

been a flourishing business, it would have lacked defenders? Let him say whether any proposal to stop the business of piracy without compensating the pirates would not have been denounced at first as a proposal to set aside vested rights?

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Mr. George was not content with pointing to the misuse of the doctrine of vested rights in the past. He pointed to its misuse in his own day of a quarter of a century ago, a misuse that is even more common now. Having appealed to other states of society and to times that were past merely to get his readers out of their accustomed ruts of thought, he continued:

The proof of what I assert about the Kidds and their business is in the thought and speech of to-day.

Here is a system which robs the producers of wealth as remorselessly and far more regularly and systematically than the pirate robs the merchantman. Here is a system that steadily condemns thousands to far more lingering and horrible deaths than that of walking the plank—to death of the mind and death of the soul, as well as death of the body. These things are undisputed. No one denies that Irish pauperism and famine are the direct results of this land system, and no one who would examine the subject will deny that the chronic pauperism and chronic famine which everywhere mark our civilization are the results of this system. Yet we are told—nay, it seems to be taken for granted—that this system cannot be abolished without buying off those who profit by it. Was there ever more degrading abasement of the human mind before a fetish? Can we wonder, as we see it, at any perversion of ideas?

Consider: is not the parallel I have drawn a true one? Is it not just as much a perversion of ideas to apply the doctrine of vested rights to property in land, when these are its admitted fruits, as it was to apply it to property in human flesh and blood; as it would be to apply it to the business of piracy? In what does the claim of the Irish landholders differ from that of the hereditary pirate or the man who has bought out a piratical business? "Because I have inherited or purchased the business of robbing merchantmen," says the pirate, "therefore respect for the rights of property must compel you to let me go on robbing ships and making sailors walk the plank until you buy me out." "Because we have inherited or purchased the privilege of appropriating to ourselves the lion's share of the produce of labor," says the landlord, "therefore you must continue to let us do it, even though poor wretches shiver with cold and faint with hunger, even though, in their poverty and misery, they are reduced to wallow with the pigs." What is the difference?

This is the point I want to make clearly and distinctly, for it shows a distinction that in current thought is overlooked. Property in land, like property in slaves, is essentially different from property in things that are the result of labor.

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The property in land to which Mr. George has referred comprised landed property of many dif-

ferent kinds. It comprised property in city building lots, which grows in value as the city grows. It comprised property in unimproved farming lands, which enables mere owners to levy tribute upon working farmers. It comprised property in railroad rights of way, which enables railway corporations to monopolize traffic. It comprised property in natural mineral deposits, which enables owners to consolidate titles in these gifts of nature and thereby to plunder the people for the coal they burn and the iron they use. Of all these he might have said, as he did say of the monopolized lands of Ireland, that the indictment which really lies against the private owners of such natural bounties is not that their predecessors robbed the American people in the distant past, for that makes no difference, but that here and now, at the close of the year 1906 and the opening of the year 1907, they themselves are robbing the American people.

Though they are not robbing the American people now of grants of lands and mines and highways, they are, by means of grants in the past, now robbing the American people of the products of their present labor which is dependent upon those lands and mines and highways. "And shall we be told that there can be a vested right to continue such robbery?"

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## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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### AUSTRALIA.

(See pages 367, 486.)

Corowa, N. S. W., Nov. 20.—The last session of the second Federal parliament ended last month. The principal acts passed were the Australian industries preservation, British preference, South African preference, spirit duties, agricultural machinery duties, and alteration of Constitution referendum acts.

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The Australian industries preservation act (usually called the anti-trust act), is intended to repress monopolies and prevent "dumping." It prohibits, under heavy penalties, restraint of trade, the destruction or injury by unfair competition of any advantageous Australian industry, and the monopoly of trade. The definitions of unfair competition are very wide and are evidently intended to prevent importers from underselling local manufacturers. As originally introduced, this measure gave the Minister of Customs a great deal of authority, but under the act as passed all power is vested in the Federal High Court, which is, of course, a great improvement.

The British preference act is a sham. The ministry brought in a bill for raising the import duties on a number of articles unless they were manufactured in Great Britain. In some cases Britain had already the whole trade; in others, the articles af-

fectured were not manufactured at all in Great Britain. The object of the bill was really to increase the protection to local manufacturers. It passed the House, but in the Senate an amendment was inserted that the preference be extended only to goods of British manufacture, carried in British ships which were manned wholly by white seamen. When the bill returned to the House it was discovered that the clause would violate a number of treaties between Great Britain and other countries to which the Commonwealth is a party, and it was struck out. But the Houses came into conflict on some question of procedure, and the Senate insisted on the amendment, so it was retained. The act was not signed by the Governor-General, but reserved for the Royal assent; that is, the British government will veto it.

