

The Single Tax Review

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Current Comment

NEW YORK CITY is in the throes of an anti rent-profiteering movement. High rents are being denounced—in much the same way as Canute defied the incoming tide. Many people are in actual distress. The number of evictions increase day by day. There is a real, not merely an artificial, scarcity of apartments. There is an artificial, not a real scarcity of land.

WHILE the Realty interests are complaining that real estate is overburdened, business and commerce on their part complain through their representatives that they are being forced to bear a disproportionate share of taxation, while real estate escapes its just share. Mr. E. F. Cole, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trade and Transportation of this city, condemns in the following language the bills introduced at Albany in the interests of the landlords:

"The underlying policy recommended in these bills is that the State's demand for increased revenue shall be paid by the business interests of the State and the owners of the real estate are to be relieved. We have expressed our views regarding the dangers which would attend that course."

IN THE controversy that has arisen Mayor Hylan has evidently seen a great light. He vetoed the Boylan Bill which limited the tax rate on New York real estate to 2.25 per cent. He accompanied his veto with this strong condemnation of the measure: "Such a law would give the landsharks a great opportunity to fleece the honest investor in real estate." The mayor apparently sees, even if vaguely, that the effect would be to raise land values, since what is saved in the tax rate is capitalized in the selling price.

THE land speculators of New York who call themselves the New York Real Estate Board are keenly disappointed at the mayor's veto. They attribute it to the secret opposition of the owners of vast personal property, and say of this class: "They labor quietly but effectually, and for years have blocked the efforts of 250,000 home owners of Greater New York to make them pay their share of the cost of government."

IT MAY be of interest to indicate these 250,000 home owners of New York, who are distributed as follows:

One family houses	164,000
Two family houses	85,000
Tenements (no elevators)	108,000
Hotels (and elevator apartments)	2,982

These figures instead of representing home owners are merely buildings used for homes. A large number of the

buildings classified as tenements are not in the hands of owners at all, but of lessees who are free to exploit the tenants.

IN ONE instance the tenants went on strike. In another a widow, with a soldier son fighting in France for the country for which his mother pays rent to the owners, brought her case into court, but the legality was clearly with the men who own New York, so Judge Lazansky generously gave his personal cheque to the widow to assist her in procuring new apartments. There are several considerations suggested by these incidents. One is that the proper place to strike is at the ballot box; the other is that the generous-minded judge has owing to him eighty dollars, not from the widow, but from the men who made the land laws of New York.

IN THE habit of stressing the non-essentials and omitting the essentials, the *Call*, socialist organ of this city, runs a close second to the so-called "capitalistic" press. In its issue of April 30 the *Call* says: There have been three great war breeders. They are secret diplomacy, the capitalist struggle for foreign markets, and the private manufacture of munitions of war." That the chief incentive to war is the desire of nations and individuals to the territory of their neighbors, and that therefore the private ownership of land is the chief cause of war, does not seem to have filtered down to the socialist's conception. From the land hunger of the nations and the powers that land ownership confers, are derived all the secondary causes named as the three war breeders, secret diplomacy, the capitalist struggle for foreign markets, and the private manufacture of war munitions.

THE *Portland Telegram* is worried about the new Single Tax amendment that will shortly come before the voters of Oregon. It settles itself resignedly, however, to the task of defeating it, and urges its readers not to become irritated. The measure will come up year after year, the *Telegram* reminds us, and says, "After all, it is not much trouble to go to the polls and mark a ballot."

WE ARE overjoyed to witness this spirit of Christian resignation on the part of the *Telegram*. The habit of voting against the Single Tax is not, like so many bad habits, incurable, and may be outgrown in time. The *Telegram* faces the inevitable in a true American spirit. It does not urge that the measure be inhibited in the constitution, like it is in Ohio. It is content that the question of its acceptance be tried out by vote. Single Taxers ought not to be less American. They, too, should urge that it be tried out by vote.

