

THE COMING ELECTIONS.

MR. GEO. FOWLDS AT THE CITY HALL.

SPEECH TO AUCKLAND CITY ELECTORS.

(From the Auckland Star, September 30th, 1896.)

LAST evening Mr George Fowlds addressed a fairly large meeting in the City Hall on political topics, in connection with his candidature for the Auckland city seat in the House of Representatives at the approaching general election. Mr W. H. Smith presided, and amongst the citizens who occupied seats on the platform were the Rev. G. Burgess, Messrs E. Tremain, B. N. Warner, A. Withy, Mitchell, R. Tudhope, Gregory, Higgins, Cleghorn, Mesdames Daidy (Women's Political League), Jordan (Women's Liberal League), Mr W. H. Lyon, and others.

The Chairman, in introducing the speaker, said that he was sorry the bad weather had prevented a larger attendance. He spoke warmly of Mr Fowlds' social qualities, and described him as an honest, whole-souled, level-headed Scotchman. Mr Fowlds had his heartiest sympathies in his candidature for the Auckland City seat, and he had the advantage of being the first in the field. He had no doubt Mr Fowlds would make a favourable impression, and he hoped to see him returned to the House of Representatives. Mr Fowlds came into the political arena as an independent Liberal candidate. He was a man of sterling qualities, and the colony needed many such men. Mr Fowlds was a warm-hearted and liberal-minded man with an earnest desire to benefit the community. He (Mr Smith) did not know what all Mr Fowlds' political and social opinions were, but as a Liberal, and almost a Radical as well, he had the greatest pleasure in giving

what help he could to that gentleman's candidature. (Applause).

MR FOWLDS' ADDRESS.

Mr Fowlds, who, on rising, was received with applause, said that some time ago he received a requisition signed by 640 of the electors asking him to become a candidate for Parliamentary honours, and in response to that requisition he intimated he was willing to do so. With that in view he had asked them to meet him there that night so that he might explain the principles by which he should be guided if elected to the position, and express his opinion on some of those great political and social questions which were or ought to be agitating the public mind. He regretted that the night was so inclement, but he was thankful so many had braved the elements to come out and hear him that night. In looking around the world to-day they saw a great deal of discontent and unrest. Human society was ever in a state of transition. Wherever there was life there was growth and movement, and to-day there was more life in social matters than perhaps there had been at any previous stage in the world's history. In the life of communities, as of individuals, there came times of crises, times when it was necessary to have clear guiding principles. At these times they left the beaten track to try fresh grounds; at present society here and elsewhere was showing signs of one of those times of crises, and therefore it was all the more necessary, in deciding what course to take, that they should go back and trace their way from first principles, but he thought they would agree with him

that at the present time principle in politics was largely at a discount, and therefore, as a natural result, things were in very considerable confusion.

WHAT IS LIBERALISM.

They found in this country the leaders of both great parties in the House claiming to be the only true Liberals, without apparently having any very clear definition in their own minds of what they meant to imply by the term "Liberalism," and the people throughout the country generally were in a very unsettled condition of mind as to what the Government ought to do and what they ought not to do. Now he thought if they would shortly take a look at the origin, development and functions of government they might be able to arrive at some clearer principles which would guide them in deciding what the Government ought to do and leave undone. The origin of the idea of government they found amongst primitive peoples originated in the family. There the head of the family held powers of life and death over the members thereof, decided what was best to be done in the interests of the whole, and regulated the interests of its several parts. In a pastoral or nomadic life with a sparse population this condition was eminently satisfactory, but by-and-bye, as these travelling families began to come into contact with other families, as the population increased, a new condition arose; they began to have intercourse with these other families, and the relationships of one family to another required frequent adjustment, and required a head and central authority to regulate them. These families joined in clans or communities, and required a head directing, controlling, and regulating the interest of the whole. This headship was naturally one acquired by force, the conditions being such that the requirements of the head was one of a controlling character, and the conditions which were best fitted for use in battle were the ones that were successful in securing this headship, might then being the law of right. These clans or communities, as the development proceeded, would come into contact with other clans and communities, and there again fresh conditions arose which required a larger controlling power, and hence

