

*Evening Post* for May 15, Governor Stassen deplors the capital gains tax, much of which absorbs economic rent, and pleads for an overall consumer tax to finance postwar public works.

There is the experience of a neighboring state, South Dakota. In the Black Hills, are the richest gold mines in the world. William Randolph Hearst, the main stockholder, has worked through his political stooges a technique preventing any tax on land values in that state. These politicians concentrated on the Senate, holding control over a majority of its members, so that no such legislation could get through. Not a state in the whole area was so hard hit during the depression. Here was a natural resource being removed from the state, and making millions of dollars for Hearst and his associates, yet yielding practically nothing for the social needs of that state. The situation became so flagrant that finally the Hearst wire-pullers permitted a small severance tax to go through to quiet the protests.

Farmers and workers must cooperate to see that land values are assessed to drain off excess profits of the monopoly corporations capitalizing on the war. Farmers have no reason to fear such a land tax, for it is based not on area, but on intrinsic worth. Farm im-

provements are generally worth more than their land, and like urban labor, farmers would be relieved of taxes on production, which now take such a toll on their skill and labor.

We are going to win the war, but as things are going today we may very likely lose the peace. The policy of our State Department in North Africa in setting up men like Peyrouton and Nogues in places of power, the building up of Franco of Spain, Otto of Austria, the House of Savoy in Italy, Bruening of Germany, all as a clerico-fascist *cordon sanitaire* to hem in Russia, and the unwillingness to be courageous in meeting the refugee problem, all means that we can win the war and yet lose all that we are fighting for.

The 1944 election is going to tell the story as to whether the victory in war will mean a victory in peace. If the obstructionists and isolationist-imperialists win that election, we shall have a repetition of 1920.

Whenever and wherever farmers and workers cooperate they build progress. This has been true in the influence they have exerted in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and in the part that they have played in the United Nations. The future for a progressive, democratic America depends on their working together here.

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# The People's Lobby

By Colston Warne

IT may come as a surprise to many Americans to learn that there is a People's Lobby in Washington operated on a modest budget, but possessed of a vigor which resulted from the effective work of its founder and Executive Secretary, Benjamin C. Marsh. For more than twenty years Congressional hearings have witnessed a tall, lank, vigorous figure stepping to the fore to present the case of the people. Congressmen early recognized Ben Marsh as a master in the give and take of debate. They have learned to respect his integrity and judgment.

The People's Lobby has never been a mass organization. It has been supported on about \$8,000 a year, a sum which has sufficed to publish a monthly bulletin, at least one sizable pamphlet every year, and to pour forth a stream of nearly 200,000 circulars a year. In its headquarters at 1410 H Street, N.W., are memoranda on finance, clippings from papers, summaries of releases, piled high along the walls, but its most valuable asset is the knowledge by its Executive Secretary of all of the scamps and all the angels in Washington, and his capacity to make life increasingly unpleasant for the scamps.

The organization was founded in 1920 as "The People's Reconstruction League." Its birth was the outgrowth of alarm on the part of farmer and labor groups over the election of President Warren G. Hard-

ing of "normalcy" fame. Its chief supporters were then the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Firemen and Enginemen, the International Association of Machinists, the International Electrical Workers, and the Brotherhood of Railway Conductors. A Republican State Senator from Michigan headed the League, whose program centered on progressive taxation and food control.

In the early twenties the People's Reconstruction League led the campaign which resulted in the Packer and Stockyards Act of 1920, an act which sought to correct the abuses made public by the Federal Trade Commission. Opposition was also voiced to the imperialist designs of the United States in Latin America.

During the middle twenties the organization's name was changed to "The People's Lobby," and in 1928, John Dewey, Columbia educator and philosopher, was elected its President, a position which he retained until 1936. When Mr. Dewey took over the Presidency, some of the more conservative members objected to the new name. Labor had in this period become highly conservative. A number of unions had entered banking, and a spirit of labor capitalism dwarfed the demand for reform. By 1929, the major labor organizations had deserted the Lobby.

The conservative trend in labor did not, however, alter the Lobby's program, and individual support was

secured from a widely scattered group of key people in communities scattered across the nation, including many labor leaders. Through the frequent trips of its Executive Secretary, the Lobby continued to have the confidence of farm and labor groups, which could see beyond the "new era" politics of the twenties. This support was even more pronounced during the long depression of the thirties.

