

## Wilson's Single-Taxers: Urban Radicalism on the National and International Stage

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1914, the Colorado National Guard fired on a colony of striking coal workers killing several, including women and children. In response to what came to be known as the Ludlow Massacre, the reformer George Creel rushed back from New York to mobilize in solidarity with the workers. Creel had earned an impressive reputation in the state as a radical agitator. His decision, after being appointed Denver's police commissioner, to take batons away from the police force had made him one of the most controversial characters in Colorado. Within three weeks of the massacre, Creel pulled together a protest of ten thousand at the state capital. As a follower of Henry George, a so-called single-taxer, he believed that the earth was communal property and saw the Ludlow labor battle as a facet of the larger struggle for the land. At the protest Creel proposed "a constitutional amendment ... that will permit the state to develop its own natural resources, dig its own coal, harness its own streams, water its own deserts, to the end that workers may be protected and parasites destroyed."<sup>i</sup>

Had Creel been any other brand of left-wing radical the story would have ended there, but Creel had well-connected compatriots. Creel had worked with Frank Walsh under Joseph Folk, a Missouri Governor known nationally for prosecuting political corruption.<sup>ii</sup> In 1913 Walsh was appointed by Democrats in Congress to chair the Commission on Industrial Relations, a government study to determine the causes of industrial unrest. Walsh enlisted Creel to advise him on the situation in Colorado. Together they called John D. Rockefeller, who owned a substantial portion of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, to testify before the Commission and subjected him to a rigorous grilling, the transcript of which they used to portray him as a modern-day Louis XVI.<sup>iii</sup> The CIR produced a report consistent with Creel's beliefs. It called for

the outright nationalization of several of what single-taxers called “natural monopolies,” including the telegraphs and the phone service.<sup>iv</sup> It endorsed the restoration of public land, water, and mineral rights. While it did not demand government operation of this property, it did recommend supervision for “superior use.” Since the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company operated on leased public land, this would have put those responsible for the Ludlow Massacre under public supervision. Most importantly, the report included the central demand of single-taxers, a confiscatory tax on land values. Although the CIR is largely remembered for legitimizing the concept of Industrial Democracy, its advocacy of land value taxation was almost as systematic.<sup>v</sup> It was discussed throughout the report as a solution to issues as diverse as farm tenancy, housing shortages, and unemployment.<sup>vi</sup> Shortly thereafter, at a single-tax conference in San Francisco, a letter was drafted to congratulate Walsh for “preparing for the first time an official report to Congress, which discusses the fundamental economic propositions and recommends the single tax as the remedy for unemployment and other evils.”<sup>vii</sup> In a startling political moment, a committee representing the federal government endorsed the politics of Henry George, a philosopher known for rejecting the concept of private property in land.

Thomas Knock showed that Wilson was often receptive to the influence of socialists, most notably to Max Eastman, editor of *The Masses*.<sup>viii</sup> Socialists, however, were only visitors in the White House. Single-taxers were unique amongst left-wing radicals in that they became a major intuitional force in Wilson’s administration and the Democratic Party coalition. The list of single-taxers in the Administration included: Secretary of War, Newton Baker; Assistant Secretary of Labor, Louis Post; Chairman of the Committee of Public Information, George Creel; Minister to Belgium, Brand Whitlock; Surgeon General, William Gorgas; and Immigration Commissioner, Frederic C. Howe.<sup>ix</sup> Others like Franklin Lane and William Kent

were influenced by the movement. Even Wilson's closest adviser, Col. Edward House, who lived with the president in the White House, had advocated a revised form of the single tax in his anonymously published novel *Philip Dru*. Because George and his movement are often read wrongly as myopically focused on the proposal to tax land values, the full scope of the movement he spawned has never been recognized. A close look at Wilson's single-taxers shows a high level of consensus and coordination between them on issues as diverse as anti-colonialism, free speech rights, and wartime economic reorganization. The ideology, history, and networks which comprised the movement often helped shape the policies of the Wilson administration. Placed within the context of the single tax movement, Wilson's cabinet, the President himself, and the complex of foreign policy ideas known as Wilsonianism, take on a new, more radical light.

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Single-taxers did not accidentally become guests of the White House; they earned their positions because of raw political power and their role in building a new Democratic Coalition. In 1912 a California referendum designed to allow municipalities to institute the Single Tax won 41% of the vote. Single-taxers, who were generally only weakly affiliated with major parties, were potentially an influential swing vote. It was likely because of this strong showing in a state that would make or break the Presidential election in 1916, that after the election Theodore Roosevelt, endorsed the sort of local option proposal that had been on the California ballot, arguing that "the burden of municipal taxation should be shifted as to put the weight of land taxation upon the unearned rise in the value of the land itself rather than the improvements."<sup>x</sup> Political connections, built over the preceding decades, were also important in the ascendant power of the single tax. Louis Post was drafted to be Assistant Secretary of Labor by Secretary

of State William Jennings Bryan, Secretary of Labor, William B. Wilson, and Congressman William Worth Bailey. The appointment appears to have been made against the wishes of President Wilson, who preferred John Commons for the position, but Post was supported by Bryan, with whom he had a close and long-standing relationship, and by a vigorous letter writing campaign organized by Bailey.<sup>xi</sup>

More important for the future of the Single Tax Movement was its organizational strength in Ohio, a state that Wilson needed for his reelection. Running as either non-partisans or only loosely affiliated with the Democratic Party, Tom Johnson and Samuel Jones had won the mayoralty in the traditionally republican cities of Cleveland and Toledo. Their machines were able to sustain the career of the successors Whitlock and Baker, the latter of whom was so popular that he won election in 1911 by the largest margin in Cleveland history. These two mayors were essential links in connecting the historically agrarian Democratic Party to urban, working class constituencies in Ohio, and Wilson knew it.<sup>xii</sup> These two former mayors were considered for positions as diverse as Attorney General, Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of War, Minister to Belgium, Ambassador to England, Ambassador to Russia, and before Whitlock told Col. House to end all discussion on the subject, Vice President.<sup>xiii</sup> Their associates, Frederic Howe and John Clarke received jobs as Immigration Commissioner and Supreme Court Justice, respectively. Wilson made the political nature of these appointments clear when, in a short note to Baker, a diminutive lawyer with no military experience, he promised the post of Secretary of War because “it would greatly strengthen my hand.”<sup>xiv</sup>

Newton Baker understood the calculus behind his appointment and offered his resignation less than two weeks after Wilson’s reelection, with a letter that assured him “you now have the sanction of a majority of our people,” adding that “the fine vote in Ohio was your

vote and not mine, and the people of the state will not misunderstand. <sup>xxv</sup> Baker was characteristically generous to Wilson; in a note to Whitlock he observed that “the pivot in the last election was Ohio, and there Tom’s work, and that of Jones and yours showed wonderfully.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Of the three counties in Ohio with the most new democratic voters, two were in Cleveland and one was in Toledo. Whereas the Democratic Party picked up an additional 5% of the electorate in the rest of the state, these three counties showed a rise in Democratic turn-out ranging from 16-19%. Had the nearly 60,000 new Democratic voters in these counties stayed with the Republican Party, Charles Hughes would have been the 29<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Wilson, however, did not accept Baker’s resignation. Political power was not the only thing single-taxers brought to the table; Wilson often preferred their advice. At the same time that the philanthropist and political activist George Peabody was insisting that he had to be “out of politics” because he was known for his “radical views as to government ownership of railroads, single tax, free trade and women suffrage” Wilson’s associates like Col. House and Franklin Roosevelt were encouraging him to meet with the President more often because the President shared his views and respected his opinions.<sup>xxviii</sup> Wilson, who offered Peabody the job of Secretary of the Treasury, assured him: “You need not fear that your radicalism alarms me in the least degree. It is a mere frankness of thought which does you the utmost honor.”<sup>xxix</sup> Similarly, Secretary of State Robert Lansing observed, quite bitterly, of the President’s relationship to George Creel:

Creel’s socialistic tendencies, which were well known and which were evidenced by some of the persons whom he employed in his office, aroused considerable criticism, particularly in Washington. Though this radicalism caused apprehension and distrust among many officials of the Administration, I do not believe that it disturbed Mr. Wilson, who viewed with toleration, if not with a degree of approval, certain socialistic ideals which he termed ‘progressive.’<sup>xxx</sup>

Lansing's biting implications about Wilson's politics speak not just to the president's political sympathies but the palpable tensions between conservative and radicals wings of the administration.<sup>xxi</sup>

Having a voice in the ear of the president, however, did not translate into many peacetime domestic accomplishments for the Georgists. Their biggest accomplishment was the symbolic victory of the CIR's endorsement. Other measures stalled. The ambiguously-worded Crosser Bill, proposed in the House in 1916, would have granted authority to the "Secretary of Labor to..." create the "opportunity for permanent and profitable employment."<sup>xxii</sup> It was intended to allow the Department of Labor to lease public lands to the unemployed.<sup>xxiii</sup> The reaction to that bill, which fell flat, was so weak that George Foster Peabody took it as evidence that the single tax would have to be implemented slowly over a period of approximately fifty years.<sup>xxiv</sup> On another front, Frederic C. Howe lobbied to have the food service in Ellis Island operated by the government, rather than contracted out. This campaign reflected an important trend in the Single Tax Movement to focus on public-private contracts as a form of "natural monopoly." Howe won the support of Wilson, who put Howe's plan in the Congressional Budget, only to have it covertly taken out by William Bennet, a New York Congressman and legal counsel for the contractor. Howe won a level of redemption by leading a successful campaign to unseat Representative Bennet on the grounds that he was legislating on behalf of his own financial interests.<sup>xxv</sup>

But Wilson was, surprisingly, just as inclined to turn to single-taxers for assistance in foreign as domestic policy. In a letter to Robert Lansing requesting the appointment of single-taxer Frederic C. Howe to the Joint High Commission on Mexico, he claimed that he was "the closest and most comprehending student of such questions as those which undoubtedly lie at the

bottom of the whole Mexican domestic settlement....<sup>xxvi</sup> Wilson is known to have seen the Mexican Civil War as a struggle for land reform.<sup>xxvii</sup> According to Wilson, the war ‘was a fight for the land – just that and nothing more.’ In the past land barons had confiscated peasant property, so “doing away with the land monopoly and dispersing it among the proletariat” would be a “restoration” of the land.<sup>xxviii</sup> Because Howe exhibited no knowledge of Mexican domestic politics, it seems that the the only expertise that would recommend him as “comprehending student” of the problem was Howe’s background in single-tax land reform.

