

tion has increased, then how much more must production increase before it will pass beyond the power of private monopoly and special privilege, to keep up with it in the matter of advancing prices?

The question presented to intellectual honesty is: Are the proponents of the spurious and absurd "economics," which totally ignores the preponderant factor of the problem (the effective power of private monopoly and special privilege)—are these proponents sincere, and do they speak as they do through ignorance? or are they insincere, and do they utter their absurdities trusting that the general ignorance will shield them from detection?

In either case it is the high duty of every man who understands, to declare the truth, to keep open the way of progress, that the toiling millions may pass on to the plains of plenty.

EDWARD HOWELL PUTNAM.

## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

### EXPOSURE OF AN OHIO REACTIONARY.

Columbus, Ohio, Feb. 6th.

The use of the Singletax as a scarecrow with which to damage the Initiative and Referendum proposals now before the Ohio Constitutional Convention was amusingly exposed before the taxation committee of that body today.

The gentleman to take a double tilt at the I. and R. was James W. Halfhill, a lawyer of Lima, Ohio, and delegate from the County of Allen in the Convention. The man to expose the double purpose in the attack was the chairman of the committee, Edward W. Doty, a Cleveland delegate for Cuyahoga County.

Mr. Halfhill submitted a proposed amendment to the Constitution which contemplated tying the hands of both the State legislature and the people against taking ground rent by taxation. The proposal read: "The General Assembly may classify all property for the purposes of taxation; but no class of property shall be taxed for the benefit of any other class, no double taxation shall be permitted, no confiscatory rate or levy shall be legal, and the single tax on land or ground rent shall never be established."

In the course of his remarks for this curious proposal, Mr. Halfhill informed the committee that his proposal was submitted purely as a vote-getter, and that he had no intention that it should be written into the State Constitution. The idea, he said, appealed to certain persons in his own constituency and was included in his proposal purely for "local consumption." The frankness of this statement amused the other members of the Convention present, and the Chairman took advantage of the situation to draw some further reactionary teeth.

The Initiative and Referendum is the great question before the Convention. It is the question with

an emphasis on the "the," so that many of the plays by the delegates are intended solely for their reflex influence. For instance, one delegate was heard to remark that he favored the recording and printing of the debates and proceedings of the Convention for the reason that the expense would discredit the whole proceedings in the eyes of the electors. That is why he had voted for the recommendation of the printing committee. With this situation evidently in mind, the Chairman of the taxation committee pointed out to Mr. Halfhill that the Singletax is not an issue before the Convention, and is not now in force in Ohio and not likely to be for some time to come. The Chairman wanted to know of Mr. Halfhill if he could not be equally candid with regard to the Singletax clause in his proposal. Was not that also inserted for an ulterior purpose, for the purpose of heading-off the Initiative and Referendum?

To this Mr. Halfhill, with continued candor, assented.

"What do you mean by Singletax?" asked Mr. Geo. W. Harris, one of the committee men. The question caused some perplexity to the man from Allen, and afforded no little suppressed mirth to the Singletax chairman of the committee.

Mr. Halfhill fell back upon the name of Henry George, and then followed the interesting spectacle of a reactionary and self-confessed political manipulator reading with dramatic emphasis the eloquent statement of Mr. George's proposals, as found in *Progress and Poverty*.

"Sounds good," commented the Chairman as the reading concluded.

Mr. Halfhill ejaculated contemptuously: "Not to me."

"Don't you like that about abolishing poverty?" asked the Chairman.

"That shows the man was a dreamer," retorted Mr. Halfhill.

A long and animated discussion on the definition of Singletax followed, in which it was demonstrated by Mr. Harris, of Cincinnati, that the idea as drawn from the writings of Henry George is very different indeed from that in the minds of some people who oppose it.

A. W. R.



### AUSTRALASIA.

Corowa, N. S. W., Australia, January 12.

The State elections held in Victoria in November made practically no alteration in the position of parties.

This was the first time that women in Victoria could vote at State elections.



In South Australia, owing to a disagreement between the State Houses of Parliament, the lower House has been dissolved, and general elections will be held.



General elections were held in New Zealand last month, and resulted in a great change in the state of parties.

The Liberal party, which has been in power for 20 years, under Mr. Ballance, Sir Richard Seddon, and Sir Joseph Ward, has lost its majority, for the new House is composed of 37 Liberals, 37 Conservatives, 3 Labor members, 1 Socialist, and 2 Independents.

