

NEWS DOMESTIC.

OREGON.

A *resume* OF THE GREAT FIGHT IN OREGON
—THE BUNKER HILL OF 1908 A PRELUDE FOR THE YORKTOWN OF TWO YEARS HENCE—MR. BOWERMAN TELLS OF THE SPLENDID SPIRIT OF OUR OREGON COMRADES.

The editor of the Single Tax REVIEW has requested that I pen a *resume* of the recent Single Tax Campaign in Oregon. To do this with events in order is not an easy task, for, the Oregon Tax Reform Ass'n lacked organization and system until the second week of May. Consequently no records were kept and, after such a struggle, where the energy of heart and mind is sacrificed, after the whirl and anxiety and exhaustion of a campaign for righteousness, whether the battle is won or lost, the past is, for a time, viewed as a strange dream—a phantasma, and memory overwhelmed with scattered material is unable to respond to the demands of intellect. I shall try, however, to satisfactorily record the history of the greatest fight ever made for the cause which we hold dear.

I might say briefly, we fought, we lost, we won: for out of the distraction of defeat arose the paean of victory. Our advance had been temporarily stayed but our little force still held the field. Without ammunition, with less money than is required to build a decent frame house, armed only with the zeal for justice, a mere handful had combatted the efforts of the hordes of special privilege and captured one third the State of Oregon. But let us go back.

From time to time the Single Taxers of Portland had met in the office of H. D. Wagnon, President of their Union Mutual Aid Ass'n. In 1907 a half dozen earnest spirits determined to organize The Oregon Tax Reform Ass'n, for the purpose of abolishing the system of faucet charge, and amend the city charter to compel the maintenance of the water system by an additional tax on land values. The water-board had contemplated raising the mini-

imum charge per house from \$1.50 per month to \$2.00. The fight was launched and while the effort was defeated through the refusal of the council on a technicality, to adopt the petition of the people the result of the struggle was a reduction of the minimum charge per house from \$1.50 to \$1.00 per month.

A few months elapsed when a call was issued with a view to discussing the advisability of submitting to the people under the "Initiative and Referendum" a tax amendment to the constitution. A constitutional amendment proposed by W. S. U'Ren and adopted by popular vote, had provided that the constitution can not be amended except by the people through the referendum. The time foreseen by Mr. U'Ren had arrived. If a tax amendment could be carried it must needs remain the law of the State.

The Legislature had, by U'Ren's foresight, been bereft of the power to corrupt or violate the will of the people. It is powerless; a tyrant once, a servant now. Accordingly in February of this ever-to-be-remembered year of our Lord 1908 the active Single Taxers of Portland with Mr. U'Ren of Oregon City, assembled to discuss an amendment. Two amendments were considered; a carefully prepared and pure Single Tax amendment offered by Mr. U'Ren and the amendment finally adopted offered by Mr. H. D. Wagnon. The debate was warm and fervid. Three meetings were adjourned without adoption of either. On the fourth assembling two supporters of the U'Ren measure being absent the partial exemption measure carried: Mr. U'Ren then and there, with characteristic candor declaring that he would not lend active support, that he "never stood for and would not consent to stand for a half way measure."

The measure adopted, Mr. H. D. Wagnon was chosen chairman and H. W. Stone, Treasurer. The first problem—the problem of funds—confronted the organization. Through the efforts of H. D. Wagnon something like \$500.00 was secured from local manufacturers, all large land owners, who, moved by the selfish belief that the proposed measure would act as a special privilege, had agreed to contribute \$1,500.

The Oregonian, the greatest paper of the State, at once assailed our effort and exposed the amendment as a Single Tax measure. The challenge was accepted without delay, the battle began, and the land holding manufacturers repudiated their pledges. All available funds were expended in circulating the petition, over 12,000 signatures having been secured in less than three weeks. It was then decided to call for aid from other States. Accordingly letters were addressed to prominent Single Taxers. At first there was no response. On the contrary discouraging and delaying comments were received from many to whom we had appealed. The members of the organization contributed every cent they could spare to the cause. At last out of the darkness came a ray of light—a letter from the Hon. Robt. Baker whose earnest efforts can not be too strongly commended. We learned that Mr. Baker had taken the initiative and had brought our struggle to the attention of the American Single Tax League—had spared no pains to render assistance—and through Mr. Baker came a letter from Mr. Bolton Hall and one from Mr. Joseph Fels, each bearing words of encouragement and promises of aid. The effort of Mr. Baker secured from Mr. Fels the sum of \$400.00. Mr. Kiefer later, realizing the value of our fight, gathered several hundred dollars for our cause. The room at No. 704 Marquam Bldg. was crowded with literature. Men abandoned their business and gave their time toward the success of the eternal right. From all over the nation came little contributions ranging from ten cents to ten dollars.