Howe was not, however, the only single-taxer that Wilson pulled on in crafting his Mexican policy. The centrality that Wilson placed on land in the Mexican Civil War can at least in part be attributed to the fact that he turned to another single-taxer, Lincoln Steffens, to inform him about the conflict. Wilson doubted the credibility of reports from his State Department, and placed his faith in Steffens, who he called the “second best informed man in the U.S. on Mexico” next to himself.<sup>xxix</sup> In the crowded field of Mexican revolutionaries, known as Constitutionals, Steffens encouraged Wilson to back Carranza, who he considered an authentic radical, and to allow him to enact land reform during a pre-constitutional dictatorship.<sup>xxx</sup> Though dictatorship was generally not part of his repertoire, Wilson supported Steffens plan. Steffen’s advocacy, however, was not limited to politicians north of the boarder. When it became known that Steffens was an unofficial agent of the President he gained access to Carranza’s inner circle and began pitching ideas. He invited Dr. J. W. Slaughter, an associate of the Fels family, to aide him in his evangelicalism.<sup>xxxi</sup> Steffens believed that Carranza “and his successors accepted and enacted as much as they understood of the [single-tax] theory.”<sup>xxxii</sup> Steffens was confident that his work had inspired Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which made land state

property.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Whether or not it is true, this version of events was widely circulated in America, by sources as reputable as the New York Times.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Wilson resisted calls to entangle himself in the civil war, but what force he did exert was potentially decisive. While he declaimed that “We have no right at any time to intervene in Mexico”<sup>xxxv</sup> he still funneled guns to the Constitutionalist revolutionaries, and, sent troops to Vera Cruz, where they confiscated a large shipment of arms on their way to Huerta. The Constitutionlists were reluctant to accept intervention, especially the use of American troops in Vera Cruz, but there is good reason to believe that the arms Wilson confiscated, along with those that he shipped to the revolutionaries, tipped the balance in favor of Carranza.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

With Huerta disposed and Carranza, a land reformer, in office, war continued to loom, and single-taxers worked to protect the reform-minded Mexican government. Pancho Villa made several cross-border raids into the United States which sparked calls for full-scale war. In response, Baker, displaying a bit too much radical idealism for the American public, compared the Mexican Revolutionaries to the Continental Army led by George Washington. Defending the Mexican revolutionaries – and his own proclivity toward non-intervention—he noted that the Continental Army had also survived by stealing and printing worthless money.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The Daughters of the American Revolution immediately called for his resignation, which Baker tendered, but Wilson refused to accept. Creel, working for Wilson’s reelection, authored a book in which he defended Wilson’s decision not to attack Mexico and explained that the revolution was necessary: “In a country of fifteen millions, ten thousand owned every inch of the land ... the toilers of the nation were serfs, compelled to labor all their lives under laws that legitimized slavery and oppression.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> Steffens, Baker, and Walsh met privately to discuss putting a progressive on the peace commission, recommending either Howe or Brandeis, both of whom



Wilson entertained before giving the job to the land reformer, Franklin Lane.<sup>xxxix</sup> Steffens personally met with Wilson to persuade him not to go to war. After the meeting, Wilson told him that “You have given me good information... which prevents a war.”<sup>xl</sup> Steffens was overly susceptible to flattery; it is likely Wilson had already decided not to go to war. Collectively, however, single-taxers formed an important block of opinion against intervention, especially considering that Baker as, Secretary of War, was in charge of the troops along the border.

Even as war disappeared from the horizon, Creel remained active in Mexican politics, using the public persona he earned as America’s chief propagandist during World War I. How the question of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, establishing public rights to land, was to be enacted, remained a vital issue for years after the revolution. There was considerable pressure from the United States to protect the property of American oil companies. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1919, Creel sent a telegraph through Manuel Carpio, Carranza’s publicity man, to the Mexican Senate, where a petroleum bill was intensely disputed. He urged the government “to not gratify oil interests by legislating at their pleasure.” His letter was purportedly “commented upon generally in Mexico City.” The support of a high level government official eased fears of Yankee retaliation. The Mexican Consul-General in New York, R. P. de Negri, wrote to Mexican Senator Flavio Borquez, “You are probably familiar with the statements made by George Creel... on President Wilson’s views with regard to the nationalization of petroleum in Mexico.” He concluded that the “working classes, radical socialists, and honest intellectuals” in the U.S. were open to “nationalizing natural resources” and encouraged him to push for reform.<sup>xli</sup>

A year later, in October of 1920, Creel, like Steffens, became an unofficial administration agent in Mexico. Creel met with Wilson twice and then snuck across the border under an assumed name, where he began to negotiate terms for recognition with interim Mexican

President Adolfo De La Huerta. According to Creel, he did so unofficially and at his own expense, upon the urges of special envoy Pesquiera and with the blessing of Wilson.<sup>xlii</sup> Creel had already, when he was serving as chair of the Committee of Public Information, been reprimanded by the State Department for allowing his employees to communicate directly with foreign heads of state, making Creel's mission a serious affront to the department.<sup>xliii</sup> While the mission was intended to be secret, Creel was followed across the border by an informant of Republican Senator Albert Fall, later famous for his role in the Teapot Dome scandal. News of the trip was leaked to the press.<sup>xliv</sup> The State Department, under the Administration of Bainbridge Colby, denied that Creel's mission was diplomatic in nature and gave every indication that it was opposed to hastening the pace of recognition. While in Mexico, Creel publically dissented with the State Department, arguing that the oil question should not be a factor in recognition. His comment provoked an unnamed "high official of the State Department" to respond, in essence, that the Department was inflexible on the oil issue.<sup>xlv</sup> Two days after Creel returned to D.C., he conferred with Wilson and Colby, and Colby announced that he would be expediting the process of recognition. Colby claimed that Creel had no impact on his decision, but the timing makes it far more likely that he was trying to save face after the success of a delegation that had circumvented his department and whose legitimacy he had disputed.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Despite Wilson's decision to move forward negotiations for recognition stalled because of opposition from the Senate and State Department. When the Harding Administration took over, the new President of Mexico, Alvaro Obregon, issued an appeal to the American people. He claimed that "The natural resources of the country made enormous fortunes for the few; wholesale campaigns of dispossession gathered the land into great estates owned by absent landlords, industry was dragged back and fifteen million people led lives of misery." The

government's plan was "To finance the national progress through the medium of our natural resources." Mexico was rich in natural resources, which were poorly distributed. Nationalization of natural resources would provide the nation with the wealth to build a stable democracy, and "honest taxation" would "put an end to this policy of land monopoly and non-productivity."<sup>xlvi</sup> Astute observers in the American press noticed a fair share of what had come to be known as "Creelisms" in the statement, and remarked that Creel was spending time in Mexico as part of the "Obregon retinue."<sup>xlviii</sup> Creel denied that he had written the report, but the multiple drafts in his personal files tell a different story. America's publicity man had become the press agent for Mexican land reform and used the opportunity to put the President of Mexico on record for a land tax.<sup>xlix</sup>

Mexico, however, would not be the only foreign policy development in which Wilson would work closely with single-taxers. World War I would provide the catalyst for expanding single-tax influence both at home and abroad. Brand Whitlock wrote Newton Baker about the war:

Radicals everywhere have been sobbing over it and yet it has accomplished more in three years for the very cause they have been supporting than they could have done in three hundred. Every single contention that we have ever made as to the precedence of public right over private right, of public property over private property, has been conceded by the very ones who used to oppose them.<sup>1</sup>

Georgists had not been eager to accept American involvement in what they saw to be a rapacious conflict over trade and natural resources. In *Wilson and the Issues*, Creel opposed war, and declared that Americans had to decide "between the decent, orderly development of our own resources... and a return to the feudal madness that places a people at the disposal of lords and overlords."<sup>li</sup> Creel noted that "we have seen the socialists of Europe, pledged to peace, swept away in tides of racial feeling" and predicted that war would have the same stifling effect on

dissent in America.<sup>lii</sup> Frederic Howe's *Why War*, published the same year, indicted the European war as a conspiracy designed by a cabal of elite economic interests. Howe found himself in common cause with the anti-war Senator Robert La Follette, who read portions of the book into the congressional record.<sup>liii</sup> Baker reputation as a pacifist was so well established that his appointment as Secretary of War helped signal that war was not imminent and, at least in his hometown of Cleveland, there was a feeling that "Now that Newton is Secretary there can be no war."<sup>liv</sup>

Some Georgists identified with pacifism, but the label anti-imperialist would generally be more appropriate. Early in his career, Henry George had appealed successfully to Irish Nationalists by arguing in the *Irish Land Question*, that colonialism in that country was the result of the private ownership of land.<sup>lv</sup> *The Public* mocked the concept of the white man's burden as a thinly guised excuse for economic exploitation: "For taking up the burden... we'll take, as wages small, Their lands, their crops, their ore, their All -- A rich and splendid burden."<sup>lvi</sup> During the Spanish American War *The Public* had argued that "the one just cause for war is the continual denial of liberty." It backed intervention to free Cuba, but railed against McKinley when he failed to fulfill the promise of complete independence. Post's paper had not limited its focus to those colonial ventures vital to American politics; as early as the 1890s Post was criticizing English colonialism in India.<sup>lvii</sup>

Unlike many members of the Wilson Administration, the single-taxers argued for national independence regardless of color. On the eve of the World War I, Lincoln Steffens and Frederic C. Howe were both active members of the League of Small and Subject Nationalities, an organization which included advocates for the independence of nations as disparate as Scotland and Assyria.<sup>lviii</sup> Writing in the midst of World War I, Frederic Howe boldly asserted

that “the world will never be at peace so long as it is governed on the assumption that only the white man is fit for government.”<sup>lix</sup> Steffens told Mexican President, Carranza, in reference to the Fourteen Points “that the small nation paragraphs for Belgium and Finland and Poland must mean Porto Rico and Mexico,” and he asked “him to believe . . . that the President intends that this construction shall be put upon them.”<sup>lx</sup> The single-taxers’ embrace of a color-blind anti-imperialism contrast starkly with Wilson’s Secretary of State Robert Lansing, who contended that the principle of self-determination was not applicable to “races, peoples, or communities whose state of barbarism or ignorance deprive them of the capacity to choose intelligently their political affiliations.”<sup>lxi</sup>

Steffen’s claim that Wilson planned to protect the sovereignty of non-white nations would be greeted with incredulity by historians who emphasize Wilson’s faith “in a hierarchy of race” which compromised the capacity of non-whites to govern themselves.<sup>lxii</sup> Steffens assertion would be less absurd to contemporaries; as astute an observer of race as W. E. B. Dubois had backed Wilson’s bid for the presidency believing that he might be a “second Abraham Lincoln.”<sup>lxiii</sup> During the war, Dubois even wrote – with the encouragement of Baker and Creel -- that Wilson’s anti-imperialism would lead to global black liberation.<sup>lxiv</sup> Wilson most famous breach of black Civil Rights -- his decision to segregate the federal government – was perceived even by his socialist critiques as a cowardly concession to his southern supporters, not as representative of his own opinions.<sup>lxv</sup> Conversely, Wilson’s Philippine policy seemed to indicate that he supported self government, regardless of race. Wilson had appointed Francis Burton Harrison, an avid supporter of Philippines Independence, Governor General of that territory and under his lead had begun transferring public offices to Filipinos. As early as 1914 Wilson had backed legislation supporting eventual independence and increased local autonomy. He briefly

supported a bill that would allow for complete independence within four years, though he privately doubted it would be a sufficient amount of time to make the transition.<sup>lxvi</sup>