A somewhat similar bill was brought in to establish preferential trade (so-called) with New Zealand, in accordance with an agreement made between Mr. Deakin and the late Mr. Seddon. Australia was to raise the duties on certain articles against all countries except New Zealand, which was to do likewise as regards the Commonwealth. The New Zealand parliament rejected the bill, so of course the whole scheme was then dropped.

The South African preference act is a real reciprocity treaty as far as it goes, duties being reduced on both sides. Two reports of the tariff commission were dealt with; those referring to spirits and agricultural machinery. In both cases alterations were made in the duties for the benefit of the local manufacturers.

A referendum is to be taken at the next election on the question of altering the Constitution so that the term of service of senators may begin on July 1, instead of January 1. At present elections have to be held in November or December, which is inconvenient to farmers, as it is harvest time in most parts of the commonwealth.

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The next election for the whole of the House of Representatives and half the Senate is to be held on December 12. When the House rose the state of parties was as follows: Ministerial (Deakin) 19, Opposition (Reed) 31, Labor (Watson) 25.

The Labor party is the only one with a definite policy. The principal planks of its platform are: Maintenance of a white Australia, nationalization of monopolies, old age pensions, tariff referendum, graduated tax on land values, restriction of public borrowing, navigation laws, citizen defense force, arbitration act amendment.

Deakin's followers are divided among themselves, some supporting most of the proposals of the Labor party, while others are opposing them. Their only common ground is the advocacy of increased protection to manufacturers.

The party led by Reed calls itself anti-Socialist. It includes both free traders and protectionists, who have agreed to sink the fiscal issue and oppose the Labor party. Mr. Max Hirsch is a candidate for the Wimmera, a large country electorate in western Victoria. He stands as an anti-Socialist. If there were a straight-out contest between him and the Labor candidate it is thought he would win, but as there are several other candidates, the result is very uncertain.

In the new South Wales state parliament, the local government extension bill has passed the lower house and is now before the Council. It provides that all municipalities shall impose a tax of one penny in the pound on land values. For any further revenue required it is optional whether the tax be levied on the improved or unimproved value of the land. Every municipality is to decide for itself by taking a referendum of the taxpayers.

This bill has encountered great opposition, and it is rather doubtful whether it will be passed this session. In addition to altering the incidence of taxation, it gives greatly extended powers to local governing bodies.

ERNEST BRAY.

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## NEWS NARRATIVE

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To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

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Week ending Wednesday, Dec. 26, 1906.

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### Single Tax in Scotland.

The report of the parliamentary committee on land values taxation in Scotland (p. 895) reaches this country as apparently adverse to the measure. Upon examination, however, it proves to have been adverse only to the particular bill, and not to the principle. And, as to the bill, it reports against it because it is hostile to the principle. A minority report supports the contention of the landlords.

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As the report is summarized by the Edinburgh Evening News of the 14th, it appears that:

The main principle which, in the opinion of the committee, underlies the proposals to tax land values is the setting up of a standard of rating whereby the ratepayer's contributions to the rates is determined by the yearly value of the land which he owns or occupies apart from the buildings and improvements upon it, the object being to measure the ratepayer's contributions, not by the value of the improvements on the land to any extent, but solely by the yearly value of the land itself. A justification given for the adoption of the new standard is that land owes the creation and maintenance of its value to the presence, enterprise, and expenditure of the surrounding community. The value of the land is not created or maintained by the expenditure or exertion of its owner except in so far as he is a member of the community. It is well, therefore, the committee think, to select a standard of rating which will not have the effect of placing a burden upon industry. Hence the proposal to exclude from the standard the value of buildings and erections of all kinds and fixed machinery. To include these in a standard tends to discourage industry and enterprise; to exclude them has the opposite effect. If, then, the value of bare land apart from improvements be chosen as the measure by which to fix contributions to the burgh expenditure, the ratepayer will, it is alleged, be merely restoring to the exchequer of the local authority part of that which he has derived from it. Of this principle and of the reasoning on which it rests, the