THE IDEA OF A NATION

evolved with its head or king ruling by force and administering justice amongst the several clans, and between members of the different clans, and, finally, as the idea of the nation became clearer, between

members of the same family. As it was frequently the stress of battle which had produced this condition of things, evolution was naturally of a military type. This continual condition of fighting involved frequently the capture of slaves, who were taken and kept to minister to the interests of their captors, and hence originated the idea of rulers and ruled, an idea which, unfortunately, had continued very largely in our own times. Even now every one who got invested with a little brief authority felt called upon to lord it over his fellows, and the idea was still current in the minds of a large class in every community that they alone ought to be entrusted with the powers of law-making. Pursuing this evolutionary course, they reached the age of industrial development, when a new set of conditions arose. Combinations sprung up within the nation, men united in trade associations and formed guilds. Then started a process of social and political education. Men began to discuss the Rights of man and the idea of individual and political equality arose. Then they found two opposing ideas developing side by side — Individualism demanding and securing equality of political rights and privileges, while Socialism on the other hand was being rapidly adopted in the government of the towns and cities. This latter was quite a natural and necessary condition with the aggregation of population in large centres. What would be right to people under certain conditions would, under others with an accumulated population, be entirely wrong. Now, what he had been endeavouring to show in this rapid sketch of the evolution of Society and systems of government was this, that every fresh stage in the development necessitated limitation of the claims of the individual, and that this limitation was for the purpose of securing to all full and free political and social liberty and equality, and also that what might be right for one man or for one family living in each of the large islands of New Zealand would be radically wrong and a serious infringement of the rights and privileges of his neighbour living, say, in the city of Auckland.

STOUT'S LIBERALISM.

Some time ago they had Sir Robert Stout speaking in that hall, and some very clever and pointed things he said, but in the course of that address he referred to the Chartist movement, and claimed that here in this country they had nearly everything that the Chartists demanded, and seemed to think that it was sufficient condemnation

of some of the measures which had been passed and proposed in this country to say that they were not included in the Chartist demands. They knew Sir Robert was one of those men who claimed to be the only true Liberals, and, therefore, everything which did not meet with his approval must of necessity be bad Liberalism. Now, it seemed to him that to suggest to the people of this country, that having secured free education, universal suffrage, short Parliaments, payment of members and no property qualification, and voting by ballot, they should ask for nothing more, or to hint that those great and good men who fought and died in securing some of these reforms would, if they lived to-day, ask for nothing more was to write them down as a pack of fools. ("Hear, hear.") What was the use of educating the people, giving them a vote which they could exercise without coercion, securing to them short parliaments, paid members (so that everyone of ability might represent his fellows), if they were not to use those powers when once they had been secured? Was not the demand for equal political rights intended as a stepping-stone to secure equal social and economic rights? (Applause.) The same spirit which animated the Chartists of old in their fight for Political Liberty and Political Justice must animate the people to-day in fighting for social liberty and social justice. (Applause.) If the laws at that time were right, what, he asked, would be the sense in asking for a change of lawmakers?

THE ENCLOSURE ACTS.

They had only to read the history of English lawmaking to realise how far these laws were from being just. Was it just or right when a parliament of land owners passed the infamous Enclosure Acts, and thus robbed the people of England of millions upon millions of acres of land, which had been their heritage, without ever once talking of compensation? Was it right or just when a Parliament of land owners by a majority of two throw off their own shoulders the burden of taxation, which constituted the conditions under which they held their land from the Crown, and placed it on the backs of the common people by Excise and Customs duties?

PRECEDENCE FOR A LAND TAX.

There seemed to him to be so much neglected knowledge of the evil contained in the passing of those acts, and the enormity of the offence which those men did,

he would read a short extract from a sub-leader which appeared in the STAR some five or six years ago. This, he explained, was in reply to a correspondent who had written on the question of taxing.