As firm believers in national independence, single-taxers were predictably concerned about the German occupation of neutral Belgium, especially because one of their most esteemed members was at the frontline of that ordeal. Brand Whitlock, as American Minister to Belgium, had watched the Germany troops march into that country and would write extensively about the horrors of occupation. Belgium, as the most urbanized country in Europe, could only feed one-fifth of its nation and under the allied blockade was confronted with imminent starvation.<sup>lxvii</sup> According to Whitlock most of his fellow diplomats blandly noted that the Hague Convention obliged Germany to feed the country, and then “with that inveterate vice of the human mind which persists in the belief that a problem is solved as soon as it has been reduced to formulae, they would sigh and sink back in their chairs as though the phrase sufficed for the deed.”<sup>lxviii</sup> Whitlock had less faith in German benevolence and rapidly realized that outside help was necessary. He entered into a series of negotiations that allowed the allies to ship food into the country under the guise of an organization known as the Committee for Relief in Belgium. All of the supplies shipped to Belgium would officially be the property of Whitlock until distributed to the people of Belgium. Despite the immense burden apparently resting on Whitlock most of his job consisted of smoothing interaction between the warring parties engaged in the organization. The actual organizational effort would fall to his subordinate, Herbert Hoover, who Whitlock rapidly recognized as a person of potential. Whitlock wrote Baker to say that Hoover was “precisely the man that the liberal movement in America, as you and I understand it, needs” Whitlock gave the young prodigy a copy of George’s *Progress and Poverty*. Because he doubted that the future president would ever open the book, he also instructed him to meet with

Post and Baker after returning to America.<sup>lxi</sup> Neither Post nor Baker seems to have had much success impressing their beliefs on the future president. After he entered the Administration, Hoover protested against Baker's draft system, designed to insure equal sacrifice, because it did not grant exemptions to the agricultural "ownership class."<sup>lxx</sup>

In his private correspondence, Whitlock often forced his friend, Secretary of War, Newton Baker, to confront the Belgian disaster in the language of social reform that both were so familiar with. When Baker asked Whitlock to inquire with the Germans about a missing soldier, Whitlock came back, as he generally did after such inquiries, emptied-handed. He complained "What strange fate is it that has made me the object of the appeals of so many in trouble. I often think of what Sam Jones said to me once at the close of a long hard day" "I could wash my hands in women's tears any day."<sup>lxxi</sup> Referencing his political mentor again, he wrote Baker:

Jones used to say to me once in awhile when I questioned his attitude toward certain persons, 'I know the Golden Rule always works but the trouble is I don't know how to work it on that fellow.' I don't know how to work any of those theories on the Germans when certain words—for instance, honor, justice, liberty, pity, compassion—have either no meaning at all in their minds or have connotations that they do not have for us.<sup>lxxii</sup>

Ambrose Woody, Whitlock's Vice Mayor in Toledo, wrote Baker in March 1917 to tell them that while traveling the country and he had observed that the "citizens of this Country are standing firmly behind the President and his Cabinet and I honestly believe that the time has come for this country to declare war."<sup>lxxiii</sup>

Baker appears to have concluded that the war could be made on progressive grounds and encouraged his commander-in-chief to do so. On December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916 Baker received a letter from W. M. Johnson, a former associate in Ohio, criticizing Wilson's statement of neutrality. Johnson wrote:

There were a good many things in your great friend Tom Johnson in which I did not believe, but his faith in Democracy was not one of them. And a tremendous lurch toward democracy in Europe is the one good thing which is slated to come out of this horrible war....<sup>lxxiv</sup>

While Baker did not endorse his opinion, he forwarded it to Wilson and commended the author as “one of the most intelligent and zealous defenders of the Administration” in Ohio.<sup>lxxv</sup> Wilson wrote back on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December dismissing Johnson’s assertion that the Allies represented the cause of Democracy: “If Professor Johnson had lived with the English Statesmen for the past two years and seen the real inside of their minds I think he would feel differently.”<sup>lxxvi</sup> Three months later, on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1917, Wilson would reverse his position and declare war on Germany, vowing to make the world safe for democracy. Wilson never gave any decisive indication as to why he chose to enter the war and there seems not to have been a single factor. Growing tensions abroad were coupled with increased pressure for action from progressive internationalists at home; probably, for a president who tended to defer to his department heads, the conversion of his pacifist Secretary of War was a notable example of the latter.<sup>lxxvii</sup> Baker voted for war in the Cabinet meeting of March 20, 1917. The next day he expressed hope that the war was bringing the age of autocracy to a close. In a private conversation with the Steffens, Baker pulled the pipe from his mouth to muse “Well, I guess this king business is pretty near over.”<sup>lxxviii</sup>

One would imagine that with the onset of war Baker would be preoccupied with troop movements. Actually Baker only ever gave two such orders during WWI: one to send General Pershing and his troops to Europe, another to bring them back home. A month into office Baker decided to take a different route, researching economic mobilization and designing “such an organization of the industrial, commercial, financial, and social resources of the nation as will enable them to be mobilized, both to support the military arm and to continue the life of the



nation during struggle.”<sup>lxxxix</sup> At a conference of publishers Baker declaimed that war is “a conflict of smokestacks now, it is the combat of the driving-wheel and of the engine.”<sup>lxxx</sup> When the George Peabody suggested that Baker take over the Treasury because of his “trained economic mind” Baker responded that his current job was already economic in nature and that “our saving of money is complementary to the Treasury’s obligation to raise money.”<sup>lxxxii</sup> Initially Baker envisioned government ownership and use of factories as a method of denying “the possibility of war profits, thus eliminating the danger of war profiteering.”<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The National Defense Act of 1916, drafted by Baker and Josephus Daniels, empowered Baker to appoint a board to research government construction of munitions.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The process, however, was too slow to produce results; a plant in Toledo was still incomplete when the war ended. It was subsequently abandoned.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

Baker had extensive experience, from his time as a reform mayor in Cleveland, designing ways to mitigate the effects on the public of natural monopolies. Baker had taken part in Tom Johnson’s fight to force local street cars to adopt a 3 cent fare. In his own administration he had built a municipally owned electrical service to run at cost. Both public ownership and price controls were tactics that had been promoted by the single tax movement. In 1898, confronted with how to deal with street-car monopolies, *The Public* had argued against a tax, similar to George’s land tax, because to do so would “lessen city taxes which otherwise would have been born by real estate owners.”<sup>lxxxv</sup> Instead, *The Public* recommended price controls which would ensure that the savings went directly to the people. Most single-taxers were ultimately interested in government ownership of natural monopolies, but price controls were an important stop-gap mechanism for many.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

Baker applied these same techniques, derived from his experience in the single tax movement, to war mobilization.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> On May 28<sup>th</sup> Baker wrote Wilson with his plan for a War Industries Board to regulate private military contracts. The board would serve as the central purchasing agency of the military and would set prices under the “unwholesome and unsafe high level” made by current market conditions. He added that: “there is no other alternative, so far as I can think it out, except to seize the mines and control the raw material supply directly through the Government. This I think neither Congress nor the public are ready to sanction.” While he acknowledged that there was public opposition to government ownership, if price controls failed, it would “be obviously necessary as the only other recourse.”<sup>lxxxviii</sup> The War Industries Board followed the design set down by Baker until February 1918 when, after discussions with Bernard Baurch, Baker agreed to centralize more authority in the chairman, and more importantly, to expand the board’s power to setting prices for the consumer market.<sup>lxxxix</sup> Although Baker was uncomfortable with the expanded functions of the WIB, it generally failed to fulfill them anyway, finding that it was remarkably difficult to manipulate the market without real legal authority to do so.<sup>xc</sup>

The government never seized the mines, as Baker and Peabody had hoped, but nationalization remained a vital issue throughout the war. When one munitions maker refused to produce goods at the price set by the government, the firm was informed that, even without legal authority, “The Army can occupy your premises. You can bring action, but I think the courts will not settle until the War is over.”<sup>xcii</sup> Wilson gave teeth to Baker’s plan by publically threatening to nationalize the steel mills in retaliation for their failure to provide a “just price” for their goods.<sup>xciii</sup> That threat was never followed up on, but during the war the Administration did nationalize one of the chief targets of the single-taxers: the railroads. Before this move was made, Frederic

Howe had already drafted a bill for the nationalization of the railroads and the Fels Fund mobilized a national campaign in support of it.<sup>xciiii</sup> After the success of government operation many single-taxers were ecstatically hopeful for the fulfillment of their program. Peabody wrote Baker that railroad nationalization had “done fifty year’s work in six months in some respects.” He suggested further the nationalization of mines because that was “as you well know, the only way to deal with the trusts.” While he recognized the need for public support he was confident “that will follow promptly now any recommendations of the President, after the railroad legislation is accomplished.”<sup>xciv</sup>

When, on the eve of the Versailles conference, the transatlantic cables were nationalized, the impression emerged that these economic reforms were more than transitory wartime measures. Because the war was over, Republicans in Congress cried foul. Senator Watson, grappling with the administration’s motives, pointed to the “the hidden and sinister reason that it is part of the general policy of Government ownership and that it is the opening door to the existence of a social state.” Senator Sherman claimed that the Cabinet “headed by Colonel House, is a collection of radicals imbued with the vagaries of Karl Marx and of Lenine and Trotzky (sic).” Senator Lewis of Illinois, Wilson’s Senatorial Whip, and a long time single-taxer, confirmed the suspicions of his colleagues when, in response to their criticisms he offered a bill that would institute government ownership of natural monopolies, including transportation, communication, and fuel. The bill, according to Senator Watson accentuated “the very idea I have been trying to impress upon Senators and that is that various members of the President’s Cabinet and a large number of those socialistically inclined who surround him are seeking to force upon this country a program of State of socialism (sic).”<sup>xcv</sup>

In a Republican-controlled Congress, Lewis' proposal had no hope of success, but it demonstrated that some of the President's political associates actually did see wartime nationalization as a bridge into permanent government ownership. Certainly that was the hope of many single-taxers. Speaking to the Academy of Political Science both Frederic Howe and George Peabody argued for a five year extension of public ownership of the railroads, ostensibly, to test its efficiency.<sup>xcvi</sup> Creel did not find such a test necessary; he took it for granted that McAdoo's successful management had proven the case and a decade later still pointed to his tenure as an argument for public ownership.<sup>xcvii</sup>

