

move that burden. Dynasties, imperialism, aggressions for trade purposes may be desirable, but they cost more than they bring in. So we are going to disarm and inaugurate an era in which we shall remove burdens at home rather than seek new sources of income abroad."

If Germany issued such a statement doubtless it would be received with ridicule by the ruling classes of other countries; but the masses who bear the burdens, who pay the taxes and do the work, what of them?

I am sure they would rise to the occasion and demand from their government similar declarations of intentions. I am sure that no government could then endure which imposed such burdens upon its people.

And the people of Wisconsin would find their cost of living reduced by five per cent at once, and still further reduced by much more than that amount, when the energies which are now devoted to preparation for war, were devoted to the service of mankind in the production of wealth.

While this is purely a personal point of view, is it not well worthy of consideration? As a cold blooded business proposition are we not foolish when we fail to capitalize the universal selfish human sentiment which objects to having any part of its earnings taken away without compensation. As a Christian nation are we not remiss in our duty when we fail to express in our institutions the spirit of brotherly love?

G. A. BRIGGS.

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## NEWS NARRATIVE

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

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Week ending Tuesday, July 11, 1911.

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### State Insurance and Annuities.

By signing on the 6th a bill passed by the legislature of Wisconsin at its recent session, Governor McGovern has made that State the pioneer in State insurance against poverty from death and old age.

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Under this law, State life insurance policies will be issued and annuities granted to persons between the ages of 20 and 50 years. Life insurance policies are to be issued in amounts of \$500 or multiples thereof, but no persons may be insured for more than \$1,000 until the number of insured persons exceeds 1,000, or for more than \$2,000 until the number of insured persons exceed 3,000, and for not more than \$3,000 at any time. The annuities are to begin at the age of 60 years or more, and are not to exceed \$300 annually to any beneficiary. Life insurance and annuities may be combined and may be granted in the same policy.

### A Municipal Socialist's Inaugural Address.

Stitt Wilson, the Socialist who was elected Mayor of Berkeley, Cal., last spring and inaugurated July 1st, made a lengthy inaugural address, pursuant to the provision of the charter of Berkeley, which requires its Mayor to give the Council information annually and from time to time, relative to the affairs of the city. [See current volume, page 634.]

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Describing his address as "a tentative outline or plan of action," Mayor Wilson said:

There is but one problem right now before the American people—that is to deliver the real producers of wealth from the exploitation of the privileged interests and giant monopolies. The one supreme issue is: The People vs. the Plutocracy.

A small city like ours can do little to solve this great question. But we can at least face the forms of the issue that are at our own door and seek to put the people in possession of their own, and prevent further encroachment upon the earnings of the people by any form of natural or other monopoly.

The new members of the Council were elected to office upon a definite policy of constructive municipal socialism. Stated in the exact terms of our public utterances preceding election, that policy in general is, that the city administration should secure the necessities and advantages of the city life for the use and enjoyment of the humblest families at the lowest possible cost for the best services. And in order to secure these necessities and advantages at the minimum cost, we stood flat footed on the principle of municipal ownership of public utilities.

This principle is contained in one of the most fundamental provisions of our new charter. We are not obliged to resort to the legislature for permission to fulfill these needs of the people. That has been secured to us by the framers of this new instrument under which we are now working. The charter is not a socialist charter, but it is socialistic.

Therefore these three required conditions of progressive action agree: The charter makes adequate provision for municipal ownership; the people at both the primary and final elections have emphatically declared for that policy; and the men are today installed in office who are definitely pledged to inaugurate that policy as rapidly as the machinery of the law can effect it and the necessary referendums of the people shall permit. It now devolves upon us to proceed with all seriousness and energy with this new program. It is for us to actually accomplish all that can possibly be done in this direction during our short term of office and by our preparatory work to leave a heritage to our successors looking toward further application of the principle.

Then taking up seriatim and for constructive suggestion, measures for a municipal water supply, a municipal lighting plant, a municipal garbage plant, asphalt paving, public lavatories and city beautification, Mayor Wilson proceeded:

All of these considerations are no mere sentimentalities, but are the hardest sense for such a city as ours. It is for the Mayor and Commissioners to give

no mistaken lead on this matter, and let our citizens pull together for its actual fulfilment.

It has frequently been the history of civic bodies and improvement clubs that they only take action negatively, that is to say in objecting to steps proposed by the City Council. The brief outline of municipal policy herewith suggested if unanimously supported by the Council should afford to the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Trade and the several Improvement Clubs, definite objects for enthusiastic work in the years immediately before us.