Mr. George Fowlds,\* who recently resigned his position as Minister for Education, etc., has lost his seat as member for Auckland. The law provides that where no candidate has a majority at an election, a second ballot shall be taken to decide between the two highest candidates. Mr. Fowlds was at the head of the first poll, but not having a majority, a second ballot was necessary, at which he was defeated.

The local option (liquor) vote taken on election day made no alteration to the existing no-license areas.

A vote was also taken on the question of national prohibition of liquor. Fifty-six per cent of the votes were in favor of prohibition, but this was not sufficient to carry it. The law provides that prohibition shall not be carried unless at least 60 per cent of the votes cast are in favor of it.



The triennial conference of the Commonwealth Labor party, at which all the States of Australia are represented, is sitting at Hobart, Tasmania.

ERNEST BRAY.



## "HARASSING THE RAILROADS."

Portland, Ore.

"The basis of the general outcry from various railroad commissions against Judge Hook is that he rendered a decision restraining Oklahoma from putting in force the 2-cent-per-mile passenger rate law on the ground that it was unreasonable," says the Portland Oregonian. Yes, some State railroad commissions have "gone over to the mob," and there's no telling when half a dozen more will join the dynamite brigade. And what will become of this country if the Federal Bench is filled with men who write decisions otherwise than in the cold glow of the "light of reason"? Let the agitators beware.



Judge Hook took a judicially reasonable view of the Oklahoma 2-cent law and said it was judicially unreasonable. He said it before there was any opportunity to see whether it was reasonable or unreasonable. But it wasn't necessary for him to demand facts when he had all the fiction that a high-priced railroad legal department could give him. Years ago, when Willie Hook was laboring in the little red schoolhouse and learning how to be a Federal judge, he wrote in his copybook: "Truth is stranger than fiction," and "Be not intimate with strangers."

Of course the Oklahoma 2-cent law was unreasonable, because it interfered with passenger-rate laws enacted from time to time by the railroads. It isn't reasonable to have two or a dozen legis-

lative bodies making laws about the same thing, and the railroads can enact all the passenger-rate legislation necessary for the safety of the public and the profit of the roads. What's the use of having Federal courts if they don't protect the rate-making legislative bodies of the railroads?

Who says the railroads don't legislate and have no right to make laws? Their rates, fares and charges are taxes, aren't they? Then they have the power to tax the people, and do tax them. But the taxing power belongs exclusively to sovereignty, doesn't it? Well, hasn't a sovereign power the right to legislate? You may draw diagrams on a blackboard as big as a ten-acre lot, but you can't make a diagram of a sovereign power, with the right to levy taxes, that has not the power and legal right to legislate.

For years and years the railroad rate-making legislators have been enacting rate laws fixing certain passenger rates at less than 2 cents a mile, and as low as a cent and a quarter a mile. They do that a dozen times a year, every time they make and abrogate "special rates." But when a State tries to fix the maximum passenger rate at 2 cents a mile, then the railroad rate-makers send their attorneys into court to prove that no railroad can keep out of the junk pile unless it charges more than 2 cents a mile.

That is all the more impressive when we remember that the expensive "legal departments" of the railroads are maintained by the excessive freight and passenger rates paid by the public. The people pay the court costs and attorneys' fees of both sides.



Just to show that railroads do carry passengers at less than 2 cents a mile—and therefore can't afford to do so—hearken to this tale of the rail:

Last September I went from Portland to San Francisco, 772 miles, on a Southern Pacific train. After dinner such male passengers as were addicted to the burning of tobacco assembled in the smoking tunnel of the observation car. We had a few rounds of talk about hops, labor unions, lumber and Taft, then the conversation veered around to railroads, to the Spokane rate case and naturally to railroad rates.

Eight of us were bunched as closely as we could get together at one end of the tunnel, and for some minutes we listened in respectful silence to a pompous man who was in an active state of eruption. His fuse had been lighted by a traveling man who ventured to suggest that a passenger rate greater than 2 cents a mile was robbery. Mr. Pompous Man asserted that no railroad can pay expenses unless it charges 3 cents a mile, and that the railroads are "hunted and hounded like criminals by anarchistic, socialistic legislators who are egged on by low, lying yellow newspapers that are trying to destroy the government."

"Do you mean the Government, or railroad government?" asked a Chicago traveling man.

Fearing bloodshed, I asked Mr. Pompous Man whence he came. "N'York," he replied. "And how far are you going on your ticket?" I asked. "Back to N'York." I took a similar census of the others

\*See The Public of January 26, page 84.