Most wartime public ownership was in fact transitory, though hydroelectricity is a notable exception. The National Defense Act of 1916, drafted by Baker, authorized the President to acquire the land and equipment necessary to produce nitrates for explosives and fertilizer.<sup>xcviii</sup> Because of its military implications, the plant, as well as the dam designed to feed it with energy, fell under Baker's department. Baker initially found the land necessary for the development of the plant at a reasonable price in the Muscle Shoals region, but when he realized that the contract was contingent upon leasing the energy to a private company, he refused. Baker decided that he would move the site unless the government was granted full ownership.<sup>xcix</sup> Under his leadership the Department was able to purchase and develop the land for full public ownership. The first plant was completed on January 11, 1919; the second, known as Wilson Dam, would not be completed until after the war. The Muscle Shoals project was part of a broader agenda of public hydroelectricity for Baker. With Secretaries Lane and Houston, Baker helped draft the Water Power Act of 1920, which limited the period of hydroelectric franchises to fifty years, after which time the government would have the option take ownership of them.<sup>c</sup> This was congruent with grassroots, single-tax interest in the issue. As early as 1916, the New

York State Single Tax League had written Gifford Pinchot for information about water power legislation so that they could incorporate it into a statewide “educational campaign” dealing with “matters having a bearing, direct or collateral, on the Single Tax.”<sup>ci</sup>

The development in Muscle Shoals came under the threat of private ownership again during the 1920’s when Henry Ford put forth an offer to lease the dams for one hundred years. In reaction, Baker joined with several other former Administration officials to form the National Committee for the Defense of the Water Power Act.<sup>cii</sup> In 1924, the situation became dire when the House of Representatives passed the McKenize Bill, authorizing the purchase of Wilson Dam by Ford. Baker felt that Congress was being propelled by the impression that farmers supported the measure as a way to flood the market with cheap fertilizer. Baker wrote to W. I. Drummond of the International Farm Congress to argue that public ownership would be the only way to prevent a utility monopoly throughout the region. He encouraged Drummond to provide Senator George Norris with evidence that farmers opposed the privatization of Wilson dam. Drummond told Baker to continue his efforts, and his organization came out in opposition to the McKenzie Bill.<sup>ciii</sup> Baker was active in Congressional debates on the bill, testifying to the Senate on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1924.<sup>civ</sup> In March, Congressman John Hull of Iowa read a letter of Baker’s to the House, describing him as “having more to do with Muscle Shoals than any one else (sic).”<sup>cv</sup> He would quote him again two days later, saying that the development was “a gold mine... everlasting and increasing in value each year.”<sup>cvi</sup>

After price controls and public ownership, the third component of the war time economic plan Baker offered to Wilson was an excess profits tax, emblematic of a progressive era shift in the single tax movement –contested by many -- that sanctioned various forms of progressive taxation. These other types of progressive taxation though, were seen, by those who advocated

them as alternative ways to seize the “unearned increment” in land values. Single-taxers Frederic Howe, Charles Leubuscher, Charles Ingersoll, and Senator Charles O’Connor Hennessey were on the executive committee of the Association for the Equitable Federal Income Tax. Other notables in the committee included John Dewey, and Amos Pinchot. While the committee was supportive of national land value taxation it noted such a plan was “not feasible for many years because of provisions in State constitutions, and in the Federal Constitution, which it would require years to amend.”<sup>cvii</sup> In the context of a wartime emergency, the committee recommended a rapidly progressive income tax and did so in language that was consonant with single-tax thought: “Every great fortune in the country was secured through some privilege: tariff, freight rebates, patent rights, control of credit – or the fundamental privilege—monopoly of land, and natural resources....”<sup>cviii</sup> Demonstrating a level of discomfort with taxes other than the land tax, it opposed state income taxes, arguing that they were a plot by real estate magnates to shift taxes from land.<sup>cix</sup> Instead, citing endorsements of the Walsh’s CIR, it argued for land value taxation on the state level “to prevent speculative increases in land values, which are placing annually a dead weight burden upon industry and workers of billions of dollars.”<sup>cx</sup> The Executive Director, Benjamin Marsh, met with Wilson and presented his organization’s case to Congress.<sup>cxii</sup> Secretary of Treasury, William McAdoo, who drafted the wartime tax laws which established progressive taxation, kept the organization’s materials in his personal papers.<sup>cxiii</sup>

The wartime emergency also empowered single-taxers to take on the land issue directly in ways that had been impossible. The Crosser Bill, proposed in the House in 1916, was designed to allow the federal government to lease public lands.<sup>cxiiii</sup> Turning the federal government into a landlord, who charged rent, was seen as functionally similar to a national land tax. Single-taxers

had long seen the government leasing of land as a salient alternative to taxing it, when the latter was impossible. The most famous proponent of such a policy was the British utopian Ebenezer Howard, who acknowledged his deep indebtedness to George, but wrote that it was politically inexpedient to attack landowners as a class.<sup>cxiv</sup> Post did not share Howard's concern about landowners, but there was a consensus that the Constitution's ban on direct taxes made George's land tax impossible on the national level.<sup>cxv</sup> The Crosser Bill had initially fallen flat so resoundingly that Peabody saw it as a testament to the fact that it would take another fifty years to implement the single tax, a calculation inspired, in part, by the Jewish fifty year cycle of the Jubilee, a concept George had highlighted in "Moses: Apostle of Freedom."

However, using wartime precedents, Post saw the opportunity to resurrect the legislation. In the wake of the Civil War public lands had been opened for colonization by veterans. He argued that in the past selling public land had led to corporate land speculation, so he advanced a different model. Instead of selling the land outright, Post proposed that the government retain ownership and lease it to former soldiers as repayment for service. The measure would save money for the Treasury, using resources readily at the government's disposal. Post presented the plan to Secretary of Labor Wilson who asked Post to begin research. Subsequently Secretary Wilson endorsed the idea and took it to President Woodrow Wilson who, according to Post responded "favorably" to it. Because the plan would involve the co-ordination of the Department of Labor, Interior, and Agriculture, Wilson requested that all three department heads assent to it. According to Post, opposition by Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of Interior, blocked his plan.<sup>cxvi</sup>

Franklin K. Lane, however, was friendly to single-tax principles and hoped not to reject, but to tweak Post's proposal. He had been a member of the Reform Club in New York with

Henry George, who he considered a friend.<sup>cxvii</sup> In his private letters Lane lavished George with praise. In 1920 he said George was one of “three greatest forces in the last thirty years,” along with Theodore Roosevelt and William James.<sup>cxviii</sup> Drawing on European ideas about co-operative farming and rural community, Lane proposed to settle soldiers in co-operatively run farming communities.<sup>cxix</sup> Post had traditionally been friendly, if not enthusiastic about co-operativism, but Lane’s proposal would allow farmers to earn title to the land, which Post disapproved of. The bill was arguably more ambitious than the original Crosser Bill and yet gained a wider body of support. It now won vigorous public endorsements from Woodrow Wilson, *The New York Times*, and Theodore Roosevelt, whose last public statement was an endorsement of the plan.<sup>cxx</sup>

Although co-operativism was mostly tangential to Georgism, and private ownership of land antithetical, Lane addressed concerns of single-taxers, including land speculation and monopolization. Explaining to Congress the considerations that needed to be addressed when designing solidier resettlement communities, Lane said that: “the acreage should be limited to that which will be sufficient to reasonably support a family... It should be the first policy of the Nations and the States to discourage in every way possible the gathering into one hand or a few hands large bodies of land.” He warned against fostering “speculative ventures in the unearned increment.” To prevent land speculation Lane proposed a spate of regulations to “save the Government the opportunity to hold in its own hands the fate of these lands,” meaning, in effect, that the government would continue to exercise a level of control over the land.<sup>cxxi</sup>

The prominent single-taxer Frederick C. Howe joined the chorus in support of the Lane bill, writing *The Land and the Soldier* (1919) to promote it. According to Howe provisions in the bill that prevented soldiers from owning more than one piece of land, that limited the amount of property they could obtain, and that made continued tenancy contingent upon use, set up a



structure where “the community” served “as landlord.”<sup>cxxii</sup> This sort of public supervision of land use was attractive to a Georgist, but Howe encouraged Congress to move the bill closer to his own ideals. Like Post, Howe argued that the soldiers should be perpetual tenants, not land owners.<sup>cxxiii</sup> *The Public*, Post’s old paper, endorsed the Lane Plan with the proviso that it “should not be subject to laws that permit half the tillable land to remain unused....”<sup>cxxiv</sup> Despite strong public appeals, the bill ran into a dead end when faced with an intractable Republican congress. However, when Democrats retook control in the New Deal, the concept of Government owned communities was resurrected on a much larger scale.

For single-taxers, the war brought threats as well as opportunities and those in power mobilized to mitigate them. In October of 1917 the single-taxer Herbert Bigelow, Reverend of the People’s Church of Cincinnati, was taken into the woods and horsewhipped for his imagined lack of patriotism. Bigelow had been a fervent opponent of the war in Europe, until Wilson laid down his democratic ideals in a letter to the Pope. Baker was so impressed with Bigelow’s response, that he forwarded a letter from him to Wilson to demonstrate the “effect of the answer to the Pope on at least one very outspoken and prominent leader of radical opinion.”<sup>cxxv</sup> Baker doubted that Bigelow’s patriotism had been the cause of the attack on him and had a

certain suspicion that the fellows who took him into the country and whipped him cared very little about his opinions on the German question and very much more about his opinion on certain other economic questions in which he was constantly agitating on the Democratic side.<sup>cxxvi</sup>

Baker was a personal friend of Bigelow and had worked with him when Bigelow served as President of the Ohio State Constitutional Convention in 1912. Inflamed, Baker encouraged Attorney General Gregory to investigate the incident.<sup>cxxvii</sup> He also issued a public statement designed to discourage future vigilante actions: “The cause of the United States is not aided, but

is hurt, by this kind of thing. No nightriders are needed, and when the country is at war for liberty and justice they make a humiliating contrast to our national ideals and aims.<sup>cxxviii</sup>

Baker was less zealous in the protection of free speech for those with whom he did not share common cause. Despite protestations from George Peabody, Baker did believe that the government had the right to prosecute individuals who advocated violent revolution.<sup>cxxix</sup> Baker still made some efforts to protect the rights of those more radical than himself. He voted to pardon Eugene V. Debs, though it did little to help the jailed socialist leader, who remained in prison for the duration of Wilson's presidency. He won a small victory when he successfully lobbied Attorney General Gregory to have an old German nationalist with whom he was acquainted released from internment.<sup>cxxx</sup> After being entreated by fellow single-taxer Albert Nock to make the case to Attorney General Gregory for ending the prosecution of the socialist journal, *The Masses*, Baker agreed.<sup>cxxxi</sup> If he made the case, though, nothing did or, ever would have, come of it; Gregory refused to listen even to President Wilson's pleas on the matter.<sup>cxxxii</sup>

