

News—Foreign.

TORONTO.

Our civic elections have come and gone, and tho' we have not won all that we wanted to we are still better off than we were last year.

Ald. Dr. Noble and Mr. W. A. Douglass, both Single Taxers, were nominated for the city council, and Ald. Noble was re-elected. Of the present council five of the twenty-four aldermen are pledged to submit our \$700 exemption to a vote of the people. Our active campaign this Fall has all centered about this plan of exempting dwellings from taxation to the extent of \$700 of their assessed value, and we have succeeded in making quite a stir over the matter.

A special committee of the legislature met in November to consider the new assessment bill before the house. When the members of this committee met we had time allotted to us to address them. As a result of our letters they knew the lines along which we would talk and comprehended us much better than they otherwise would have done. We urged upon them the taxation of franchises and the granting of local option to municipalities to the extent of the \$700 exemption of dwellings. Our deputation was exceedingly well received, and numerous compliments were showered on us from the chairman and members, and from the press.

We also sent a deputation to the city council to ask that body to submit the question to the people. There is a resolution to this effect before them, made by Ald. Noble, but they are all afraid of it and every time it comes up they "refer it back." What they will do now that the elections are over is a matter of speculation.

We have put out five thousand tracts on the question and Ald. Noble has put out an additional five thousand of them in his own ward. In fact he fought and won his election on it.

Our annual series of Sunday afternoon meetings commences in the Grand Opera House on January 3rd. This season we are to have a definite series of eight lectures and intend to throw the very best talent into them all. Our speakers are all arranged ahead and Rev. Mr. Cooley of Cleveland is to start them going.

In our last letter we reported the commencement of "The Canadian Single Taxer." Three issues have now appeared and the success of the venture is pretty nearly assured. We are making it as bright and full of news as is possible and we think our American friends would find it interesting, as it contains reports of the work that is going forward in one of the "hottest" centres on the continent.

Good progress has been made by the Direct Legislation movement here. This year we have practically all the aldermen pledged to adopt such rules of procedure in

the council as will establish this much needed reform in our city government.

During the coming year we propose to take advantage of this and work up an initiative petition to compel the aldermen to submit the \$700 exemption to the people.

This shows the advantage of other reform to Single Tax. Direct Legislation is our first step, for it will enable us to secure such legislation as the people want. There will then be some use in educating them.

WALTER H. ROEBUCK, Sec'y.

MONTREAL.

Looking back over the calendar year which closes to-night, I am not sure that I can point to any particular event which has occurred among us during that time and find therein any specific gain to the cause of Single Tax. And yet I and the other members of our Association, not only do not feel at all discouraged but believe we have every right to feel quite hopeful regarding the effect of our year's work. Still, there are associations in Canada, such as that very energetic one in the city of Toronto, which can point to tangible results. And this is the age when tangible results count, faith in the unseen working out of principles being yet in swaddling clothes.

Outside of a few public meetings and the visit of Mr. Bellangee, of the Fairhope Colony, we have, perhaps, not done any special propaganda work with the direct object of advocating the Single Tax. Yet, if I were asked what I considered the most prominent or interesting events to Single Taxers during the year, in this community, I should point to the Morgan store incident, and to that of the fight for the extension of the Street Railway franchise. And I should give as my reasons the fact that in both instances the interest of the public, if not its passions, were aroused to an unusual extent for the city of Montreal, proclaiming a slowly awakening belief that there is something the matter somewhere.

Perhaps I could not do better than to review the events referred to. The Morgan Departmental Store matter was fully explained in the *Single Tax Review* of the second quarter of this year. In short, the Morgans considered themselves overtaxed, but failing to convince the city officials of this, they cast about for a means of reducing the value of their building. This being one of the handsomest of its kind in the city, was, in accordance with the plan pursued by most corporations and governments, compelled to bear heavier taxes than its less beautiful brethren. So the Morgans determined to build around it (they having sufficient land for the purpose) a plain brick shell, it having been explained to them that valuations for the purpose of taxation were generally made from the exterior appearance. The public became interested, then

the absurdity of the thing seemed to strike them. The city officials compromised, and thus prevented the defacement of the block; but not before the lesson had come home to thousands who would otherwise never have had any doubts that our present method of taxation was the best that could be devised.

