

A WHIRLWIND DEBATE.

JAMES R. BROWN, OFFICIAL LECTURER OF
THE NEW YORK STATE SINGLE TAX
LEAGUE, DEBATES WITH ALLAN
ROBINSON IN ALBANY.

Mr. Allan Robinson, of the Allied Realty Interests of this city, has debated with Single Taxers before, but previous encounters have been for the most part merely scientific sparring exhibitions, what may be called "contests for points." Our readers will forgive us the use for the minute of prize ring terms, since no other descriptive phrases so adequately describes what took place. For the first time he met an opponent who beat down his guard, and kept "coming" every minute of the time. The debate took place in the Assembly Room of the Albany capitol on the afternoon of Thursday, Jan. 21, before the convention of the State Agricultural Society. The editor of the REVIEW was in the audience during part of the time.

Mr. Brown began by saying that if there was any subject on which the farmers of the State required education it was the subject of taxation. No man defends the present system of taxation. The Single Tax is not a tax on land, but on land value. Mr. Brown took a farm worth in the market six thousand dollars, and said if it were stripped of everything that was due to labor, mighty little value would remain. But in the cities there are lots which if stripped of everything created by labor would be worth hundreds of thousands, and acres worth many millions. This is the value the Single Tax would take, leaving the farmer those values due to labor now taken by our present methods of taxation.

Mr. Brown said: Here is a farmer who is far from industrious, who lets his land go to waste, who spends most of his time in the gin mill of the village. The assessor comes along, and surveying the dilapidated property, the idle fields, says: "Poor fellow, he is not making much. We will have to show him special consideration." Here is another farmer, industrious, self-respect-

ing, always on the job. He adds to the wealth of the community. His farm is neatly kept, his buildings are of the newest pattern. The assessor looks, and his face darkens. "We'll have to show this man the error of his ways; we must teach him better." So he fines him heavily, according to the law. Now, is this a wise thing to do? We make life more difficult for this man. We visit with extreme penalty anyone who plants two blades of grass where one grew before.

Mr. Brown described the origin and growth of land values as the measure of the value of public service. He showed in a few homely but striking phrases what makes the value of a lot, and declared the Single Tax a boon to the farmer. "It lifts from his shoulders the grievous weight he bears, for it taxes only land values, and what are the land values of rural communities?"

Then swinging again at his opponent, he said: "Here we have an aggregation of individuals who call themselves The Allied Realty Interests. They have no industry, no name in business, so they call themselves Realty Interests. Now what do the men behind these interests want, and what are they really interested in? Not improvements, not buildings, not the right and privilege to serve the people as all those who work must serve, but the values of social service created by the community, those values that attach to land."

Mr. Brown here read a significant paragraph from the *Real Estate Record and Guide*, urging investments in New York realty on the ground of the many public improvements contemplated. "This gives away their case," said the speaker. "Now if the city creates these values, as these men state, they belong to those who create them, not to this little bunch of operators."

It is all too simple for you not to understand it. A tax on a labor product increases the cost, obstructs business, discourages industry; a tax on land values, on the other hand, encourages the use of land, and tends to prevent involuntary idleness by increasing the opportunities for employment."

Mr. Allan Robinson began by explaining

that the Single Tax is not a tax at all. "Single Taxers themselves oppose the use of the term. Mr. Henry George, the promulgator of this doctrine, did not believe in private property in land, but aimed to bring about a system of common ownership. Let us understand what the Single Tax is. Mr. George advocated it merely as a method of establishing common ownership in land. Mr. Robinson declared that the Canadian experiments were failures. He said that Single Taxers never explain their doctrine, that he had never heard it explained.

Mr. Brown in reply said that Mr. Robinson should hear it explained now if he never had before. To the statement of Mr. Robinson that rents would be higher under the Single Tax than now, Mr. Brown said that if that were so the men who were behind Mr. Robinson would tumble over themselves to get it. For what they want are high rents, and their "cupidity has no limits and their greed no bounds." He declared it utterly false that the Canadian experiments were failures, and he had been where these experiments had been tried.

Mr. Brown's final reply to Mr. Robinson was very short. But it was remarkably effective. This master of ring generalship beat down the cunning defense of his opponent and completely overwhelmed him with the vigor of his attack.

The effect on the audience was marked. The applause was general and spontaneous. Mr. Brown was kept busy shaking hands and acknowledging the congratulations of members of the conference.

Before adjourning he asked Mr. Robinson if he would debate with him in New York City on his return. Mr. Robinson said he was "through." But it is hoped that this advocate of the Realty Interests will not desert his clients in their extremity.

Mr. Brown left for Buffalo the same night. In that city he will speak nearly a score of times before his return.—J. D. M.

W. A. DOUGLAS, who is in Lansdowne, Pa., on a visit, gave two addresses at Gerard College, one on The Study of History and another on The Difference Between the Single Tax and Socialism.

TO SINGLE TAX LETTER WRITERS.

The New York State Single Tax League offers to Single Tax Letter Writers the following suggestions:

An editor likes to get letters from readers because it furnishes the best proof that his paper is read.

ADDRESS THE EDITOR WITH KINDLINESS.

Be certain that your comment has value as new information or clears some obscurity in article or editorial you are discussing.

BE PERSUASIVE.

Concede all non-essentials; direct your whole attention to the essential point. When you have made your demonstration—STOP!

QUIBBLING WEAKENS ALL ARGUMENT.

State your view-point, and submit the facts supporting your judgment. Arrange your facts in logical order, built up to the climax.

PERSONALITIES ARE NOT CONVINCING.

You may have a justifiable grouch, but the rest of the world is not interested in it.

BRIEF LETTERS.

Write tersely—affirmatively—legibly, on one side of the paper only. Strike out all unnecessary words.

SIGN YOUR NAME.

The editor will more readily publish your communication if you show good faith by personal endorsement of your opinions.

NOTES.

One sentence—one idea. Short sentences give snap; long sentences are ponderous. Simple words are best. Adopt the tone you would use in talking to a dear friend. Practice makes perfect.

JOHN Z. WHITE debated the Single Tax in Denver with Celsus P. Link on Saturday, December 19, before an audience of over 2,000 persons. Mr. Link is a member of the State Tax Commission and also an officer of the National Tax Association. Mr. White was at his best and the debate is the talk of the town.