

BI-MONTHLY NEWS LETTER.

By THE EDITOR.

The fight for a referendum on the Herrick-Schaap Bill goes on, with Benjamin Marsh and Frederic C. Leubuscher leading the fight against Allan Robinson, president of the Allied Real Estate Interests, the ablest and most resourceful of the opponents of the Single Tax.

There have been debates and meetings, and the papers have had letters from friends and opponents of the measure. Among the papers which have allowed the fullest and freest discussion on the measure consistent with editorial exigencies the *Globe* should be especially singled out for commendation. Admirable letters on the Single Tax and on the particular measure before the public have appeared therein from Benjamin Doblin, Oscar Geiger, A. W. Norwalk, and many others. Many of the letters from the opposition were of the kindergarten character, but others were clever and presented problems that were ingeniously put and called for more than the usual knowledge in reply.

On Feb. 20 there was a largely attended and exciting hearing before the Mayor and Board of Estimate on the question of a referendum of this measure, and Frederic C. Leubuscher read an argument—he began by saying that it was the only time that he had ever read a speech—in which he presented the reasons justifying the bill. Prof. E. R. A. Seligman read a paper in opposition. Although the Mayor and other members of the Board of Estimate are on record as favoring a referendum of this measure, they proceeded to “can” it in the following resolution:

“Resolved, That the Board of Estimate and Apportionment of the City of New York earnestly deprecates the passage of the Herrick-Schaap bill, or any similar legislation, until the question involved in this proposed measure has been given the careful investigation which its importance demands, and the Mayor, through the Department of Taxes and Assessments and such other means as the city authorities may see fit to employ, has made a thorough and impartial study of the subject of taxation upon lands and buildings.”

Confronted by Mr. Marsh with the statement that “if we were good enough to vote for you we are good enough to vote at a referendum,” the Mayor replied:

“I still hold the position I expressed then. I told your society how I stood and how I would regard a referendum. I wrote you I never would oppose a referendum for the people of the city. I notice that you did not ask me if I favored an immediate referendum. I would regard it as unwise at this time, as the proposition is both difficult and technical.”

Perhaps the Mayor may justify this attitude to himself, but he will have difficulty in doing so with those who supported him because of his assumed friendliness to a measure on which he should now be as well informed as any of its defenders. It is not unfair to assume that influences have reached him

which have changed his friendliness to opposition, and determined him to "can" it by the usual method of the appointment of a commission. Of all the devices that block the way of democracy perhaps the commission plan stands first. This commission will amount to no more than the thousand and one commissions appointed from time to time. And it is meant in this case to amount to just that. And the not unintelligent young man who sits in the Mayor's chair is, it is to be feared, perfectly well aware of it.

On March 3 there was hearing at Albany on the Herrick-Schaap bill, attended by over 200 real estate men, and Register John J. Hopper of Manhattan, Frederick L. Cranford and Benjamin C. Marsh were the principal speakers for the bill. Allan Robinson spoke in opposition. The *N. Y. Times* in a column report of the hearing says:

"The snappiest part of the hearing came during Thomas M. Galbreath's argument favoring the bill. The sharp questioning to which he was subjected by the committee amounted almost to heckling. He began by calling attention to the fact that the block on which the Belnord apartment house is built pays \$50,000 taxes more than Vincent Astor is compelled to pay on his vacant block near by.

"Yes," interrupted Assemblyman Hutt, "but the Belnord owner gets a larger return for his property."

"That may be," retorted Mr. Galbreath, "but I hold that the Belnord owner is fined \$50,000 for putting up his building."

"Why don't you carry the argument out to its limit," asked Senator Thompson, "and take all the tax off buildings?"

"That's just what I favor," replied Mr. Galbreath, "but I don't think we can get that, and it's better to try the half tax first."

Mr. Marsh had with him a pasteboard box nearly two feet high containing 20,000 of the 38,000 signed petitions already sent in to the committee."

During a part of the discussion, Mr. Hopper had asserted that the people could be trusted to vote intelligently upon the bill. Assemblyman McCue asked, "What do you think we are here for as the legislature? Don't you think the duty devolves upon us? Are we not to look into the merits of the bill before turning it over to the people to decide?"

To this Mr. Hopper assented, but asked if those present did not think the people would vote intelligently upon the bill? and the loudest "No" came from Mr. McCue.

On the same day of the hearing a great meeting was held at Cooper Union to urge the submission of the Herrick-Schaap bill to the people. Hon. Frederick C. Howe, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, J. P. Coughlin and F. C. Leubuscher were the speakers.

