

Washington Landlords

THE landlords of the city of Washington are gathering in the golden harvest. The chance of a lifetime is upon them. Apartments which in New York City would be rented for \$50 per month are held for \$150 in Washington. But the rent hounds in Washington have gone a little too far. Gen. Black, chief of engineers in the United States Army, went abroad with Secretary Baker. After he had left, his family were notified that their rent would be hereafter \$250 per month, instead of \$100. Congress has rebelled, and the chairman of the District of Columbia committee in the House of Representatives has introduced a resolution authorizing the President to commandeer the property.

A peculiar circumstance aggravates the disgust which we would in any case feel towards these rent profiteers. In Washington half the expenses of beautifying the city, of building the streets, sidewalks, sewer, parks—half the expense of giving value to private property has been borne by the national government. The local expenses of the District of Columbia have been equally divided between the federal government and the local population. The District of Columbia property owners bit the hand that fed them when they took advantage of the government's need in order to rob its employees.

The legislators at Washington will have an interesting opportunity to learn what the Single Taxers mean in their demand that the government and not the private property owners shall appropriate the unearned increment on land. When population grows, land becomes more valuable and its rentals increase. To whom does the increment in value belong? Shall it go to the landlord in rent, or shall it be taken by the public which created it?

The question has been put up to Congress in concrete form.—New York *Evening Mail*.

Mississippi

HON. N. M. Everett, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the Mississippi legislature, has introduced a bill to bring about a just distribution of wealth. It provides as follows:

Section 1. Be it enacted by the legislature of the State of Mississippi, that all forms of property which shall have been produced by the labor of human beings, shall be exempt from taxation in this State, and that all public revenues except poll taxes, State, county, municipal and district, shall be raised by the taxation of land value, exclusive of any improvements, made by labor, in or on the land.

Section 2. That the board of State tax commissioners is hereby authorized and empowered, and it is hereby made a part of the board's duty, to levy, annually, upon the assessed land values of this State, for State revenues, a tax the rate of which to be fixed by said board, will, as nearly as practicable, be uniform throughout the State, when added to any county, municipal or district tax, absorb the entire rental value, for the year such tax may be levied, of all lands, subject to taxation, exclusive and irrespective of any improvements, the work of man, thereon.

Michigan

THOSE only who have engaged in an educational campaign such as is now being pushed in Michigan for site value taxation, can realize the many obstacles to be surmounted in the endeavor to reach the public. The constitution of Michigan allows this instrument to be amended by initiative from the voters themselves. Whenever a number equaling one-tenth of those who voted for Secretary of State at the last general election want an amendment submitted to the electorate, it can be done independent of the legislature by petitioning the Secretary of State to submit the proposition to the voters at a general election.

The site value taxers of Michigan are endeavoring to obtain the signatures of 65,152 voters to its petition, so amending the constitution of the State that hereafter each property holder will have entirely exempted from taxation a thousand dollars' worth of personal property and a thousand dollars' worth of improvements "in and upon land," and also exempting from taxation 50 per cent. of the rest of the taxpayers' personal property and improvements.

Although the Single Tax has been before the public for nearly 40 years, it is yet the judgment of solicitors that of those approached for signatures, eight out of ten are ignorant of what Single Tax and Site Value are. Most workingmen are indifferent; the majority of farmers are suspicious. Land speculators are sufficiently "class conscious" to distinctly disapprove of any encroachment on their exploitation. And "vested interests," as represented in a recent convention of a State tax association, condemn the site value tax idea.

But notwithstanding ignorance, indifference and more or less concealed and open opposition, the Michigan campaign for signatures is making satisfactory progress. As high as 1,000 signatures have been received by the secretary in one day, and most of them from Detroit, the solicitors working there promising 25,000 by the middle of June.

As showing the cosmopolitan character of this campaign, there came to the secretary, recently, within a few hours of each other, four petitions. One was headed by the president of a great national bank, and following his own signature there were appended the signatures of most of the bank's officials. The second contained an even 50 signatures, collected at a Gleaner celebration. The third was filled with the names of moulders, union and non-union, working in an "open" shop. And the fourth's signatures were obtained along a Detroit thoroughfare in a small-merchant district.

A goodly number of Union leaders, Grange and Gleaner officials and old-time Single Taxers are circulating petitions, and the secretary is continually searching for those who can be induced to take an interest in the movement. Hundreds of villages and hamlets where there has heretofore been complete ignorance of the effect of taxation on wealth producers have been reached with literature until now there is not a county in which petitions are not being circulated.