The strength of the Lobby as an organization has been due in substantial measure to its method of its operation. The members are informally polled to determine the issues which should be stressed during the ensuing year. Its annual meeting is a democratic forum of opinion. As an organization, it has consistently sought to secure the acceptance of its ideas by other groups, and it has frequently worked in close cooperation with such groups on particular measures. It has featured luncheons and radio broadcasts to stress its ideas. In newspaper publicity it has not been a modest violet. Membership in the Lobby ranges from a minimum cost of \$1 a year to a maximum set by one's pocketbook (and by the tax structure).

In 1942, the Lobby had 2,200 members scattered over 34 states, besides several hundred subscribers to its *Monthly Bulletin*. About one-fourth of the members are from Pacific Coast states. Each member, irrespective of his dues, receives the eight-page factual *Monthly Bulletin* of the Lobby, together with such pamphlets as may be published during the year, and such *Congressional Record* reprints as may be sent out.

#### WASHINGTON-PROFITEERS OF WAR

Following is part of a release sent out confirming People's Lobby verdict on war-time Washington:

William Allen White, publisher of the Emporia (Kansas) *Gazette*, after his visit to Washington in February, wrote about what he learned here:

"It is silly to say New Dealers run this war show, it's run largely by absentee owners of amalgamated industrial wealth, men who either directly or through their employers control small minority blocks, closely organized, that manipulate the physical plants of these trusts. Also, for the most part, these managerial magnates whom one meets in Washington are decent Americans. For the most part they are giving to the American people superb service. They have great talents. If you touch them in nine relations of life out of ten, they are kindly, courteous, Christian gentlemen.

"But in the tenth relation, where it touches their own organization, they are stark mad, ruthless, unchecked by God or man, paranoiacs, in fact, as evil in their designs as Hitler.

"THEY ARE DETERMINED TO COME OUT OF THIS WAR VICTORS FOR THEIR OWN STOCKHOLDERS. . . . This attitude of the men who control the great commodity industries and who propose to run them according to their own judgment

and their own morals, does not make a pretty picture for the welfare of the common man."

Membership in the Lobby has come to mean that a person secures a first-hand knowledge of the crucial issues that are in the forefront at Washington. As the Lobby now nears the end of its first quarter century, its membership is sharply advancing; it increased 40% during the past year. Those who join the Lobby must expect no blind allegiance to any political group or ideology. The Lobby has, of course, not considered all New Deal measures to be worthwhile. Its approach has been that of stressing particular legislative issues, and of seeking to have a firm factual basis for its stand. "We get the facts and give them" is its slogan.

#### ADVOCATES TAXES ON LAND VALUE

The People's Lobby has consistently advocated taxation of land values as part of a well rounded and fair system of taxation. The Lobby has also consistently opposed consumption taxes, such as sales taxes, and similar methods of taxing in proportion to inability to resist, instead of ability to pay and benefit conferred by Government.

The Lobby has urged a Federal excise tax on the privilege of holding land, but believes that little city and farm home owners should have an exemption. This is the principle of the measure devised by Judge Jackson H. Ralston, which unfortunately has not had either fair hearing or consideration by Congress.

The Lobby has secured considerable support from major farm, labor, church, civic, peace and women's organizations on particular issues. Unfortunately, to date, not one of these organizations has backed the full program.

In an effort to popularize the issues backed by the Lobby, a series of five or six luncheons are held annually in Washington, dealing with various phases of its program, and talks are frequently broadcast nationally. News letters are also sent out to several hundred farm, labor, church, and socio-economic publications. Twice within the past few months the Lobby has participated in the debates organized by the American Economic Foundation, which are sent in mat form to papers with over seven million circulation.

Looking ahead, it appears that the job which will confront the Lobby will greatly increase with the years. The financial instability, which appears inevitable as the result of the unsound tax measures adopted by Congress, will aggravate the inequalities in wealth and income distribution. The problem of having the control of America split between huge business combines and Washington, is not on the way to a solution. Moreover, only a utopian would believe that the tariff proponents and the colonial imperialists have been silenced.

There is a job ahead in education and in persuasion. With Washington abounding in lobbies dedicated to the interest of selfish and predatory groups, there should be an increasingly vigorous *People's Lobby* to fight for a better world.