

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

The elections for the Federal Parliament were held on September 5th, and the Labor party, led by Mr. Andrew Fisher, have been returned to power by a very big majority. In the Senate they have captured 32 out of the 36 seats, and they have a majority of ten in the House of Representatives. If this party were true to name, and advocated a policy framed in the interest of those who labor, one could feel pleased at their success. Unfortunately, their policy is one of special privilege. They give privilege to the landlord class by supporting an exemption of £5000 in the Progressive land tax. This is a sop to catch the vote of the small farmer. Then the manufacturer has special favor shown to him by tariff legislation, and labor supporters have special privilege in the form of preference to unionists being adopted as the policy in connection with employment in the Commonwealth service. The main plank in Mr. Fisher's platform was that dealing with "effective protection to Australian industries." If this is put into operation it will mean that the consumers will be robbed to a greater extent than at present. In every other part of the world the reform parties are trying to solve the high cost of living problem by reducing the customs duties. Here in Australia this so-called labor party is trying to solve the same problem by increasing the duties.

The future outlook is very gloomy. We are now experiencing the worst drought we have had for over fifty years. Cattle and horses are dying by the thousands for want of feed and water. In the city of Adelaide we have a water famine, and cottage gardens are dying because of the proclamation issued prohibiting the use of water for garden purposes. Most of our chief mines are closed owing to the war, and because of this, thousands of men are out of employment, and government relief has to be given. With high rents and high cost of living the people are beginning to see the folly of tariff and wage board legislation. If the Federal

government would abolish or reduce customs duties, and levy an all round tax on land values, production would be stimulated and avenues of employment opened to help us in our hour of trial.

The defeat of the Hon. A. H. Conroy in the Werriwa district of New South Wales is a great blow to the free trade movement. Mr. Conroy is a born fighter, and allows no party to influence him when principles are at stake. He was regarded by reformers as the leader of the reform movement in Australia, and he would have been a tower of strength in the House during the coming session when it is proposed to reopen the tariff question and increase the duties. Mr. Conroy was opposed by a Labor man who was a farmer. The figures were Lynch, 15,162. Conroy, 15,155. There was the record number of 537 informal votes.

Mr. W. E. Johnson, the late Speaker of the Federal House, has again been returned for Lang Division in N. S. W. As he is a Single Taxer there will be one voice raised on behalf of freedom.

Our State elections take place early next year and it is hard to say which party is likely to be returned to power. The Peake Government, which claims to be a Liberal one, got into power at the last general elections mainly on account of having proportional representation in their platform. When they were elected they at once turned down proportional representation, and gerrymandered the electoral districts with the object of securing a perpetual lease of life for themselves. It is just possible that they will be disappointed in this respect, as the Labor Party have a policy that should appeal to all fair-minded people. It includes proportional representation for both Houses, an all-round tax on land values, with reduction of railway freights and fares; and making the income tax exemption £300 instead of £200. Although the policy is not a perfect one by any means, and includes some socialistic proposals which true reformers cannot approve of, still it is going the right way on the taxation question, and also provides for all sections of the community getting their fair share of

representation in the Parliament. On these grounds alone it should be supported by all reformers as it is a big improvement on the policy of the party that calls itself Liberal.

Our Henry George Social was held on Sept. 23d, and was a great success. The commemoration address was given by Dr. W. E. Macklin from China, and was a very fine, inspiring effort. Being a personal friend of Henry George, the Doctor was able to give some interesting narratives concerning the life and work of that great reformer. The account of the reform work in China was also very interesting. During his stay with us the Doctor pleased all with whom he came in contact, and we were all sorry that this enthusiastic Single Taxer could not prolong his stay with us.—E. J. CRAIGIE, Secretary, Adelaide, South Australia.

WONDERFUL PROGRESS IN WESTERN CANADA—DEATH OF W. J. TREGILLUS.

Your readers will no doubt have noticed reports of the new land value tax measure lately passed by the legislature of Alberta. The November number of the *Single Taxer*, published by our League, gave extended reference to this new law, which I regard as one of the most important yet adopted, as it recognizes the principle of land value tax for provincial revenue purposes. Heretofore the so called Single Tax movement in our Western provinces has been mainly along municipal lines. This, of course, is the line of least resistance. We are now working in the provincial field, and hope that will be followed by a move for a federal tax. Naturally, in a new country like this, with vast areas of vacant land held by railway and other corporations as well as private speculators, the first movement in land value taxation is to tackle the vacant land proposition. As the farmers who use the land are obliged to pay a tax (customs or manufacturer's privilege) upon almost everything they require in the operation of their farms, and as these same farmers

through the use of the land, add largely to the value of the vacant land around them it seems legitimate that the thin end of the wedge of land value taxation for provincial purposes should enter in this quarter. This again is the line of least resistance, in the larger provincial field. As for the federal field, we think that it will have to be a fight for free trade for some time yet, before we can hope to make progress toward a land value tax.

Alberta now has land value taxation almost exclusively for municipal revenue purposes, and a wild land value tax and an increment tax for provincial purposes. A very fair start for a community that only secured provincial government a few years ago. Saskatchewan province also has a vacant land tax, but it is a flat rate per quarter section and not based on value.

What is particularly significant about the so called Single Tax movement in our Western provinces is the fact that with the exception of British Columbia, it is primarily a farmer's movement. At almost every meeting of farmers held in the three prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, resolutions demanding measures of land value taxation have been adopted. Some of these have been straight Single Tax resolutions, such as one passed by the Alberta provincial association in annual meeting, which called for the abolition of all customs and other forms of taxation, and the raising of all revenues by a Single Tax on land values.

Time was when the farmers of these provinces were continually calling for various little measures of assistance, charity or patronage. They wanted the government to do all kinds of things for them, and this gave rise to the saying in political circles in the East that the people of the West wanted to be fed with a spoon. Things are different now. The cry of the western farmer now is: "A square deal and no favors." They have got beyond the idea of demanding little patronage measures. They have declared in convention that they want no protective measures or other considerations. They demand only relief from the burdens imposed upon them by legislation in