It is time for Berkeley to move as never before. Rumors are heard to the effect that everything will be done in some quarters to hamper the new Socialist administration of Berkeley in order to fasten the eyes of critics on our failure. Gentlemen of the Council, we are here to work for Berkeley and her citizens. Whoever strikes at us, strikes at the City of Berkeley. We have no private or personal or partisan interests to conserve. But better things than these rumors might indicate are in store for us. We are expecting the heartiest co-operation of all the civic bodies and improvement clubs. . . .

Berkeley is pre-eminently a seat of culture and education. She is the Athens of the West. It is around the University of California that the city has been built. It is in relation to this noted seat of learning that we are so widely and favorably known throughout the State and the nation. The city cannot be indifferent to this supreme fact in the growth, development and significance of our civic affairs. Develop as we may, this is the genius of Berkeley.

The Socialists of Milwaukee, immediately upon their entrance upon the administration of that city, sought the co-operation of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, in order that the ablest scientific research and assistance might be secured in the various city departments. And a bureau was established for the purpose of affording scientific data to the city administration on various important civic questions.

President Wheeler of our State University was one of the first citizens of Berkeley to proffer assistance to the new administration, now installed in office. This is as it should be. . . .

If the city of Berkeley actually undertakes to do what ought to be done for herself, she must come out of her village state of mind. You can't run a progressive city on a village tax. There is an economy that is penny-wise and pound-foolish. There is an economy that is parsimony and a saving that actually impoverishes. . . .

In this connection we would be wise to make Berkeley the center of a movement for an amendment of the State Constitution providing for local option in taxation and the taxation of land values. By this method we shall not be forever confronted with pressing civic necessities and meager resources in the city treasuries. Thus justice and utility will be served. The principle of taxation of land values is far past the period of mere experiment, and it is our business as city officials not only to operate the machinery at hand but to work for such more perfect municipal machinery as the crying needs of the municipality demand.

The program herewith suggested for our action, I feel sure, will command the civic wisdom and civic pride of the Council and all Civic Voices, the press,

and all our citizens generally. It is not a big program, but it is enough for our immediate contemplation and aggressive constructive action.

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#### Improved Taxation in Pittsburg.

An explanation is given by Shelby M. Harrison in The Survey for July 1 of two improved tax laws for Pittsburg. One does away with a landlordistic system of tax classification and the other abolishes separate taxing districts for schools. Mr. Harrison's credit for the movement for doing away with the classification system goes to Mayor Magee, Thomas J. Hawkins and Thomas C. McMahon (president and secretary of the city assessors), to Allen T. Burns, James R. Park and, "in marked degree, W. D. George." Among the Pittsburg organizations in the fight to pass the school code which abolished the district system for school taxation he names the Pittsburg Teachers' Association, Pittsburg Principals' Association, Schoolmasters' Club of Western Pennsylvania and Federation of Women's Clubs. David B. Oliver and Thomas O'Shell, who spoke before the committee in favor of the code in behalf of the Junior O. A. M., are also mentioned.

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Under the classification system, Pittsburg, to quote Mr. Harrison, "has been divided into three parts. These divisions class all real estate into 'agricultural' property, paying one-half the tax rate prevailing in its ward; 'rural,' paying two-thirds; and 'full city' paying the full tax rate. . . . Whole districts, similarly located and otherwise much alike, were placed in different classes; and in the same way individual holdings, often in the same ward, were inequitably classified." This antiquated tax system, Mr. Harrison continues—made it easy for individuals and estates to hold great areas unimproved, because of favorable discriminations; but on the other hand, it has gone gunning for the person who bought and improved a small tract, and has leveled at him a double rate. The first has been rewarded by the city for doing nothing further than holding his land while the community's growth increased its value, but the second has been penalized for doing something which directly increased other land values as well as his own. Moreover, the definitions of "rural" and "full city" property laid down by the court reduced the tax by one-third on expensive homes surrounded by large lawns, shrubbery, trees, and flowers—property owned by precisely the people who are best able to support the government—while homes surrounded by a mere ribbon of grass, or none at all, and tenements that crowd block after block on both street and alley, have paid the highest rate. These disproportions have been further accentuated and complicated by the local practice of levying separate tax rates for each of sixty-three different tax districts within the city limits. Although the boundaries have been extended from time to time incorporating suburban properties as integral parts of