

CANADA

As we go to press a letter reaches us from Mr. D. W. Buchanan, of Winnipeg, giving an interesting report of the movement for the Taxation of Land Values in Federal politics and the Western Provinces. We must hold this over till next month. It provides a complete answer to the contentions of the Land Union that Site Value Rating has failed in Canada. One item of news is that Winnipeg has spent £3,200,000 on a new water supply, and the capital investment in this work has been made a charge on unimproved land values.

EXEMPTION OF IMPROVEMENTS IN OTTAWA

The TORONTO GLOBE of April 4th reports that the Private Bills Committee of the Ontario Legislature agreed to allow Ottawa to experiment with a measure imposing taxes on the full assessment of land values and relieving improvements gradually as provided for in the following clause:—

"The Council of the said Corporation may provide, by by-law to be passed after submitting the same to the vote of the ratepayers of the said city, that on and after a date to be fixed by such by-law that all buildings, structures, machinery and fixtures erected or placed upon, in, over, under or affixed to land, and all incomes as defined by Clause (e) of Section 2 of the Assessment Act, and all business assessments defined by Section 10 of the said Act, shall be exempted for purposes of taxation except for water rates, and public and separate school purposes, for the year next following the coming into force of such by-law, for a sum equal to 25 per cent. of the assessed value thereof; for the second year following the coming into force of such by-law for a sum equal to 50 per cent. of the assessed value thereof; and for the third year following the coming into force of such by-law for a sum equal to 75 per cent. of the assessed value thereof; and that from and after the expiration of three years after the coming into force of such by-law all taxes and rates of the said corporation, except for water rates and public and separate school purposes, shall be assessed, levied and rated upon actual land values only."

The Bill was explained by City Solicitor, Frank Proctor, of Ottawa, and by Mr. W. S. Southam, and was passed. This means that Ottawa is now in a fair way to become what is known on the American Continent as a "Single Tax City."

VANCOUVER

The Financial and Departmental Reports of the City of Vancouver for the year ended December 31st, 1917, give the following particulars:—

Valuation at close of 1917 (subject to Court of Revision)—	
Real Property (Unimproved Land Value) ..	\$140,819,150
	<i>approximately</i> £28,163,830
Improvements	\$ 75,716,910
	<i>approximately</i> £15,143,380
Total (Land and Improvements) ..	\$216,536,060
	<i>approximately</i> £43,307,210
Population	102,550

The rate of taxation in 1917 was 24 mills to the dollar imposed on land values alone. The gross amount of taxes levied was \$4,348,037.69 (£869,600) and at the end of the year the accumulated tax arrears amounted to \$5,043,110.92 (£1,008,620).

The City grew rapidly in population between the years 1901 and 1912, viz., from 26,133 to 122,100. Since 1912 there was a decline to 95,922 in 1916 and in 1917 there has been a recovery to 102,550.

The assessed value of land (apart from improvements) reached its highest point in 1914, when it stood at \$150,456,000 (£30,091,200), and declined to \$139,463,435 (£27,892,680) in 1916.

In the year 1918 the City Council departed from the system of levying the city taxes on the value of land alone, which had been in operation since 1910, and decided to tax 25 per cent. of the assessed value of improvements together with the whole value of land.

The investigation made by the special Commissioner of SINGLE TAX REVIEW (and reported in its issue of May-June, 1911) into the tax system in Vancouver showed that the land was assessed on the average at about 40 per cent. of its selling value. The ratio of assessable value to selling value was not

uniform. There were wide divergences. The system of land value taxation was vitiated, in fact, by a faulty valuation.

WINNIPEG

The platform of the Winnipeg branch of the Dominion Labour Party is straightforward and clear cut on the question of taxation. The platform says: "To facilitate the establishment of the equal rights of all to the use of land, the Labour Party favours a progressive tax on land values, to be increased annually until the whole rent of land shall be taken."

THE REAL COST OF PREFERENCE

There is in some Labour quarters a disposition to regard the controversy of Free Trade and Protection as of small importance and irrelevant to the main economic problem of our time, the transformation of Capitalist society.

No error could be greater.

It may be true that for the worker the direct and immediate economic effect of Preference *as now proposed* will be small; but it is nevertheless true that the triumph of Preference will spell the ruin of almost everything for which the workers are now fighting.

The logic of the thing is quite simple. We give a preference to, say, Indian tea or Egyptian cotton or Nigerian tobacco or Canadian wheat. And, says the Imperialist, you compensate for that by getting a preference for your manufactured goods from the Canadian, Egyptian, Indian or Nigerian. The Canadian pays for his preference by giving one, and the Egyptian, Indian and Nigerian are compelled to do so whether they want to or not. From their markets the "foreigner," that is to say, the American, Frenchman, Italian, Belgian, is excluded in lesser or greater degree. The British Empire becomes an institution hostile to their interests. Every time it expands they lose a market. To forestall that France must be on the look-out to expand *her* Empire in Africa; America, perhaps, hers in China—or Canada. So we shall need large armies all over the Empire; and that means the militarist state, centralised power, conscription, military service acts, Prussianism; and sooner or later, of course, it means collision; a struggle for the undeveloped areas of the world. That struggle was indeed the cause of this war. And so the war which was to end war would finish by strengthening the motives which lead to war. The world conditions would be more provocative of conflict than ever. The triumph of preference in the British Empire will inevitably strengthen Capitalist Imperialism with all that comes in its train; militarism, the exploitation of native populations, the Capitalist organisation of cheap labour, the suppression of a self-government in native states, little wars, punitive and other, hostility to foreigners, trade bickerings, Jingo scrambles for territory suitable for markets, bribes offered to certain classes of workers in an attempt to get their sanction for military adventures abroad, a Chauvinist psychology that renders co-operation between workers of the world impossible, the destruction of all hope of a real League of Nations, and finally another Armageddon.

That would be the workers' dividends from Preference. —*Daily Herald*, May 7th.

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