Other single-taxers were more willing to protect the far left, even if it brought them into direct conflict with others factions in the administration. When Howe, as Immigration Commissioner, was ordered to deport foreign-born socialists, he refused to do so before they were given a trial.<sup>cxxxiii</sup> The deportation cases then came under the authority of the Labor Department, where Post presided over the hearings. Post pardoned 2,700 of the 3,400 cases that came before him, arguing that membership in communist organizations was not sufficient evidence for prosecution.<sup>cxxxiv</sup> Both Howe and Post were called by Congress to answer charges of radicalism. Republican Congressman Hoch from Kansas passed a motion to investigate the possibility of impeaching Post. Attorney General Palmer noted he was not surprised "when the opportunity ... presented itself [to Post] in an official way to render a service to those who

advocate force and violence” that he “should employ it to the limit. He has always been sympathetic to that sort of thing.”<sup>cxxxv</sup>

Before Randolph Bourne famously predicted in “Twilight of the Idols” that the war would be an untamable force, Creel had already written about the inevitable process by which the war would stifle internal dissent. Unlike his fellow village denizen, Creel fought a precarious battle within the institutions to mitigate its stifling effects. After Wilson’s declaration of war against Germany, Creel wrote him recommending a program of “voluntary censorship.” It was assumed that there was sensitive military information that if published would endanger the war effort. To forestall more oppressive measures, Creel’s plan was to draw up voluntary guidelines for what types of information were acceptable to publish and to provide the press with useful information about the war effort, mixing “censorship and publicity.”<sup>cxxxvi</sup> To put this plan into effect, on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1917, Wilson created the Committee of Public Information (CPI) with Creel as its chair, using war appropriations that he had unilateral control over.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> Despite the illiberal implications of the CPI, Creel always saw his job as an effort to prevent more oppressive forms of censorship:

I took this position because I believed in the freedom of the press, and wanted to be in a position where I could help to guard it. You know and I know that this freedom has been often abused, and that out of the abuse have proceeded injury to institutions and injustice to individuals. But you cannot cure such an evil by cutting it out. A better way is to crowd it out. Suppression is not the wise remedy. Hope of betterment lies in the slow process of education and in the development of a capacity for restraint and self-discipline.<sup>cxxxviii</sup>

Nock, believing the position was untenable, wrote Creel that his was “the most detestable job in the world” and that while “you are sincere and loyal to the core, and honestly and with splendid industry and diligence trying to make something out of your job that will reflect sincerity and loyalty... If you do not succeed, -- and you won’t, -- it is because it isn’t in the job.”<sup>cxxxix</sup>

Steffens observed that Creel received nothing but abuse for his work, and was “often deeply depressed.” But he was confident that Creel was a superb operator behind the scenes, accomplishing a great deal for progressivism: “his services to the forward movement here and in the world... are a fine story. If it hadn’t been for Creel, I think sometimes everything but the war would have been stopped .... He has worked steadily for other things, insisted that the President hear of them and act, and fighting all the while with heads of other departments.”<sup>cxl</sup>

Creel’s CPI was shaped by his adherence to republican ideology, with its faith in education’s ability to promote national unity. The CPI’s focus on unity, manifest in pamphlets with names like “Unite to Win” was coercive, but often designed to shield dissent. Creel repeated the popular myth that American revolutionists were being encouraged by German agents, but added the caveat that right-wing lynch mobs were as well: “German agents are at work inciting the I.W.W., organizing leagues of conscientious objectors, and preaching violence in the West, while other German agents are leading mobs to tar and feather the victims of this German propaganda of social unrest.”<sup>cxli</sup> In his second message to the United States People, Creel reminded Americans that there were many loyal socialists, specifically naming Charles Edward Russell and John Spargo, an avowed Marxist.<sup>cxlii</sup> Both of the latter were employed by the CPI at various points, as was Edward Riis, son of famous reformer Jacob Riis. One CPI member wrote that leftists were employed by the CPI to provide them with the aura of patriotism necessary to guard against the threat of violence; when a “radical Democrat could not get access to any platform in his home town, in order to speak in support of the war, the Committee used him as a propagandist at large so as to save him from the appearance of being a pacifist.”<sup>cxliii</sup>

Creel employed his powers in defense of the Nonpartisan League, which was subject to a violent campaign of intimidation. League members were often brutally beaten; its gubernatorial

candidate, Charles Lindbergh, was fired on. Creel sent committee members to speak at Nonpartisan League meetings and organized a meeting between the League's President A. C. Townley and Wilson. At the league's convention a statement of Creel's was read to the effect that "Despite attacks, I believe intensely in the loyalty of the Nonpartisan league. I have done all in my power to defend it from unfair assaults."<sup>cxliv</sup> The CPI did a profile of the league's South Dakota gubernatorial candidate Mark Bates, "to send to allied and neutral countries, with the idea of keeping their people informed as to the activities of this nation and also of helping to maintain their morale." Headlines in the state read that the league had been "Asked to Aid Federal Government in Propaganda," giving the league evidence of its loyalty.<sup>cxlv</sup> The league's opponents, on the other hand, were smeared by Creel as unpatriotic for interrupting a Nonpartisan League meeting at which a CPI official were speaking.<sup>cxlvi</sup> Creel's defense of the league is not surprising, since he saw much of his own politics in the league. In a profile of league governor Lynn Frazier written in 1923, Creel highlighted Frazier's support for government ownership of transportation, coal mines and other "natural monopolies;" as well as the fact that the league had exempted farm improvements from taxation, a step in the direction of land value taxation.<sup>cxlvii</sup> Creel knew first hand that people of his political inclinations were subject to harassment; as chair of the CPI, Creel, like Howe and Post, was called to Congress to address questions about his radicalism.

The CPI's domestic accomplishments, however, paled in comparison to its international ones. Creel hoped to use his organization to spread Wilsonianism and anti-imperialism across the globe. In early January 1918 the committee's representative in Russia, Edgar Sisson, requested that Wilson "re-state anti-imperialist war aims and democratic peace requisites of America in a thousand words or less, almost placard paragraphs" for easy distribution

internationally. Creel approached the President with the request, which Wilson fulfilled a few days later, on January 8<sup>th</sup>, by laying out his Fourteen Points.<sup>exlviii</sup> The Fourteen Points and Wilson's other speeches were sent around the world, from South Africa to China and Japan, using post cards, movies, and posters. Creel told Wilson that "for the first time in history the speeches of a national executive were given universal circulation, and I am proud to tell you, sir, that your declarations had the force of arms."<sup>cxlix</sup>

The effect of Creel's agitation was to stoke expectations for independence globally. In Beijing sixty thousand marched in solidarity with the Allied victory in Europe, some shouting "Long Live President Wilson."<sup>cl</sup> The young Ho Chi Minh came to the peace conference in Versailles with a petition asking for Vietnamese Independence. When the terms of peace failed to live up to the hopes that Creel had helped create the reaction was often violent. Protests irrupted across the world, from China and Korea to India and Egypt. As the liberal message of self-determination preached by Wilson and Creel fell into disfavor, Lenin's gospel of anti-colonialism rapidly became more persuasive. Ho Chi Minh joined the Communist Party in 1920; Mao Ze Dong was thrust into political life with the May Fourth protests against Versailles in 1919. Korea was the laggard, with its Communist Party established a few years later in 1925.

Even before Versailles, there was evidence that Creel's aspirations outpaced the reality of the situation. When Wilson, who routinely read and edited Creel's speeches, came across a passage declaring that America sought to "establish a Monroe doctrine not only in South America, but for the Balkan States, for China, and wherever else a weaker people are in danger of being exploited by force," Wilson politely penciled through it. In its place he wrote a comment about the "adequate defense of law."<sup>cli</sup> Implicit in this moment is a difference of opinion between Wilson and his chief propaganda officer as to whether the war would be a

global struggle against colonialism or a means of restoring the established world order. There is no evidence that the president made any attempt to further clarify his correction, even though it indicates an important divide between the President and his chief propagandist.<sup>clii</sup>

Creel suggests that if Wilson's opinions were not as advanced as his own, it was because he understood the limitations of his position. While traveling to Versailles, Creel thanked Wilson for the Fourteen Points address. The President responded on a deeply pessimistic note:

It is a great thing that you have done... but I am wondering if you have not unconsciously spun a net for me from which there is no escape. It is to America that the whole world turns today, not only with its wrong, but with its hopes and grievances. The hungry expect us to feed them, the roofless look to us for shelter, the sick of heart and body depend upon us for cure. All of these expectations have in them the quality of terrible urgency. There must be no delay.... People will endure their tyrants for years, but they tear their deliverers to pieces if a millennium is not created immediately. Yet you know, and I know, that these ancient wrongs, these present unhappiness, are not to be remedied in a day .... What I seem to see – with all my heart I hope that I am wrong – is a tragedy of disappointment.”<sup>cliii</sup>

The statement is almost too prescient to be credible; Creel's memory of the conversation and his own objectivity are open to question. But, if nothing else, this quote, with his depiction of Wilson as an authentic reformer, cognizant of his limitations, is extemporaneous of the way that most single-taxers saw their commander-in-chief.

Single-taxers did not uniformly back Wilson or the war effort, but those who worked closely with him became overwhelmingly confident of his sincerity. Opponents, like Albert Jay Nock called the war “Anglo-American Imperialism.” He worked to persuade his friends in the administration to retire, though even he acknowledged that he could “see the force of the idea that it might be better for a few chaps like you [Whitlock] and Baker and Howe to be helping run this thing than for it to be altogether in the hands of the professional-criminal class.”<sup>cliv</sup> Howe,

who was in the administration, but never terribly close to Wilson, was decidedly mixed in his views of a man whom he saw as a sincere and remarkable evangelist, who was nevertheless deeply flawed personally and incapable of practical politics.<sup>clv</sup> On the other hand, Creel's remembrance of Wilson was typical of those closer to him. He recalled visiting Wilson, ill after his stroke, "his face white and ravaged... a terrible desolation in his eyes. 'I failed.' Was his cry. 'I failed.'"<sup>clvi</sup> The vision of Wilson as a radical idealist, whose greatest short-coming was the world with which he kept company, was ubiquitous amongst those radicals closest to him.<sup>clvii</sup> Steffens fondly remembered that when he was newly converted to the Bolshevik faith and "all the secret services were pestering me in Paris and the papers were hot after me, Wilson stepped out of the group of premiers at the Crillon and, with a crowd looking on in astonishment, put his arm over my shoulder and whispered in my ear,-- nothing. He meant to rebuke the detectives and reporters, and he certainly did it." Even as he moved progressively further to the left, Steffens continued to see Wilson as a "victim" of forces beyond, his, or any other man's, control.<sup>clviii</sup>