In New Jersey Chas. O'Connor Hennessy, who is Senator from Bergen County, has introduced into the Senate a bill for home rule in taxation. This bill will have the support of the Progressives and many Democrats. Last year when it was introduced not a Republican voted for it, but it received seventeen votes in the Senate. It will increase the number of its supporters this time.

The George taxation bill for the District of Columbia introduced by Congressman George, which provided for the par value assessment of land, annual instead of triennial assessments, and extended the powers of local assessors, has been emasculated by an amendment to the bill introduced by a member of the committee, Congressman Prouty, Republican, of Iowa, which reads as follows:

"That for the purpose of establishing a uniform rate of taxation in the District of Columbia, there is hereby levied upon the aforesaid real estate an annual tax equal in rate to the tax rate which is now or may hereafter be imposed by law upon tangible personal property in the District of Columbia; and further, the same rate of taxation is hereby levied upon all intangible property in the District of Columbia which would be taxable under the existing laws were it tangible personal property, including moneys, credits, stocks, bonds, annuities, cash, and all other forms of indebtedness owned by or payable to the person, firm or corporation to be taxed and also including jewels, jewelry and similar articles of personal adornment."

This effectually kills the commendable features of the bill, and will of course alienate the support of Mr. George himself. The amendment was carried in the Committee by a vote of 12 to 4. The four members of the committee who stood by the bill in its original form are George, Crosser, Igoe and Wallin. Crosser is a progressive Democrat of Ohio, Igoe a Democrat of Missouri, and Wallin a Republican of New York. Congressman Crosser declared that the amendment was an attempt to muddle the water, and secure the defeat of the bill in its original form. The Prouty amendment has had the effect of calling attention to the bill, and making its original provisions more popular than they would otherwise have been. The people of Washington do not regard favorably the taxation of personal property and the sponsors of the original features of the bill find themselves in a conservative position. The labor unions of Washington have also united in condemning the changes in the bill.

Congressman Warren Worth Bailey has introduced another bill for taxation in the district, which combines the Pittsburgh plan and some of the features of the Houston plan. It specifically exempts all forms of personal property, and provides for a progressive exemption of improvements. It goes further than the George bill in its original form and has aroused much attention in the press.

Turning now to Great Britain, the fact is to be chronicled that the Liberals have just lost one important by-election in one of the poorest districts of London. Here the Insurance Act played the principal part, failing to make a successful appeal. It would have been the part of courage, and certainly of wisdom, to have made the campaign on grounds of fundamental democracy. But the opportunity was lost and with it the chance of retaining a Liberal seat.

The speech of Lloyd George at Glasgow contained a renewal of the government's pledge for the taxation of land values. The Single Taxers of Great Britain have not been captious in their criticism, but they have felt, and they

have said it, that the British government has shown an inclination to "wobble." And they have felt, and they have said it, that the government was not definite as to the time and manner in which they proposed to carry their pledge into effect. There can be no question that the great body of workingmen of England and Scotland, especially the latter country, where the doctrines of Henry George have been incessantly preached these thirty years—is ready and eager for a more drastic policy than the government has yet shown a disposition to adopt. Even this speech of Lloyd George at St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, failed to dwell upon the effects which would follow the taxation of land values. The social benefits of the proposal did not seem to engage the Chancellor's attention so much as its fiscal advantages. He is surely aware by this time of the feelings of a Glasgow audience, and he must have known that most of his hearers are for the taxation of privilege for more important reasons than were hinted at in his address. And the speech though received in kindly spirit failed to arouse that enthusiasm the cue for which was eagerly awaited.

The *Highland News* in explanation of the character of the speech and its apathetic reception, said: "It might have been that Mr. Lloyd George had been deceived as to the strength of the land values movement in Scotland, and in Glasgow in particular." If this is so Mr. George must be a much more poorly informed politician than people have imagined. But if so, this meeting, and the outburst of applause when he said: "You must make the land contribute to public expenditure on the basis of its value," no doubt undeceived him.

SOME INTERESTING EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE MANHATTAN SINGLE TAX CLUB. 1886-1892.

(Continued.)

(For the Review.)

By BENJAMIN DOBLIN.

This series of memoranda, as we explained in our last issue, are designed merely to furnish the ground work for a history of the Manhattan Single Tax Club. Those who can contribute anything to the data here collected should communicate with Mr. Doblin, or the SINGLE TAX REVIEW.—THE EDITOR.

1896.

Lawson Purdy, President; Proposed Charter for Consolidated City; watched for the purpose of inserting provision for the Publication of Assessments.

April 2nd—Resolution of sympathy sent to the widow and family of our co-worker, W. B. Scott.

April 24th—Edward Polak, now Register of the newly organized county of Bronx, elected a member.