UNIMPROVED LAND VALUES.

The extract was as follows:—"The writer of this sentence is evidently not aware that until the time of Charles I. of England, the land of Britain provided the national revenue required for all purposes. It was Charles I. who persuaded his Parliament to impose Customs and Excise duties. The debate which took place in the House of Commons on the imposition of these duties, proved that the House was by no means unanimous upon this proposed change of taxation, and, after all, it was decided on by a bare majority of two. Even many of the landowners in the House were greatly opposed to the change, saying that it was distinctly the land of a country that should provide the national revenue, and to take it out of the pockets of the wage-earner was a cruel robbery. (Applause.) Cromwell, who became protector of the kingdom after Charles, did away with the Customs and Excise duties, and re-imposed the land tax. During this protectorate the revenue from this source averaged four million annually. Charles II. re-imposed the Customs and Excise duties, and reduced the land tax. Each Government of England since that time has followed the pernicious example, and thus a present of the soil of England was made to its present possessors. Last year the land tax for the whole of Great Britain realised only £1,000,000, whereas had the landowners of that country paid according to the Act providing for the tax, which has never been repealed, they would have to stump up to the tune of £36,000,000. This is surely a precedent of a rather remarkable character. The tax derived from the land in India is £22,000,000, and had it not been for the arrangement made with the Indian chiefs by Lord Cornwallis in 1796, whereby the future rise in land values went to them, £88,000,000 would now be paid."

A GOVERNMENT'S FUNCTIONS.

Now they were to see if they could arrive at a clearer definition as to what were the true functions of Government, remembering that the same law of Necessity, which had controlled and guided in the past, would operate in the future; now, what had been the essential spirit of human progress hitherto? It seemed to him to have been in the direction of securing to every

individual free and equal opportunities of living his own full life untrammled and uncontrolled by his fellows, except where his actions infringe the like freedom and equality on their parts, therefore his conception of the functions of Government was that it should aim at securing to every member of the State full and equal freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action, with free and equal access to all the natural opportunities of the earth. (Applause.) In this view of the case Government became more of a negative than a positive character. Its commands must be "Thou shalt not" rather than "Thou shalt do this or that." Its primary duty was to see that liberty did not degenerate into license (applause), that no one in the exercise of his own liberty infringed the like liberty of his neighbour. In discharging that duty the Government of the future must do many things which had not been requisite in the past, and with the industrial development which lies before us, the Government will of necessity be called upon to take up duties which are not necessary even now. The greatest menace to individual liberty to-day was to be found in the growth of monopolies, and these, as time proceeds, must either be abolished or taken over by the State and run in the interests of all the people. (Applause.) Let them consider how best those functions could be discharged. In doing this, he would first consider the machinery of the Government, legislative proposals, and, finally, the administration of the Government.

GOVERNMENT MACHINERY.

In considering the machinery of the Government the first question was that of party, or rather cabinet system of government. The system seemed to be pretty generally condemned. Everywhere there was a growing opinion that it had served its day and generation and must pass away into the lumber room of forgotten things. Party government failed to meet the formula of a true democracy. Instead of being government of the people for the people by the people, it had become government of the people by the Premier for the Premier and a few friends. (Applause.) They required to reverse their whole idea of government. Instead of the Premier being the centre of power and authority, it must be the people who held the power. (Applause.) Instead of the government being from the top downwards, it must be from the bottom upwards. (Applause.) They heard a good deal about the

