

## Overcoming the Inertia of Indifference.

SOME time ago there appeared in the *Gulf Coast Lumberman*, a lumber trade journal, an article by David Woodhead, a retail lumberman of Los Angeles, concerning the high cost of homes in that city.

"Our newspapers are to blame for the opinion that labor and material men are responsible for the high cost of building," says Mr. Woodhead.

"No newspaper can pay its way without advertising. All depend on the big advertisers for their main revenue. We should not therefore, expect them to commit suicide by printing news distasteful to, or against the financial interests of their largest advertisers.

"Real estate men are by long odds the biggest advertisers. No newspaper, therefore, no matter how much it might be convinced that land speculation will lead to stoppage of our growth and interruption of our building campaign, can afford forcefully to present this fact to its readers in its true light.

"Artisans working for wages do not advertise. Building material merchants advertise very little in comparison with these real estate men. This must be the main reason, if not the only one, why newspapers in editorials and news paragraphs as well as in cartoons, lose no opportunity to hold up to the public scorn and condemnation any rise in the cost of labor or building material\*\*\*\*. Yet they fail to mention by a single word the greatest of all increases in the cost of homes and factories and stores caused by the rapidly increasing cost of land\*\*\*\*.

"Three years ago a lot such as he (a workingman) would require in the South End of the town, could be bought for \$500\*\*\*\*. Today we must pay not less than \$1,500 for the same lot, in fact \$2,000 would be more nearly correct. The same home, therefore, assuming the cost of the building to be the same as it was three years ago would be \$4,000 instead of \$3,000.

"Do you realize that if it were not for the lot profiteer, that if lots could be secured at the same prices as three years ago, all the workmen could be paid twice the wages they were paid which would add \$600 to the labor bill, and 20% additional profit could be paid to the building material men and the owner would still have \$20 left from a completed home that would have cost no more than he must pay because of the lot profiteer.

"Mind you, I am not advocating higher wages or higher profits—building costs are high enough and too high; I am only pointing out where the chief increase in cost lies. I would also call attention to this fact: labor produces buildings, material men produce materials from which buildings are made; WHAT DOES THE LOT SPECULATOR PRODUCE?

"\*\*\*\* If we had the good sense to realize that the heavy burden of taxation that now falls on industry, and that

ultimately adds to the price to be paid by the consumer, were transferred to the lot speculator by increasing the tax on the value of his lot, it would not be so easy for him to pyramid prices so out of proportion to the real value."

Of course, the foregoing is "old stuff" to Single Taxers. It is quoted here to show that here and there the doctrines of Henry George are receiving serious thought and some much needed publicity. If our opponents make use of advertising and publicity, we can also.

Advertising is generally thought of as a profession or an art, but it is more than these. It is a force, a form of abstract energy, which, like other forms of energy, water, heat, electricity, can be made to accomplish much good or can be misused. Mr. Woodhead has mentioned one instance of the evil effects of advertising. It is regrettable yet true that no other medium has been used so effectively as a club over the heads of newspapers and magazines to compel silence on certain subjects prejudicial to the interests of the advertisers.

This adverse advertising is, however, only one of the obstacles, the overcoming of which is a part of the great game in which Single Taxers are engaged. There is another obstacle perhaps even more formidable and that is public indifference.

It is not a hard matter to find things that are wrong in the nation today, but certainly there are few conditions possessing greater potentiality for harm than this indifference on the part of the nation's citizens. It permits dishonest, incompetent men to be elected to and to remain in responsible public positions; it permits crime to go unpunished; it allows women and children to be condemned to incessant, back-breaking toil and life long poverty because of a faulty economic system. It is this same spirit of indifference that has made the progress of Single Tax so exceedingly slow.

It has been said before in these columns that reforms can not be put over until the people are ready to be reformed. It is nevertheless true that it is possible to educate people to want certain reforms. And this is the work of the Commonwealth Land Party; to try to educate the people to want a safe, sane, sensible method of taxation.

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FRANK G. CARPENTER, the world renowned correspondent, says of the phenomenal growth of the Jugoslavian capital: "Private building of all kinds is being helped by the government. There are no rent restrictions, and all kinds of building materials come in free of taxes. The homes for workers and middle-class people put up within the next two years are to pay no taxes for twenty-five years. Dwelling houses regardless of size are to be exempt from taxation for eighteen years, and apartments and stores combined for fifteen years."