whether or no, made single tax the issue of the campaign. Naturally enough, fusionists who have not accepted the single tax philosophy object to having this false issue thrust upon them. But the republicans are so plausible that the fusionists have been obliged, even while protesting, to defend the reform which their adversaries have assailed. So the single tax is being talked about and thought about all over the state of Washington. The papers on both sides are full of it and it holds the "stump." All political parties have turned in to help the single taxers make their reform familiar. This would be an opportune time to supply the single tax workers of Washington with wholesome literature.

The star objection of the republicans of Washington to the single tax appears to be the ancient "fake," which Thomas G. Shearman has so completely exposed, that all kinds of property ought to be taxed equally. It is part of the republican platform, which declares: "We are in favor of the equal taxation of all classes of property upon the basis of value." This proposition owes such effectiveness as it has, entirely to its air of fairness. There is no other merit in it. Efforts to tax all property equally have been made time and again, and they have always failed. More than one state in this union professes to tax all property equally, but not one state has ever actually experienced that kind of taxation. And no state ever will; for it is absolutely impossible to tax all property equally, or with any approximation to equality. A great deal of property is so easily hidden that it cannot be taxed at all without the owner's consent,

and as to a great deal more, its value is so uncertain that it can only be roughly guessed at. He who is richest in such property, escapes taxation in the highest degree. Consequently, the attempt to tax all kinds of property degenerates into a system under which the owners of property of simple value and not easily hidden, like farm property, and exceptionally honest people pay the bulk of the taxes.

Even the air of fairness about the proposition to tax all property equally, is deceptive. Most kinds of property would have no value at all, but for the labor of its maker. Without that, it would not so much as exist, and nothing can have value unless it exists. Of this kind of property are buildings and other landed improvements, crops and other personal property. To tax such property, therefore, is to tax labor. But some kinds of property have value not on account of the labor of the maker, nor of any individual whatever, but on account of general growth and improvement. Of this kind, for example, is land. Its value is caused by growth and good government. Therefore, to tax it is not to tax labor; it is to tax a privilege—for the man who gets value that is due to no individual's labor, but to a common growth, has a privilege. Inasmuch, then, as the taxation of all property equally would fall upon the profits of earning as heavily as upon the profits of privilege, it follows that such taxation, even if it could be enforced, would be unfair. A farm tenant, for illustration, would have to pay a higher rent for a farm near a city than for one far off. Suppose he paid half the crop. Neither he nor the owner of the farm, nor any other individual, would be the earner of that; it would represent the value of the privilege of working in an exceptionally good place—a privilege conferred by the community. But the tenant and his "hands" would earn the other half of the crop. Do you understand? They would earn it. Then if they and the landlord were taxed equally, their tax would in truth be

much more than the landlord's. For, whereas they would pay one tax to him—half the crop—for the privilege of working near the city instead of going beyond the frontier, and a percentage to the public on what remained, he would pay to the public nothing but a percentage on the location tax or ground rent he had exacted. This would be no tax at all, for he would not have earned it. In other words, when each had paid his so-called "equal" tax, the tenant (inclusive of the "hands") would have retained for himself less than he had earned during the year, but the landlord would have retained more than he had earned. To speak of such a system, except in the innocence of ignorance, as equal in the sense of being equitable, is to use honest language to conceal a dishonest purpose.

If the presidential committee charged with investigating and reporting upon the management of the war in certain respects, intended to notify the public that its function is to whitewash, it could hardly have invented a more effective method than its plan for probing newspaper men for information. It has sent letters to the editors of papers which editorially condemn the administration for bad management, asking them to tell the committee what they know—of their own knowledge. Of their own knowledge! No editor professes to know the facts he discusses—of his own knowledge; and no one understands that he knows them of his own knowledge. He takes his facts from the fact gatherers of his own paper and of papers in whose honesty he trusts. This is matter of common understanding. Then why does the presidential committee, in asking editors for information, limit the information to what the editors know of their own knowledge? Why does it not ask the editors it interrogates to furnish the facts in their possession with the names of witnesses who can prove them? Unless it shall do this, it can lay no claim to good faith; and its report, if friendly to the administra-