Each member felt more and more the nature of his burden—realized that the Single Tax world was looking to us and that on us was the responsibility. We had taken advantage of the law that requires the secretary of State to distribute to every voter in the State a copy of an argument in favor of and against each measure to be submitted to the people. One member, an old soldier, Mr. Himes, advanced \$300, all he possessed, as payment for the printing of the argument. We awaited impatiently the appearance of the pamphlet. It came to hand minus the

expected counter argument. It was later learned that two men had been delegated by the railroads to write a negative report, but when their arguments were submitted to the R. R. Attorney he rejected them as being so full of loop-holes as to aid rather than injure our efforts. The fight was now at its height; with the exception of a half dozen papers every sheet in the State followed the *Oregonian* and became our enemies. Every sheet was adorned with the big black caption, Single Tax. The Johnstown Democrat published a valuable argument which was reprinted in a number of newspapers throughout the State. The Single Taxers of Seattle made up a contribution which Mr. Stone, at that time visiting Seattle, brought to our relief. Tom L. Johnson sent a letter which published in the dailies did great good. Mr. Geo. L. Rusby (with Francis H. Legget & Co.) sent a splendid letter to every retail grocer in the State advising support of the Tax Reform amendment. We can not calculate the good that resulted from it. The *Canadian Single Taxer* aided the movement greatly both by advocacy and contribution. The *Daily News* of Portland, a small but widely read sheet, gave Louis A. Kerwin, a Canadian and enthusiastic acquisition to our forces, the free use of a column for educational purposes. Previous to this accession on the part of the *News* it had published a series of articles from the pen of Henry George, Jr. Two pages of the *Journal* were purchased, loaded down with Single Tax matter. The demand for information was great. On street corners, in restaurants, on street cars, where ever men gathered, the one theme prevailed. Those who had run athwart the beam of truth took on the fire of righteousness. Arguments glowed with that intense enthusiasm which is born of justice.

Inquiries came from every corner of the commonwealth. Cities and towns throughout the State called for speakers. E. S. J. McAllister and F. E. Coulter, our ablest orators, made many converts. Favorable reports were coming from all parts of the State, yet we realized that the rural population must be reached. Funds were low—far too inadequate to cope with the

situation. An appeal was again sent out. To all appearances \$5,000 would overwhelmingly carry the State. It was the opinion of the most conservative that \$5,000 would insure certain victory.

The writer stated the conditions in a personal letter to Mr. Baker. Our hopes were dying. We were heavily in debt. About twelve days before election Mr. Stone was notified by the U. S. Bank that \$1,000 had been cabled from England for use in the campaign. It came from Mr. Joseph Fels, through the efforts of Mr. Robt. Baker. Our hearts leaped with joy. But through the mistake of the telegraph company the message was delayed. It was addressed to Bowerman, Marquam Bldg., Portland. The company delivered the message to Senator Bowerman care of Dr. Coe, Marquam Bldg. The contribution was consequently delayed about ten days. The period of its greatest usefulness was passed. Ten days sooner it would have won thousands of votes for the cause. Speakers were immediately sent down the State. F. E. Coulter, E. S. J. McAllister and H. W. Stone started for the southern part of the State. The remainder of the available Single Taxers attacked the towns and cities within a radius of 20 miles of Portland. During the last week a cart tail campaign was conducted in Portland. A wagon bearing signs advised the populace that "vacant land buys no groceries," "Idle land means idle men," etc.

Our speakers returned from the state, having done great things. F. E. Coulter captured a Republican mass meeting at Roseburg, and organized it into a Single Tax Society. On Sunday, May 31st, a few members gathered the literature remaining—two graphic cartoons contributed by Bengough, and kept the Sabbath by distributing the glad tidings and imploring men to vote for Single Tax. The struggle was over. The tension of "what can we do" gave way to the anxiety "what will happen." On the evening of June 3 we were certain of having carried the city of Portland by 240 majority, but returns from the outer State were disappointing. The farmers had fooled themselves. At last the official returns were received and

in the dejection of defeat there came a handwriting on the wall. Lake and Coos counties had carried by large majorities, the city of Portland had carried. There had been more votes cast on the tax measure than any other measure but one. We had polled a vote of over one third the total vote. With a State larger than all the New England States combined, and a fund of only \$3,600 all told, we had won a victory—a victory never before equalled in the fight for pure democracy. This is the story of what has been. Much detail must needs be sacrificed. Many a name which should appear and recognition well deserved must be neglected in this short story of the struggle.

