

PRESS OPINIONS

Singletax in Canada.

* Reprint from St. John Standard in Berwick (Nova Scotia) Register, Feb. 15.—Whatever may be the merits or demerits of the Singletax in its local application, and we are likely to hear a good deal on this subject before we are much older, there can be no question that in the comparatively new communities of the west the operation of the tax is having an effect in compelling owners of vacant land either to sell or put it to use.



Singletax in the District of Columbia.

The Johnstown (Pa.) Daily Democrat (dem. Dem.), Feb. 19.—Congressman Henry George, Jr., has introduced a bill "to provide for a complete method for the annual assessment and taxation of real property in the District of Columbia." It provides for the gradual introduction of the Singletax. Mr. George's measure will, if passed, make the holding of land in Washington out of use a more expensive luxury. Improving of land will not be punished as now by a fine in the shape of increased taxes. The holders of vacant lots will find it to their interest either to improve these lots themselves, or let others do so. Consequently, there will be more houses, more competition between owners for tenants and lower rents. It will be possible then for wage earners of Washington to secure decent living quarters on more reasonable terms. There will no longer be the necessity of living under slum conditions. There will furthermore be an increased demand for labor in the city, not only in the building trades, but in all other industries. The untaxing of labor will remove a burden that is crushing industry. All lines of business must necessarily flourish as never before. Besides this, Washington will offer a refuge to tax-burdened enterprises of Maryland, Virginia, and other States, unless these should be wise enough to untax labor also. Every Congressman should be urged to vote for Mr. George's bill.



Mr. Shuster's Case.*

(London) Daily News (Lib.), January 30.—The plain tale which Mr. Shuster told at the dinner given to him in London last night by the Persian Committee makes lamentable reading for this country. It is the story of a betrayal as flagrant as any on record, and in that betrayal England is deeply involved. Persia had long groaned under the heel of a corrupt and tyrannous despotism. At last, against overwhelming odds, the people threw off the yoke, drove out the oppressor, and established a form of constitutional government. It rested with the two great neighboring Powers, Great Britain and Russia, to give the infant democracy a reasonable chance of weathering the storm. If they had simply stood aside it would have been enough. But they did not stand aside. They solemnly covenanted to preserve the independence and integrity of the country. If that

promise had been carried out there would have been no Persian question today. Persia would have been firmly established as a constitutionally governed country. . . . Meanwhile, Russia has overrun Northern Persia with her troops. Martial law, merciless and murderous, is established. Yesterday we reported six more executions at Tabriz. The treasury is depleted. No money has been collected since Mr. Shuster was driven out, and Teheran is confronted with famine. It is a situation that fills one with despair and shame.

RELATED THINGS

CONTRIBUTIONS AND REPRINT

TO ROBERT M. LA FOLLETTE.*

For The Public.

You are the idol of your green-hued State:
Filled with a purpose that has known no pause,
You still are champion of a People's cause!
Through bitter years of conflict, early, late,
You braved the foe, unmindful of your fate,
That Privilege be banished from the laws;
And though you won the multitude's applause,
The Few heaped on you ridicule and hate.

La Follette! ours is still the ancient strife
That Liberty has waged from time unknown
Against Oppression in its changing guise;
O lighten not the labor of your life!

Unto the greater tasks to which you've grown,
Bring undiminished your brave enterprise!

CHARLES H. WINKE.



"UNSKILLED LABOR."

For The Public.

A gang of Italian workmen are breaking up the pavement for repairs to the surface-car tracks, in one of the city's busiest streets.

They keep their many steel sledges whirling over their heads in impetuous assault upon the long chisels that their companions hold in place with the grip of their bare hands.

The sun glints dully on the rotating hammers, and the clank of metal on metal fills the street like an anvil chorus of lesser volume.

Every few minutes the men have to cease their activity, the chisel-holders withdraw their tools from the clefts, and all clear the track for a car that demands passage with warning gong, but the rear platform barely gives clearance to the sledges before they begin again their wheeling flight.

There is mingled fascination and dread in watching such a scene of labor with its display of almost superhuman accuracy.

*As a result of energetic campaigning for democratic Republicanism, Senator La Follette has been ill at Washington for two weeks, but is reported to be on the road to recovery.—Editors of The Public.

*See The Public of February 2, page 109.