autocratic Seddon—and he was and must be autocratic under the present system unless he meant to go to the wall. (Applause.) No man could successfully carry on government under the present system without a good deal of coercion. To hear some people talk, they would think that Mr Seddon had been the first Premier in New Zealand who had been dictatorial with his followers. What about the hob-nail boots of Sir Harry Atkinson? (Laughter and applause.) That gentleman had often to round up his followers by threats of dissolution. The fact was that it was not the man but the system which was at fault. (Applause.) They wanted a complete reversal of the present system of government. It should originate from the bottom and not from the top. The individual should be the unit of Government, passing onwards through the wards or local boards, then to district councils, and finally to the Parliament, whose acts, unless practically unanimous, should come back to the people for assent by means of the referendum before finally becoming law. Meantime, if they should choose to elect him he would support Major Steward's proposal for an elective Executive. (Applause.) He did not think that would be the last word on the question. In the future some system of committees must control departments of State and supplant the present individual system of management. He need not dwell upon the advantages to be derived from the elective Executive, and would content himself with pointing out one advantage that every proposal would be considered upon its merits, without reference to the standing of its proposer or involving the fate of a Government. There would be much more likelihood of getting the will of the people expressed in the legislation of the country, and the preventing the passing of laws which had not the approval of the people would be perhaps as great a gain as the getting of those laws passed which had their approval. (Applause.)

THE REFERENDUM.

Following this reform and really complementary of it would be the institution of the referendum and initiative, to secure to the people as a whole the opportunity of deciding more definitely than at present what they wanted and what they did not want. To him it seemed most absurd to hear Ministers asserting that their measures had the approval of the country because they happen to have been mentioned before a general election. He did not believe that a single candidate at the coming

election would get elected without getting the votes of many who disagreed entirely with him on many points of his programme; he certainly should not feel that all those who voted for him endorsed everything that he believed, and hold, therefore, that the present was a very crude and imperfect form of getting the mind of the people expressed, and should be supplemented by the addition of the referendum and initiative.

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The next machinery point he wished to touch on was the question of a second Chamber, and here again we had an effete survival of medieval times, with a few modern vices added; what an absurdity to have an irresponsible nominated house to thwart the will of the people, and the only means of bringing it into touch being for the Government of the day to send a few more members there to become fossilised. If they must have a second Chamber anything at all on the lines of the present House, let it be elected. (Applause.) What he should like to see would be an advisory Council of experts without the power to veto a measure that had been sent up by the representatives of the people. (Applause.) They might, perhaps, be invested with the power of saying whether any particular measure must be referred to the people for assent before becoming law. This Council would examine every proposal before it became law, giving clear and convincing reasons for every objection raised. Such a Council might well become the New Zealand Legion of Honour, election to which would be a highly prized reward for eminent services rendered to the State in all its branches, being composed of clergymen, doctors, lawyers, captains of industry or commerce.

SYSTEM OF ELECTION.

With regard to the system of election of members of the House of Representatives, they were supposed to have one man and one woman one vote, but in the large centres they had one man three votes. This was entirely wrong, and ought to be remedied as soon as possible. They must either have single electorates or adopt some modification of the Hare system. The latter might eliminate some of the parochial character from politics, but against that they would lose the personal contact between the people and their representatives. Of one thing he was convinced, and that was that the sooner they divorced the construction of roads and bridges from the

colonial Legislature, the sooner they would get sound legislation and honest administration. (Applause.)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

This brought him to the question of local government, which was one of the most important questions the next Government would have to deal with, and if they succeed in reducing it to simplicity and securing efficiency they would have done a work which would entitle them to the respect and esteem of the community for all time. But he did not expect the millennium all at once, or in one session of Parliament, and so they must be content to move slowly, but be sure they moved on sound lines. Before, however, they got an ideal state of government where the people should really govern, they would want to reverse their whole conception of government, and instead of the Premier for the time being, and those who with him constituted what they called the Government, being the centre of power and authority issuing their commands which the sovereign people had to obey, the people, the citizens, would issue their commands, and the Government should have to obey. On those lines they must attempt to reform their system of local government. He believed in the wards or local boards which should be the first political unit for all purposes of government, being small, to secure a close personal contact between the local electors and their representatives. To these ward committees or local boards he would give perfect autonomy in all purely local affairs, with a free and simple method of amalgamation with other wards or local boards for special and joint enterprises.