Creel, however, never accepted Wilson's contention that he had failed.<sup>clix</sup> This is no doubt because what Creel and many of the other single-taxers saw as Wilsonianism came to fruition. Although the philosophical justifications and scope differed, the Baker's War Industries Board naturally became a model for future reforms, especially Franklin Roosevelt's flagship program, the National Recovery Agency.<sup>clx</sup> The debate about what to do with Muscle Shoals raged on until the thirties, when Franklin Roosevelt became President. Then, the project which Baker had built and helped to defend against privatization was expanded into the Tennessee Valley Authority. Post's assistant in designing the soldiers' resettlement program, Benton MacKaye, became one of the leading members of the Regional Planning Association of America, an organization that promoted other federally designed and owned communities. The



RPAA developed allies in Frederic Delano and Al Smith, both of whom had considerable sway over President Roosevelt. F.D.R. himself spoke at an RPAA conference in Charlottesville. His Administration would, under the Resettlement Administration, build nearly one hundred government-owned communities similar to the one that Post had proposed.<sup>clxi</sup>

Writing about the single tax movement in the wake of the Wilson Administration, Louis Post claimed:

The organized movement is far from indicative of the strength of the movement itself. Both in Congress and throughout the Executive Department, as well among non-official citizens, there are many single-taxers whose quiet influence is having its effect upon the common thought of the community.<sup>clxii</sup>

This focus on the “quiet influence” of powerful men has made the history of the single tax movement harder to trace than others that focused primarily on organizing autonomous institutions. However, for a group that, at least in principle, rejected the notion of private property in natural resources, transportation, and communication, the single-taxers were remarkably effective policy makers. They were also complex. It is not uncommon to mistake Creel as a reactionary because of his zeal to promote unity and preserve the republic; Baker because of his fairly laissez-faire views toward those sectors of the economy that he did not consider “natural monopolies.”<sup>clxiii</sup> If historians have difficulty squaring those perspectives with their strident advocacy for the nationalization of large segments of the economy it is because they are unfamiliar with the complex of ideas that developed around the single-tax movement. It is only within this context that these figures, and the administration that they helped shape, become intelligible.

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<sup>i</sup> “New Light on Colorado Shed by Labor Leader,” May 14 1914, Oversized 5, George Creel Papers, Library of Congress.

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- <sup>ii</sup> Steven Piott, *Holy Joe: Joseph Folk and the Missouri Idea* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997)
- <sup>iii</sup> *Final Report of the Commission on Industrial Relations* (Banard & Miller Print, Washington D.C., 1915), 31.
- <sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-108.
- <sup>v</sup> Joseph McCartin, *Labor's Great War: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy and the Origins of modern American Labor Relations, 1912-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Land value taxation, or the single tax, refers to a tax which confiscates all of the ground rent of a piece of property without assessing the value of improvements on land. This is based off the theory that land is a "natural monopoly" the rights of which belong to all. In the words of the report land value taxation entails: "The revision of the taxation system so as to exempt from taxation all improvements and tax unused land at its full rental value." *Final Report of the Commission on Industrial Relations*, 132.
- <sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.
- <sup>vii</sup> "The San Francisco Conference," *Joseph Fels Fund Bulletin*, September, 1915.
- <sup>viii</sup> Thomas Knock, *To End all Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- <sup>ix</sup> Most of these figures have not only endorsed the single-tax, they are actually involved in single-tax organizations. At this moment, Louis Post was the primary editor of the leading single-tax paper *The Public*. Brand Whitlock, Lincoln Steffens, and Frederic C. Howe were all either advisory or contributing editors to *The Public*. Howe and Steffens, in fact, were entrusted to the Board of the Fels Fund, from which position they were responsible for dispersing funds for single tax agitation around the world. In 1914 Newton Baker spoke at the fourth annual Fels Fund commission in Washington, declaring himself in favor of the single tax. While in office, Surgeon General William Gorgas wrote a pamphlet for the Fels Fund arguing that the single tax was the best way to deal with sanitation issues. William C. Gorgas and Lewis J Johnson, "Two Papers on Public Sanitation and the Single Tax," (Cincinnati: Joseph Fels Fund of America, 1915). Arthur Power Dudden, *Joseph Fels and the single-tax movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1971), p 250. The single tax was apparently never too far away from Creel's mind while he was in office, because one of his first public statements at the conclusion of the Wilson administration was an exhortation for progressives to focus on "Henry George's theory." George Creel, "A Talk by Creel before the Wilmette Club of Chicago February 20," Box 5, George Creel Papers.
- <sup>x</sup> *Century Magazine*, October 1913, 834.
- <sup>xi</sup> Louis Post, Diary, p 9, Louis Post Papers, Library of Congress. Louis Post, "Living a Long Life over Again," pp. 303-304, Post Papers.
- <sup>xii</sup> Recent historians have focused on the importance that forming this coalition had to Democrats during this period. Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Knopf 2006). Elizabeth Sanders, *The Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State 1877-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Charles Postel has even alluded to the fact that the single-taxers might have been important in such a coalition: Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- <sup>xiii</sup> To be more precise Baker was considered for Attorney General, offered the job of Secretary of the Interior, and finally took over the War Department. Whitlock served as Minister to Belgium, but was also offered the Ambassadorship to Russia and England. Brand Whitlock to Marshall Sheppey 17 January 1916, Brand Whitlock Papers, Library of Congress.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Palmer Frederick, *Newton D. Baker: America at War* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1931) 1:8.
- <sup>xv</sup> Frederic, *Newton D. Baker*, 1:81.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Newton Baker to Brand Whitlock, December 23, 1916, Whitlock Papers, Library of Congress.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Edgar Eugene Robinson, *The Presidential Vote* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1934), 292-299. Statistics are based off a comparison between the 1908 and the 1916 election because Roosevelt's third party run in 1912 threw party loyalties into question making it a poor point of comparison. The decline of the socialist vote in Ohio has also been credited with Wilson's victory there. Actually from 1908 to 1916 the entire third party vote only declined slightly from 46,519 to 46,177. In 1912, the fact that a progressive victory was clear emboldened voters to side with Debs, inflating his numbers in a way that is unrepresentative. But if all the third party voters in 1908 had shifted to the Democratic Party in 1916 it would not have changed the result of the election.
- <sup>xviii</sup> George Peabody to Theodore Bacon, Feb. 23, 1914, box 69, George Peabody Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Col. House to George Peabody, Feb 21, 1914, Peabody Papers. "I do wish you would come down

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to see the President soon after he gets back on the 12<sup>th</sup>. It would do a world of good to the situation – national – as a whole ... the time is ripe – also I know the President would be in just the frame of mind to listen to your outlook on things – It is a matter far bigger than state P.O. or even the Democratic Party in ... N Y. State! And I feel you can be of great service to the country.” Franklin Roosevelt to George Peabody, Dec 31, 1913, Box 69, George Peabody Papers.

<sup>xix</sup> Woodrow Wilson to George Creel, March 26<sup>th</sup> 1912, Box 75, Peabody Papers.

<sup>xx</sup> Lansing, *War Memoirs* (New York: Bob Merrill’s Company, 1935), 323.

<sup>xxi</sup> Wilson was of course, trying to represent the progressive west and the fairly conservative south at the same time. These divisions become most apparent when members of the administration literally begin prosecuting their peers. We can see this as indicative of the fragility of Wilson’s coalition and a reason why Wilson would become what Skowronek has called a “preemptive president” – one who tries but fails to reconstruct the existing party order. Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush* (Cambridge: Belknap University Press, 1993).

<sup>xxii</sup> “*Congressional Record: Subcommittee Hearing on National Colonization Bill* (May, 18, 22, 25, June 5, 15, 1916).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Louis Post, “Living a Long Life Over Again,” p. 325, Post Papers.

<sup>xxiv</sup> George Foster Peabody to Stoughton Cooley forwarded to Baker, May 31, 1918, Baker Papers.

<sup>xxv</sup> Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer*, 222. Frederic Howe, *Confessions of a Reformer* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1925), 263-265.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Kenneth E. Miller. *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 250.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Mark Benbow, *Leading them to the Promised Land: Woodrow Wilson, Covenant Theology, and the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1915* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2010), 58.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Benbow, 58. According to Steffens “He took my view of Mexico and acted upon it...” Lincoln Steffens to Brand Whitlock, January 28, 1925, Lincoln Steffens Papers, Columbia University Library, New York, New York.

<sup>xxix</sup> Benbow, 88. Wilson made this statement to Baker in a private conversation. Eds. Ella Winter and Granville Hicks, *The Letters of Lincoln Steffens* (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1938), 1:377.

<sup>xxx</sup> *Ibid.*, 356-359.

<sup>xxxi</sup> *Ibid.*, 361-364.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Harry Stein, “Lincoln Steffens and the Mexican Revolution,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Apr., 1975) 203.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Stein, 197-212

<sup>xxxiv</sup> “Propaganda and the Mexican Problem,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1919.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Benbow, 91-92.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> *The New York Times*, “Women Insist Baker Must Resign,” Oct 23, 1916. The Washington Post attributed the radicalization of the Mexican revolution to American Bolsheviks and claimed to have statements from Federal officials that Steffens was responsible for Article 27. “Mexico’s Law like Bolshevik” *The Washington Post*, Feb. 17 1919. The rumor developed a life of its own taking root in popular and trade publications. *The Journal of the Engineer’s Club of Philadelphia* Vol. XXXVII (Philadelphia: The Engineer’s Club of Philadelphia, 1920), 357.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> George Creel, *Wilson and the Issues* (New York: The Century Company, 1916), 5-6.

<sup>xxxix</sup> *The Letters of Lincoln Steffens*, 377. Walsh served on the The National Single-Tax Committee of the United States and argued on at least one occasion that “the single tax is the only thing that has in it the final solution of these industrial problems. It is the only thing that will give the working man a chance and to Labor, its own.” “A True Citizen of Missouri,” *Joseph Fels Fund Bulletin*, July, 1913. In short, three single-taxers met behind closed doors to determine presidential appointments designed to protect a revolution that at least one of the three (Steffens) perceived to be a direct outgrowth of their movement. One of their proposed nominees Howe, was a vocal single-taxers, and Brandeis was, at least, personally close to many. Brandeis was offered the job; Howe, as was mentioned earlier, had been considered by Wilson. This is a clear cut example of a social movement transplanting itself directly into a presidential administration.

<sup>xl</sup> Stein, 205.

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<sup>xli</sup> “Say’s Creel advised the Mexican Senate,” Oct 2, 1919, Oversized 8, p 141, Creel Manuscripts. “Find Russian Reds Work Via Mexico,” *New York Times*, November, 15 1919.

<sup>xlii</sup> George Creel, “Woodrow Wilson’s Last Years,” *Saturday Evening Post*, January 10, 1931.

<sup>xliii</sup> Oversized 8 p 194-205 Creel Papers. George Creel, “Scrambled Washington: Battle of the Bureaus” *Colliers*, June 11, 1921. Lansing condemned Creel for allowing his subordinate to contact royalty. Creel sarcastically reflected that: “Shaken and shattered, I went back to the office, sent for Mr. Rochester, and demanded to know why he—a commoner—had dared to insult royalty with blunt cables.”