Then came the Street Railway affair, the end of which is not yet. To show how the principles, or want of principles, upon which franchises of this nature rest, work for their own destruction, and at the same time to explain the matter more fully, it is necessary to refer back a few years to the lighting franchise.

Four or five years ago the street lighting franchise expired. Our Association contended that the municipality should own its own plant, and we brought on some of our Single Tax orators from the United States to explain our ideas in a public meeting. The public seemed to take very little interest in the matter. A consolidation of several lighting companies had recently taken place, but there were still several independent ones, competition among which the people thought would safeguard their interests. The consolidated interest eventually was awarded the contract at rates pretty favorable to the city. Shortly afterwards amalgamations began to take place, and about six months ago the most powerful competitor was brought into the fold, so that to-day there is but one company in the city. Then the cost of gas and electricity for private use began to advance, and there is no reason to suppose that further advances will not be made in the near future. This naturally aroused the public.

Some months ago it began to appear that the Street Railway, whose franchise had still about twenty years to run, was going to move to have it extended. The Single Tax Association was again to the front, and soon had published and distributed thousands of pamphlets dealing with the subject in a sufficiently exhaustive manner to show what the public was sacrificing in granting an extension. These pamphlets have been the hand-book of those who have done the most effective work against the railway. In fact it was stated by one of the Aldermen that had it not been for the Association the railway would have won almost in the first round. As it is, the railway has been defeated in every round fought before the Council. The connection between the lighting franchise referred to, and that of the Street Railway, becomes more apparent when it is remembered that the two interests are so closely in touch with each other that an amalgamation between them was common gossip for a time. Many believe it will yet take place. It will, therefore, not be surprising to hear that the feeling against extending the privileges of such a powerful interest is very strong.

In all this work, of course, our Association loses no opportunity of bringing for-

ward the Single Tax argument that the public is the rightful owner of the values which it creates. The fight will doubtless develop many interesting phases, and an account of these will be forwarded to the *Review* from time to time.

T. C. ALLUM, Secy.

ENGLAND.

A conference on the taxation of land value was held in London, on December 9th. John Ferguson of Glasgow, presided. The conference adopted two bills for the taxation of land values in the boroughs of England, Wales and Ireland. These bills will be presented to Parliament.

The London Daily News, which is more than friendly to the movement in Great Britain, in its issue of December 10th, thus explains the objects of these bills:

"The seed sown by the Corporation of Glasgow last year in calling a conference on the subject of the taxation of land values has brought forth fruit in the shape of two Bills adapted respectively to English and Scottish needs. They are constructed on modest lines; but they embody the great principle the recognition of which is one of the most urgent needs of the day, whether from the point of view of land reform, housing reform, or the reform of taxation. In attacking the question the executive have deemed it wise to deal with the future rather than with the past. This is certainly pursuing the line of least resistance, and we do not think land reformers will complain. On the other hand they will rejoice to see the subject pressed upon Parliament by the great rating authorities themselves. There can be no reasonable opposition to proposals backed by the great municipalities of the country which have to face in the public interests the problems of rating and which feel the pinch of the present intolerable system at every point—in the insufficiency of rating resources, in the burden which falls upon the commercial community, and in the restriction of the building area and the consequent congestion of the people. It is proposed to bring unoccupied land on to the rate book, the suggested ratable value of such land being three per cent. on the price at which it would sell as between a willing buyer and a willing seller. This will not only mean revenue, but it will cut at the pernicious practice of holding land back from the public use until it has reached a fancy price. It will stop the conspiracy of the landowner against the expansion of the town, which is the prolific source of slums and urban misery. When the owner has either to pay rates or sell, he will not stand in the way of the community. "Don't shoot; I will come down," will be his formula. The two other points covered by the Bill are the differentiating between land and buildings for rating purposes, and a