UNIFICATION OF LOCAL BODIES.

They often heard of the multiplicity of local authorities—school committees, road boards, county councils, charitable aid boards, and so forth. He had had a little experience of the working of some of these boards, and he did not hesitate to say that greater efficiency and economy could be obtained by a unification of these local authorities. Moreover—what to him was very important—greater interest would be taken in these bodies, and public spirit would be developed. In the towns the evolution of local government was naturally more complete than in the country districts. But he would like to see much more organic life in the wards than there was at present, and in course of time he hoped to see larger and larger affiliations of these ward units.

for district works, until at last the National Government would simply control those things which were of a national or interprovincial character, such as the railways, the telegraphs, postal and marine services. The National Legislature would then be in a much better position to register the wishes of the people as they came to them, carefully considered and commended by the ward committees, through the district councils. He would give to the local bodies complete self-government in all purely local matters. He would also give them more freedom to regulate their own constitutions and methods of transacting business. Instead of laying it down that they should consist of so many members, and meet at certain specified times, and when once elected, should continue in office for one or two years, he would allow each place to decide for itself, and the best system was sure to be finally adopted. He considered this a very important point in evolving the best system of local government, to give free play to natural selection. One of the main reasons, to his mind, why the organisation of government generally was so far behind the organisation of industry and commerce, was the want of this freedom of action. (Applause.)

A LOCAL EXAMPLE.

He would illustrate what he meant by the freedom which he would give to those local bodies to unite for special purposes whilst retaining their autonomy for local purposes. They had close to Auckland four local bodies adjoining near a common centre. He meant Arch Hill, Eden Terrace, Mount Albert and Point Chevalier. Running through those districts there was a large gully, which carried the drainage of a good part of each district, and the proper enclosing of which would be a benefit to them all. It was his firm conviction that something would be done to that pestilential fever bed if they had more freedom of action in dealing with joint interests. Of course, it would be urged that the financial adjustment was the greatest difficulty at present, and that would be in no way improved by the change indicated. He would deal with the financial question later on.

WATER SUPPLY.

The speaker noted another illustration of the larger district unions to which he had referred, with regard to Auckland and surrounding local authorities, in the matters of water supply, lighting and street locomotion. With regard to each of these the

present position was very unsatisfactory. They would very soon be compelled to go further afield for their water supply, and in this matter all the surrounding districts should be united, sharing alike the burden of the first cost, and future profits. With such an arrangement they could go in for a gravitation supply, sufficient for the great expansion which lay before them, and without unduly taxing their present resources. The financial adjustment of this and other items of local government he purposed treating separately.

ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS.

The same arrangements which would be beneficial in a water supply scheme would apply to the questions of lighting and running the tramways. It seemed to him most absurd that a large city like Auckland should at the close of the 19th century be dependent on a private monopoly for its lighting, and should be debating and just on the point of handing over its tramways for 30 years to a foreign syndicate. These branches of the public service had been developed so far in other countries as to be altogether beyond the experimental stage. Did they suppose for a moment that a body of capitalists would undertake a work of this kind without a pretty strong certainty of making money out of it? It was not philanthropy for the city which animated those men, and what was possible and reasonably certain for them, was possible for the community and ought to be in the hands of the community. (Applause.) What would they suppose or expect to be the first effect of the starting of a high class electric street car system? Why, a large increase in land values, and in the hands of the city that increase, created by their expenditure, should be collected by them and credited to the cost of tramway construction. He made an emphatic protest against the handing over of this monopoly to a foreign syndicate, especially in view of the coming large increase of population and a corresponding increase in the value of the street tram system. (Applause.)

GRANTS FOR PARTY PURPOSES.