<sup>xliv</sup> Attorney General Alexander Palmer to President Wilson, November 8, 1920, Creel Papers.

<sup>xliv</sup> “Creel Returning to Aid Mexicans,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1920.

<sup>xlv</sup> Oversized 8, 194-207, Creel Papers.

<sup>xlvii</sup> “A Report to the People’s of the World: Official Statement of President Obregon,” June 26, 1921, Box 8, Creel Papers.

<sup>xlviii</sup> “U.S. Finds Creel in Note Writer for Obregon” “Creel is Personal Press Agent for General Obregon,” Oversize 9, Creel Papers.

<sup>xlix</sup> Creel’s focus on a land tax that would prevent idle speculation in land and that would confiscate increases in land value, make it clear that he is using coded language for the single tax: “Under former regimes the favored owners of these enormous estates paid little or no taxes. They could hold whole valleys and great stretches of tableland in idleness for years, using them as grazing grounds for scattered herds of cattle or else waiting for an increase in land values. Honest taxation will put an end to this policy of land monopoly and non-productivity. It will do one of two things – either it will force the landlord to cultivate his holdings or else it will force him to sell or at least to lease these holdings to the small farmer, who has hitherto been barred from the land.” “A Report to the People’s of the World: Official Statement of President Obregon,” P11, June 26, 1921, Box 8, Creel Papers.

<sup>l</sup> Brand Whitlock to Newton Baker, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1917, Baker Papers.

<sup>li</sup> Creel, *Wilson and the Issues*, 29.

<sup>lii</sup> Creel, *Wilson and the Issues*, 8.

<sup>liii</sup> Miller, 257.

<sup>liv</sup> Daniel Beaver, *Newton D. Baker and the American War Effort* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 26.

<sup>lv</sup> Henry George, *The Irish Land Question* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881).

<sup>lvi</sup> *The Public*, Feb. 18, 1899.

<sup>lvii</sup> *The Public*, April 30, 1899.

<sup>lviii</sup> “Quit Convention for Small Nations,” *New York Times*, Oct 29, 1917.

<sup>lix</sup> Frederic C. Howe. *The Only Possible Peace* (New York: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1919), 231.

<sup>lx</sup> *The Letters of Lincoln Steffens*, 1:422.

<sup>lxi</sup> Quoted in Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24.

<sup>lxii</sup> Lloyd Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 24.

<sup>lxiii</sup> W.E.B Du Bois, “Mr. Trotter and Mr. Wilson,” *The Crisis* (Jan. 1915), 120.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Jefferty B. Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 373-386.

<sup>lxv</sup> Morris Williams of the *Call* wrote, in regards to this controversy: “This is the party of Woodrow Wilson. That is the party that made him President. Their chief strength came from the South; without the South—the White South (for all elections are white men’s elections) – Woodrow Wilson would never have become President. Without the aid of the party of these men, the cultured Wilson would never have ascended to the Presidency. And so there are political debts to pay.” Wilson himself concedes that he was doing it to abate prejudice: “The white people of the country... as well as I, wish to see the colored people progress, and admire the progress they have already made, and want to see them continue along independent lines. There is, however, a great prejudice against colored people... It will take one hundred years to eradicate this prejudice, and we must deal with it as practical men.” Du Bois, “Mr. Trotter and Mr. Wilson,” 119-121. In private correspondence with Creel he also seemed to indicate that he had been handicapped in his policies on race: “I have received several delegations of negroes and I am under the impression that they have gone away dissatisfied. I have never had an opportunity

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actually to do what I promised them I would seek an opportunity to do." Wilson to Creel, June 18, 1918, Box 2, Creel Papers.

<sup>lxvi</sup> Roy Watson Curry, "Woodrow Wilson and Philippine Policy," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Dec., 1954), pp. 435-452.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Brand Whitlock, *Belgium Under the German Occupation* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 1:222.

<sup>lxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>lxix</sup> Brand Whitlock to Newton Baker, January 17, 1917, Baker Papers. Of course, because both of the people he instructs Hoover to meet with our single-taxers, and he talks about Hoover being the man that the liberal movement as "you and I understand it" needs, it seems single-taxers are here using their executive positions to convert subordinates.

<sup>lxx</sup> "Memorandum for the Secretary of War from Provost Marshal General," August 30, 1917, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Brand Whitlock to Newton Baker, July 26, 1916, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxii</sup> Brand Whitlock to Newton Baker, August 7, 1917, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Ambrose Woody to Brand Whitlock March 26, 1917, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> W. M. Johnson to Newton Baker, December 24, 1916, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Newton Baker to Woodrow Wilson, December 25, 1916, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Woodrow Wilson to Newton Baker, December 26, 1916, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Knock touches on the influence of progressive internationalists on the President: Knock, 117-119. Of course Wilson did not always acquiesce to his cabinet; the resignation of Bryan being one of the more notable examples of that. However, the wide leeway that he gave Palmer and Bursleson provide examples of Wilson's deference to cabinet officials, as is the example, later on in the text, of Wilson giving three department heads veto power over the solidier resettlement plan.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> *The Letters of Lincoln Steffens*, 394.

<sup>lxxix</sup> Palmer Frederick *Newton D. Baker: America at War* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1931), 1:48.

<sup>lxxx</sup> Frederick, *Newton D. Baker*, 1:178.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> Newton D Baker to George Peabody, November 29, 1918, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Frederick, *Newton D. Baker*, 1:50.

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> *The National Defense Act approved June 3, as Amended by Act Approved August 29<sup>th</sup> 1916*, (Washington: Government Printing Office: 1921), 44

<sup>lxxxv</sup> *Statement of Newton D. Baker and Col J. W. Joyes before the Committees on Appropriations and Military Affairs relative to Nitrate Plants* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919).

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> *The Public*, May 14, 1898.

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Baker makes clear that single tax doctrine informed his political activities in Cleveland, noting that in "the intimate circle which surrounded Tom Johnson ... there was much talk about Mr. George's doctrines...." Newton Baker to Will Atkinson Feb. 14, 1925, box. 32, *Baker Papers*. Baker indicates that he himself a deep personal knowledge of George: "I, of course, have the complete edition of Mr. George's works and know Progress and Poverty too well to need an abstract of it for my own use. Indeed I believe the distribution of Moses is much more likely (sic) penetrate than any part of Progress and Poverty, the economic qualities of which instantly arouse resistance in many minds." Newton Baker to Will Atkinson, September 17, 1927, Box 32, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Although Baker is generally associated with his foreign policy from World War I on, he is still a supporter of single tax economics well after he takes the national stage, though he endorsed a moderate, long term strategy for its adoption. In the 1920s he gave a statement for a proposed book project "The Henry George We Knew": "The world has never suddenly accepted and applied any change in its political or social philosophy so radical as that embodied in the single tax. Great truths have to make their way be accepted piece meal. Many of the implications of the single tax which were startling in Henry George's day have become commonplace parts of our later thinking and have modified economic doctrines which seemed final before they came into contact with the philosophy which Henry George preached." Newton Baker to Will Atkinson, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1925 Box 32, Baker Papers. He isn't explicit about what "implications of the single tax" have become common place in this quote, but in a letter in which he expresses very similar ideas he states that "many of the things which Henry George first recognized as legalized and law borne privilege have now been discarded form the list of things we either approve or tolerate." Newton Baker to D. W. McIntire, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1931, Box 153, Baker Papers. "Legal and law borne privilege" refers to

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natural monopolies like government contracts and street railways, in which the state picks operators and thus gives special legal privileges to certain economic agents. Importantly Baker attributes these reforms directly to the philosophy of George; we can question Baker's judgment about the overall role that George plays, but at the very least, his assessment indicates that he himself was influenced by George's ideas when challenging "law borne privilege."

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Newton Baker to Woodrow Wilson, May 28, 1917, Baker Papers.

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Newton Baker to Woodrow Wilson, February 1, 1918, Baker Papers.

<sup>xc</sup> The only major attempt to control consumer costs was a price setting deal with the shoe industry that fell well short of Baruch's expectations. Robert Cuff, *The War Industries Board* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1973), 237-239.

<sup>xc</sup> Frederick, *Newton D. Baker*, 1:131.

<sup>xcii</sup> Cuff, *The War Industries Board*, 126.

<sup>xciii</sup> Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer*, 269.

<sup>xciv</sup> George Foster Peabody to Newton Baker, January 5, 1918, Baker Papers. Elsewhere Peabody made it explicit that his opinions about nationalization developed directly from his adherence to single tax ideology: "... I have reached my very firm convictions as to the disadvantages to the public interest of private ownership of all public utilities. I am the more strongly confirmed in this by my long-time interest in and acceptance of the general principles laid down by Henry George in his great work 'Progress and Property' (sic). It was in connection with Mr. Baker's association with Tom Johnson that I first became so much interested in his career. I fortunately met Henry George personally so far back as 1880 and thus came to know the rare and extraordinary qualities of the man...." The reference to Baker is, of course, elliptical. However, sandwiched as it is between his profession of faith in the single tax and his statement to the effect that he had met George, it clearly implicates Baker in the movement for the single tax and public ownership. George Peabody to Ralph Chatam Phenix, November 7, 1927, box 185, Baker Papers.

<sup>xcv</sup> Oversized 8, 30-33, George Creel Papers. *The Public*, July 16, 1898.

<sup>xcvi</sup> *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 8, no. 4 (January, 1920):213-217, 184-189.

<sup>xcvii</sup> "Charges being made by Shuler 'Infamous from man of the Ministry'" *Los Angeles Examiner*, Oversized 10, Creel Papers.

<sup>xcviii</sup> *National Defense Act*, 45.

<sup>xcix</sup> Newton Baker to Woodrow Wilson, November 3, 1917, Baker Papers.

<sup>c</sup> While there are many components to the bill, in hearings Baker expressed particular interest in the ability of the government to obtain the dams after the expiration of their lease. *Hearings Before the Committee on Water Power*, March 18 to May 15, 1918, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), 679-683.

<sup>ci</sup> The New York State Single Tax League to Gifford Pinchot, April 17, 1916, box 18, Gifford Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>cii</sup> Cong. Rec., 64<sup>th</sup> Cong., (March 2, 1923), 5059, 5176.

<sup>ciii</sup> Newton Baker to W. I. Drummond March 17, 1924, W. I. Drummond to Newton Baker, March 14, 1924, Newton Baker to W. I. Drummond March 29, 1924, W. I. Drummond to Newton Baker, March 22, 1924, Baker Papers.

<sup>civ</sup> "May Subpoena Ford on Muscle Shoals" *New York Times* April 26, 1924.