Never a tremor of fear seems to distract the aim of a hammerer, or disturb the phlegmatic carelessness of a chisel-holder, although a single failure to strike the narrow mark would bring the heavy weapon crashing down on the holder's naked hands, or let it glance to smite his arms or body.

The observer feels an impulse to hurry on before he must witness such accidents as impend here only an inch of smooth steel away, yet he lingers in the thrall of the reckless precision, like the spectator of an acrobat's defiance of peril on a high wire or trapeze.

What a vivid parable these workers present, of the risks that must be taken by all breakers of paths, and pioneers of the collective human task through the ages, in the twin spheres of invisible thought and outward achievement!—ever must the ringing strokes that smite the tools of progress endanger the vulnerable, courageous hands that hold them to the work.

One of the hammerers in the gang is a swarthy, handsome young fellow, almost a boy, whose face and figure would delight an artist for a model of the youthful Bacchus, and make him wish that the rough garments of toil might be removed from the slender, sinewy form, to let its supple movement and rippling muscle claim the admiration they deserve.

The strokes this lad deals with his sledge are no less accurate than those of his companions, but in apparent recklessness he exceeds them all.

His black eyes sparkle, and his perfect teeth flash with his laughter at some jest of his own in the staccato Neapolitan dialect, until his share of the labor that the others perform as gray drudgery assumes the gaiety of a schoolboy's athletic romp.

The flexile, steel-spring swerve of his body, as he starts the wide arc of the hammer's swing, is followed by a swift uncoiling of the whole form, erect to the outstretched arms that carry his implement overhead and downward with the tension of a spoke in a great driving-wheel, to meet unflinchingly the crown of the chiming drill.

His attack is impetuous as that of a young Bayard or Cid cutting his way alone through encompassing foes, with battle-ax or two-handed sword in a medieval battle;

His "delivery" suggests that of a baseball pitcher, delighting in his ability to outwit opposing batsmen, and smiling toward his infielders as he turns to gather speed for a bewildering curve;

Or again he might be the ringer of some ponderous festival bell, laughing for very joy of the season he proclaims, as he launches all his weight and vigor upon the pendant rope.

It is scarcely strange that the audacious precision of this youth and his companions, whose labor is rated as "unskilled," should rather come to seem akin to the expert accuracy of the surgeon with his scalpel, the organist at his banks of keys,

the artist with his bolder brush-strokes, the cowboy with his lasso, the housesmiths tossing and catching white-hot rivets across yawning gulfs of a steel building-skeleton, and the aviator hurling his aeroplane to a spectacular plunge and recovery before a frightened grandstand.

ELIOT WHITE.



THE ROOT QUESTION.

An Address by Margaret McMillan of London to the Working Girls of America. From "Life and Labor," the Organ of the Women's Trade Union League, for April, 1911.

You girls in Chicago have just been on strike. This in itself proves that you feel yourselves in the power of something or of some one and wish to free yourselves a little. What is this that you have found in the new country? In the office of the Women's Trade Union League I met last month a little Russian girl, whose father had lost everything he had in Russia, and who had had to come to Chicago to get her living in a factory. "I must work," said the child, who already looked tired out (she was but sixteen), "else what will become of me and my sister? We must work very hard now." Close by was an elderly woman with worn, haggard face. She, too, was working hard every day, driving the wolf from the door, a wolf that came back always.

Yet just outside the city we saw plains teeming with riches, seen and unseen. For hundreds and hundreds of miles stretches this glorious continent, with its rich soil, its extensive forests, its laughing slopes, in the fall heavy with ruddy harvests, its great waterways curving round fertile corn lands and rich orchards. Why must people fight for bread—even in America?

It is this very question that is setting Great Britain in a ferment today. Our English Parliament is supposed to be discussing "The Question of the Lords," but it is really "The Question of the Landlords."

"The land!" Do you in America say, "it is not Land but Capital that we have to challenge. The great employers of labor must give us a minimum wage, and also conform to a standard of life (which we will raise when necessary) in all factories and workshops." This is excellent, and yet one of the great dangers of industrial life today is that an immense number of workers, and these not the least intelligent, will concentrate all their attention on workshop reform, and have none to spare for the greater, deeper problems that lie beyond the wage question and have created the wage-system itself.

In a city one is in danger of forgetting that one does not live by stone walls and paved streets, but by the living earth—the Mother Earth that