In order to give those who are circulating petitions a

more personal interest in the result, a book "really worth reading" is promised to each one sending in a petition containing signatures, no matter how few. And those who send in 250 signatures are presented with a complete set of Henry George's works. The books given are "The Problem of the Unemployed," "The Life of Joseph Fels," "Progress and Poverty," "The Life of Henry George," and Lee Francis Lybarger's "The Tariff: What it Is; How it Works; Whom it Benefits." As seen, this fulfills the promise of a book "really worth reading." It is simply a continuation of the campaign of education.

The Michigan Site Value Tax League has until the first of July to obtain signatures, if the amendment is to be voted on in November. Whether it will succeed in obtaining 65,152 signatures by that date, no one at this time knows.

Single Tax in California

THERE is but one Single Tax measure before the people of California for adoption as a constitutional amendment at the next general election. It is as follows:

"THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

A new section to be known as Section 15 is hereby added to Article XIII of the Constitution, to read as follows:

On and after January 1, 1919, all public revenues, State, county, municipal and district, shall be raised by taxation of the value of land irrespective of improvements thereon; provided, that war veteran, college and church exemptions in Sections 1¼, 1½ and 1a, Article XIII of the Constitution, are not affected hereby.

The intent of this Single Tax amendment is to prevent the holding of land out of use for speculation and to apply the land values which the community creates to community purposes.

All constitutional provisions and laws in conflict herewith are hereby repealed."

This is the nearest approach to an out and out Single Tax bill ever proposed for adoption anywhere in the United States, so far as I know. It was drawn by me shortly after the last general election, at which the Single Tax measure, known as No. 5, received more than 260,000 votes, at the request of that group of Single Taxers in California known as the Great Adventure group. A short time ago the Equity Single Tax League, with whose bill the readers of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW are familiar, withdrew from the field, and announced that they would make no attempt to place the Equity Tax League bill or any other upon the ballot for the coming general election. While the two bills were in the field the Los Angeles Single Tax League favored the Equity Tax League bill. At a recent meeting of the Los Angeles Single Tax League, a committee, consisting of five lawyers, was appointed to examine the above bill and report as to its form and feasibility. This committee consisted of R. L. Hubbard, Walter Gould Lincoln, R. J. Miller, S. G. Pandit and the writer. The committee unanimously reported that the foregoing bill is altogether unobjectionable as to form from a legal point of view. It is self-executing if such a bill

can be made self-executing. I am for this bill because it will change the land system of California and practically make use the only title to land. It will protect the farmer and home owner by greatly reducing their tax burdens, prevent the land trusts from holding up the public by monopoly prices, and make it highly unprofitable to hold out of use valuable lots in populous centers and large tracts elsewhere.

The Equity Tax League bill was supported by many Single Taxers in California as against the bill now before the people for the reason that all the expenses of the State government are derived from corporation taxation under a constitutional amendment adopted only a few years ago with a great blare of trumpets that the corporations were to be made to pay the expenses of the State government. We all realize now that the public utility corporations pay no taxes at all. They simply pass the burden on to the public and the public all these years have been paying the expenses of the State government. This, of course, was a part of the game, which the people were slow to see, by which the capitalists have been able to keep their valuable land holdings free from taxation. The proposed bill will throw this burden now borne by the people squarely upon the land, as well as other tax burdens now directly or indirectly discharged by the people. The land holdings of public service corporations in private control will be assessed under the proposed bill just as the land holdings of any other individual are, and while it is true this taxation must ultimately be borne by the consumer, the amount will be inconsiderable compared with the amount now paid by public utility corporations in taxation in the first instance and passed on to the consumer.

Otherwise the foregoing bill in its operation will impose the burden of all taxation in this State upon the wealthy land owner in populous centers as well as the owners of more than twenty millions of acres now held out of use in this State for speculative purposes and now bearing a modicum of the burdens of taxation.

There is no opposition to the foregoing bill in the State of California except by a few who oppose the bill for no better reason than that it originated with the Great Adventure group.

J. H. RYCKMAN*

*Judge Ryckman, of Los Angeles, California, is one of those who opposed the Great Adventure amendment until the Equity measure was formally withdrawn.—EDITOR SINGLE TAX REVIEW.

UNDER a "scare" head the New York *World* of March 17 warns the real estate interests that Big Business is in the Single Tax fold, and tells of the work of the New Jersey Merchants and Manufacturers Taxation League with headquarters in Newark. Mr. L. D. Woodworth is quoted as saying; "It is part of the Single Tax propaganda to confiscate all private property in land. Public officers and realty interests must awake to the peril of it." Mr. Woodworth evidently doesn't care what he says. The realty interests are startled by the presence among the Merchants and Manufacturers Association of influential manufacturers and business men, chief among whom is Charles H. Ingersoll.