<sup>cv</sup> "House Votes Favor Ford's Shoals Bid," *New York Times*, March 8, 1924. Of course this contrasts sharply with most current historical treatments which are surprisingly prone to see the development of the TVA as the product of a single Senator, George Norris. According to one account the Tennessee Valley Authority was "the brain child of Senator Norris." Alan Dawley, *Changing the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 343.

<sup>cvi</sup> Cong. Rec., 65<sup>th</sup> Cong., (March 10, 1924), 3911. Those familiar with single tax economics will recognize that this reflects the believe that natural monopolies grow in value with social progress; the central argument of *Progress and Poverty* of course being that poverty remains constant despite progress because land and similar natural monopolies consume all of the economic benefits of progress.

<sup>cvii</sup> The Association for an Equitable Federal Income Tax, "Why the federal Government Should Secure at least Three Hundred Million Dollars by a Rapidly Progressive Individual Income Tax," Box 561, William McAdoo Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

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- <sup>cviii</sup> Ibid. This quote confirms Robert Johnston argument that the single tax movement reflects, in large part the desire for a producerist tax that would shift the burden of public finance onto the back of those who are perceived as profiting from idle speculation. Robert Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
- <sup>cix</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>cx</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>cxii</sup> Ibid., 106-122.
- <sup>cxii</sup> Steven R. Weisman, *The Great Tax Wars: Lincoln to Wilson, The Fierce Battles over Money and Power that Transformed the Nation* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2002). Elliot Broulnee, *Federal Taxation in America: A Short History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- <sup>cxiii</sup> Louis Post, "Living a Long Life over Again," p. 325, box 4, Post Papers.
- <sup>cxiv</sup> Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of to-morrow* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 136.
- <sup>cxv</sup> As far back as the 1880s Post had written that a tax would be more efficient, but that he was open to leasing and that he was not "disposed to quarrel about the cut of a garment before the cloth is woven or the sheep sheared. *Standard*, July 27, 1889.
- <sup>cxvi</sup> Post, "Living a Long Life over Again," 321-330. Because the government in Post's plan would do little more than collect rent off of the land, the plan was functionally identical to the single tax, as long as the rent was accessed on the basis of the site value of the land.
- <sup>cxvii</sup> Keith W. Olson *Biography of a Progressive: Franklin K. Lane 1864-1921*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 18. Paul Conkin wrongly attributed the initial impetus for the plan to Secretary Wilson, Paul K. Conkin, "The Vision of Elwood Mead" *Agricultural History* 34 (Apr, 1960), 91.
- <sup>cxviii</sup> Franklin Lane, *The Letters of Franklin K. Lane* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922), 375.
- <sup>cxix</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 350.
- <sup>cxx</sup> Keith Olson, *Franklin K. Lane: Biography of a Progressive*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1919), 152.
- <sup>cxxi</sup> Franklin K. Lane, "Work and Homes for Returning Soldiers, Sailors and Marines," Report to the 65<sup>th</sup> Congress, Feb 27, 1919.
- <sup>cxxii</sup> Frederic C. Howe, *The Land and the Soldier* (New York: Charles Scribners Son's, 1919), 190-192, 90.
- <sup>cxxiii</sup> Howe, *The Land and the Solider*, 90-92.
- <sup>cxxiv</sup> *The Public*, Sept 25, 1918.
- <sup>cxxv</sup> Newton Baker to Woodrow Wilson September 6, 1917, Baker Papers.
- <sup>cxxvi</sup> Baker to John Sharp Williams (undated), Reel 3, Newton Baker Papers.
- <sup>cxxvii</sup> Frederic, *Newton D. Baker* 1:235-237.
- <sup>cxxviii</sup> Ohio National Civil Liberties Bureau, "The Outrage on Hubert S. Bigelow of Cincinnati," 1918.
- <sup>cxxix</sup> "I agree entirely with his criticism of the Davey Bill; I think its language loose and indefinite. I think I do not agree with him, however, in his criticism that membership in societies organized for the purpose of overthrowing the Government by violence ought not to be penalized. The difficulty I have with societies of that sort is that discreet and subtle persons inflame the imagination of unstable people and cause them to commit acts of terrorism and violence which the instigators themselves are too prudent to undertake. The Czolgosz incident is a case in point. Emma Goldman and a lot of other inflammatory persons provoked his weak mind into believing that he would be a hero if he became an assassin." Baker to Peabody, Feb. 12, 1920 , Box 185, Newton Baker Papers.
- <sup>ccxxx</sup> Newton D. Baker to Attorney General Gregory, October 18, 1917, Baker Papers.
- <sup>ccxxxi</sup> Albert Jay Nock to Newton Baker, June 9, 1918, *Newton Baker Papers*.
- <sup>ccxxxii</sup> *To End All Wars*, 227-246.
- <sup>ccxxxiii</sup> Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer*, 292.
- <sup>ccxxxiv</sup> Louis Post, "The Deportations Delirium of 1920," p. 157, Post Papers.
- <sup>ccxxxv</sup> *New York Times*, June 2, 1920.
- <sup>ccxxxvi</sup> George Creel to the President, Robert Lansing, Newton Baker and Josephus Daniels (undated), Box 1, Creel Papers.
- <sup>ccxxxvii</sup> Walton Bean, "George Creel and his Critics: A Study of the Attacks on the Committee of Public Information," (Berkeley: University of California, 1941), 21-22.
- <sup>ccxxxviii</sup> *Conference of the Press*, Speech by Creel, box 5, 1917, Creel Papers.

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- <sup>cxxxix</sup> Bean, 257.
- <sup>cxl</sup> *The Letters of Lincoln Steffens*, 1:425.
- <sup>cxli</sup> George Creel, "United We Win, *The Independent*, April 6, 1918.
- <sup>cxlii</sup> George Creel, "Second Message from the United States Government to the American People" *The Independent*, February 16, 1918.
- <sup>cxliii</sup> Harvey O'Higgins, "Selling the World," George Creel Papers.
- <sup>cxliv</sup> "The Nonpartisan League and the Minnesota Campaign of 1918," *Minnesota History* 34 no. 6, 1955, 222.
- <sup>cxlv</sup> *Oversized* 6. p 153, Creel Papers. For more information on the relationship of Creel to the Non-Partisan League: Michael J. Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: The Nonpartisan League in the North American West*, book manuscript.
- <sup>cxlvi</sup> Higgins, "Selling the War," 18.
- <sup>cxlvii</sup> "What do these Senators Want" by George Creel, *Oversized* 16, Creel Papers.
- <sup>cxlviii</sup> Untitled, Box 1, Creel Papers.
- <sup>cxlix</sup> Manela, 51.
- <sup>cl</sup> Manela, 103.
- <sup>cli</sup> "Premature Peace," 1918, Box 1, Creel Papers.
- <sup>clii</sup> Not only does Wilson not provide additional comment in the text of his correction, Creel's account of this situation suggests that he did not confront him about it verbally either: "Always, however, he apologized most humbly for making changes, explaining that he was still the victim of early professorial habit that forced him to make alterations in every paper whether needed or not." George Creel to George Bates Creel, May 21, 1931, Box 1, Creel Papers.
- During the Versailles Conference, Creel also pleads with Wilson to take an active stance in promoting Irish Home Rule, and suggests that Lloyd George was disingenuous in his indications of sympathy with this position. That Creel would single out the issue of Ireland, which is a particularly volatile issue, since America had allied itself with Britain, is indicative of a high level of continuity between Creel's anti-colonialism and the single tax's early roots in Irish nationalism. It is also interesting that Creel calls for home rule, not complete independence, the same position that George had taken in *The Irish Land Question*, and the one which had of course served as the starting point for single-tax anti-colonialism. Creel to Wilson, March 1 1919, Box 2, *Creel Papers*.
- <sup>cliii</sup> "Woodrow Wilson Dinner Los Angeles December 28<sup>th</sup> 1935", speech by George Creel, Box 5, Creel Papers.
- <sup>cliv</sup> Albert Nock to Brand Whitlock May 27, 1917 Whitlock Papers.
- <sup>clv</sup> Frederic Howe, *Confessions of a Reformer*, 311-315.
- <sup>clvi</sup> "Woodrow Wilson Dinner Los Angeles, Speech by Creel," December 28, 1935, Box 5, Creel Papers.
- <sup>clvii</sup> That was not necessarily true of those out of the loop. Daniel Kiefer, an important, organizer who had served as an executive of the Fels Fund, was opposed to Wilson's war from the beginning. Daniel Kiefer to Lincoln Steffens, November 1919, Lincoln Steffens Papers, Columbia University Library.
- <sup>clviii</sup> Lincoln Steffens to Brand Whitlock, January 28, 1925, Steffens Papers.
- <sup>clix</sup> "Woodrow Wilson Dinner, Los Angeles Speech by George Creel," December 28, 1935, Creel Papers.
- <sup>clx</sup> Marc Eisner. *From Warfare State to Welfare State: World War I, compensatory state-building, and the limits of the modern order* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2000). The War Industries Board was based on the philosophy that public contracts were a special case where the market did not function properly. The National Recovery Agency applied a regulatory regime indiscriminately throughout the economy. The regulations of the National Recovery Agency also far surpassed the scope of those imposed by the War Industries Board.
- <sup>clxi</sup> Edward Spann, *Designing Modern America: The Regional Planning Association of American and its Members* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1996). Carol Christensen, *The American Garden City and New Towns Movement* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986). Paul Conkin, *Tomorrow and New World: The New Deal Community Program* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959).
- <sup>clxii</sup> Louis F. Post, "The Prophet of San Francisco," p. 93 ½, Box 5, Post Papers.
- <sup>clxiii</sup> For examples of conservative depictions of Creel see: Christopher Sharrett, "9/11, The Useful Incident, and the legacy of the Creel Committee," *Cinema Journal* vol. 43 no. 4 (Summer, 2004) pp. 125-131. Susan Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). One extreme account claims that the CPI promoted "intolerance" and compares it to the Klan. Alan Dawley, *Changing the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 293, 335. That is particularly scurrilous because



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Creel used the CPI to promote the idea that America was a multiethnic nation. "It has been said that America is not one people, that Americans are not a race. Yet blood ties, after all, are not the closest ties, and the bonds that bind strongest are those that we tie of our own choice. Kinship is no mere matter of birth or race or language, but a deeper something that springs from similarity of ideas, ideals and aspirations. And in this sense America is one people, Americans are a race, for our fathers had the same passion for freedom, and the sons have the same faith and a common heritage." George Creel "Address to the Economic Club at Hotel Astor, April 4, 1918, Box 5, *Creel Papers*.

Accounts of Baker's work suggest that he was a conservative trying to restrain the more advanced ideas of Baruch. While that is partially true, they obviously miss his very radical ideas about government ownership of utilities and munitions and fail to comprehend while he would support price controls in government contracts but not private industry. Cuff, *The War Industries Board*. Beaver, *Newton D. Baker and the American War Effort*.

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