Let us turn to the story of the victory yet to be. On the evening of June 5th the active Single Taxers assembled at 704 Marquam Bldg. to determine on methods for carrying the partial victory to ultimate success. The fight was just begun. A committee consisting of McAllister, C. E. S. Wood, Coulter, U'Ren, Wagnon, Cridge and Stone, was appointed to determine the future course to be pursued. On the evening of the 19th the committee reported a plan to educate the people on the injustice of land monopoly by the publication of city and county maps of black and white in which the unused land shall be indicated with black. These maps shall have figures appended, the object being to make the people angry at existing conditions and inequality in taxation and the committee further recommended organization of the favorable vote into local single Tax Ass'ns. Following the report it was moved and ordered, H. D. Wagnon acting as temporary chairman, that the organization be henceforth styled the "Oregon Single Tax League." The following officers were then elected: President, E. S. J. McAllister; Vice-President, W. S. Holden, of Salem; Secretary, W. S. U'Ren; Treasurer, H. W. Stone.

A motion was carried instructing and empowering the president to appoint an executive committee to consist of 50 members, 15 from Multnomah County, 35 from outside counties. The meeting was then adjourned until Friday June 26th.

We have met again, proud of our achieve-

ment. with a greater faith in our fellow men, filled with a new ardor, and determined that two years and six months hence we shall win a greater—a more glorious victory than this one might have been: that we shall abolish taxation and substitute economic compensation, that we shall have enthroned the moral law and unthroned the tyrannies of the past. A gain of 3-12 of the total vote will win the day.

LOUIS BOWERMAN.

PORTLAND, Ore.

RHODE ISLAND

THE LOCAL OPTION BILL SLEEPING IN COMMITTEE—THE HENRY GEORGE CLUB TEACHING ECONOMIC TRUTHS—RHODE ISLAND SINGLE TAXERS SEND GREETING TO OUR OREGON COMRADES.

The Rhode Island General Assembly, for the year 1908, adjourned on May 26th, with the bill for local option in taxation introduced at the instance of the Rhode Island Tax Reform Association slumbering peacefully in the files of the committee to which it had been referred, namely: The Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives. As stated in a previous letter a public hearing was given on the bill which was largely attended and at which much interest was manifested. The members of the Committee were urged individually to have the bill reported to the House, but to no avail, as the result shows. It does not follow however that the work has gone for naught. People who had never given the subject of taxation a thought have had their interest awakened and the Single Tax will receive a larger degree of attention in Rhode Island by reason of this agitation than it has ever received before. This will be more and more apparent as time goes on.

The laws of Rhode Island are peculiar. This has been said many times before, but unlike some sayings that are often repeated it is true. One of these peculiarities relates to citizenship. The citizens of Rhode Island who exercise the franchise

are divided into two classes, property voters and registry voters. Property voters are privileged to vote on all questions and candidates, but registry voters are not allowed to vote in cities for members of the Boards of Aldermen or City Councils and in towns they are denied a voice in financial town meetings. Registry voters are required to register in person each year before the end of June in order to be eligible to participate in the November election. This brings the close of the registration period four months prior to the election and at a time when there is usually nothing special to direct the attention of the voter to his civic duties. The result, of course, is the disfranchisement of thousands of this class of voters, every year. Property voters are not required to register each year. Once registered their names remain on the list. This is a discrimination against the registry voter, and it should be corrected by requiring all voters to register annually; also the time for registering should be brought nearer to the time of election, say within two weeks. If this were done a much larger proportion of the electorate would participate in the elections.

The registry voter is denied a voice in questions involving the expenditure of money on the ground that he pays no taxes. He is being taught however that in reality he is the heaviest taxpayer, and that the problem that he must solve is "How can I escape the burden of taxation that is now crushing me to the earth?" A few of the members of the Henry George Club of this city have been holding open air meetings at Cathedral Square every evening during June for the purpose of urging citizens to register and incidentally showing them the answer to the above question. The citizen has been told night after night that the equal right to life involves an equal right of access to natural resources; that land is not property and cannot in equity become property; and that property in land is a negation of the individual's right to the product of his own labor.

The Single Taxer of Rhode Island heard with regret the news of the defeat of the proposed tax amendment to the constitu-