THE inhabitants of Porto Rico are agitated, according to Senator Iglesias, over "an economic financial organization imposed by an illegal system of land ownership and by absent resident corporations and individuals combined." Porto Rico is suffering from a more efficient civilization. Under Spanish rule, which suppressed political agitations as they arose, Spain's lack of energy gave to Porto Rico the enjoyment of comparative immunity from the keener economic pressure exerted by people more genuinely alive to the possibilities of exploitation. The people of the island now enjoy greater political freedom, but they are paying dearly for it. Perhaps they would prefer the more leisurely and tolerant economic rule of Spain.

WE READ that the Danish cabinet has embarked upon a drastic reform of the land laws. A bill presented to the Riksdag provides that tenants-for-life of entailed estates can acquire these estates in fee, being free to do with them as they like on condition that they pay 20 to 25 per cent. of the value to the State. With the money received a fund will be set aside for the creation of small farms.

THE new Czecho-Slovakia government has also taken over 3,250,000 acres of cultivated land and 7,500,000 acres of woodland. It is estimated that the land thus at the disposal of the State will furnish opportunities for employment for 430,000 families. Many of the countries of the world are recognizing the importance of the land question and are taking drastic means to solve it. In the United States alone there seems to be no land question. And this is the country where Henry George was born and wrote his immortal book to prove that the land question was the fundamental question.

MAYOR Baker, of Portland, Oregon, who being present at the meeting of Mayors and Governors in Washington, voted for the Creamer Resolution recommending to the governors of States the taxation of idle lands and other natural resources, now asserts that it was in no sense a Single Tax resolution. The *Portland News* prints the account of the meeting from the SINGLE TAX REVIEW and wants to know who is right.

PERHAPS it will be best to let Mr. Baker speak for himself. He is quoted as saying: "I am not for the Single Tax on idle land, and the resolution drafted by Mayor Creamer was in no sense a Single Tax project. It applies to holders of coal lands, water-power, and other natural resources, and not to land. The object was to discourage speculation in natural resources, as this contributes to the unemployment problem." Mayor Baker's discovery that natural resources are not land reminds us irresistibly of the little girl who was surprised to learn that the back yard of her father's house was the surface of the earth.

The Coming Convention

ON Saturday, June 28, there will be held in the City of New York the first annual convention to perfect the organization of a national Single Tax Party.

This marks the beginning of a new era in the movement. Whatever the outcome, those who have put their hand to the wheel will not relax. The issue of the Single Tax will be definitely launched on the political seas. For good or ill, the die is cast.

Accomplished facts are not matters for argument. The time has gone by when the proposal to commit the great issue of industrial emancipation to the higher court by whose jurisdiction alone can be determined the validity and permanence of its enactment into legislation is a matter to be argued about. Time is wasted now in meeting the reasons, however plausibly urged, that would turn from their purpose the earnest minded men and women who, taking counsel of their faith in the one fundamental remedy for the ills of a suffering humanity, will go as Luther went from the ecclesiastical body that had summoned him: "God help us; we can do naught else."

With malice toward none, and with charity to all those who will differ with us a little while, the new movement has now begun.

The Government's Theory and Practice of Revolution

REVOLUTIONS come from great landholdings," says our egregious Secretary of the Interior; and again we must ask: Does he really mean it? To judge by his land-settlement proposal, he sees red revolution in the prospect of our soldiers acquiring any large holdings. After dispersing them along our barren economic frontiers, he proposes settling them on small patches of reclaimed land, shrewdly providing:

"The acreage should be limited to that which will be sufficient to reasonably support a family. . . . These farms should not only be so small that they would not be speculative ventures in unearned increment, but they should be non-transferable to anyone holding any equally large tract of land in the same State. This will prevent their being aggregated in the course of years into great estates. . . . Enough land for a family, but not enough to make a new draft on the labor supply." His measure of what will suffice to support a family may be gathered from the following statement:

"In almost every southern State, instances can be cited where white men, under the wise direction of the Department of Agriculture, support their families and make an excellent living upon small farms of from 10 to 30 acres."

Mr. Lane's solicitude about the labor market suffering from a draft to the farm would seem to indicate no desire to mitigate the severity of that competition which makes of labor the helpless, servile tool of capital, and the master