One more point he wished to emphasise in connection with local government was that all moneys for purely local works should be raised and expended by the local authorities. He could not too strongly condemn the practice, which was increasing, of making grants from the Colonial Treasury for district works. It was open to grave abuses, and leads to gross extravagance. He would be a very bold man who would assert that such grants had not been

made frequently for party purposes, in other words for corruption and bribery, and as such had tended to demoralise the country. Bribery out of a man's private pocket was bad, and not long ago they heard the present Premier denounce the National Association for bribing the people of the country with free literature, but to use the nation's funds for this purpose was immeasurably worse. He did not blame any party in the State for this more than another; it was the system which was at fault. If it was deemed advisable to assist in any way, it should be done by means of the Loans to Local Bodies Act, and if necessary the re-payment of those loans could be made easier. This would not only prevent partiality, but secure local responsibility for all works undertaken.

REVENUES OF LOCAL BODIES.

The revenues of these local bodies seemed to him the crux of the whole question. He believed that the administration of local Government was, taken as a whole, fairly effective, though expensive, and he would not favour the creation of larger districts, except for specific purposes and district works. With so many boards, the collection of their own assessments was naturally expensive—the road boards on an average spent 20 per cent. of their income in administration. He thought, with some experience of the work, that 15 per cent. of this could be saved if the boards were relieved from the collection. Of course, he did not mean that it cost this amount for collection, but with that out of the way a good deal of honorary work would be done. For example, the secretary of a school committee was never paid in the country, and people would be found willing to do the clerical work of a road board in the same way, if the arduous duty of collecting the rates were not attached to the secretaryship. How was this to be done?

RATING ON UNIMPROVED VALUES.

It seemed to be simplicity itself, since Parliament had passed the Rating on Unimproved Values Bill largely in response to the demands of the local authorities. He considered this the most beneficial piece of legislation which the present Parliament had passed, both for the cities and the country districts. If all the local authorities throughout the colony would adopt that Act, the whole of their revenues could be collected by the general Government, along with the present land tax, with almost no additional cost. The

present exemptions under the land tax would first require to be abolished, and that point he purposed dealing with under the head of general taxation.

SIMPLIFICATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Were this system of taxation generally adopted a great simplification of local government would at once take place. They would see how much more easily the financial adjustment of joint works between the several boards could then be effected. The construction of the large sewer between the Arch Hill and other districts would very largely increase the value of adjacent lands, and the several local authorities, levying the rates on that increased valuation, would receive from the lands benefited the cost of the works which had produced the benefit, and the allocation of the share of each district would be a comparatively easy matter. The relative increase in the value of adjacent land would be a pretty reliable guide. Now, this identical principle would apply in the same way to the larger district unions he referred to, for the purpose of procuring a water supply, lighting, or running tramways. He had dealt thus fully with the question of local government, as a reform of the machinery of government, because he considered it of the utmost importance, not only for what it could accomplish in the several localities, but because he was of opinion that a proper solution of this question would affect beneficially the whole tone and character of our colonial government and legislation. They would observe that in dealing with the machinery of government, and especially with local government, he had endeavoured to keep steadily in view the pervading spirit which he thought he caught from the historical evolution of society, reserving to these political units the same rights and the same conditions as he claimed for the individual, that was freedom to do as he pleased as long as he did not infringe the like freedom and liberties of others. The same principle and formula applied to communities. He thought, along this line, they could put our system of local government on a very much better footing than at present.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS.

Now, keeping this thought still in view, let them turn their attention to some of the legislative proposals which had been from time to time before the country (hear, hear), but here they would find that society had wandered so woefully

away from first principle that it would be almost impossible to apply that principle because of the conditions into which they had drifted. It would be necessary to apply palliatives until they could get conditions where a radical remedy could be applied. Let him illustrate what he meant by these palliatives, for conditions being out of order. Supposing, for example, one of our most able medical men was going into the country for a holiday with a friend, and the friend met with a serious accident, say got his leg badly smashed, so badly indeed that the skilful and practised eye of the physician told him the only thing to save his friend's life was to have the injured limb amputated as soon as possible, but he had not the necessary instruments to do this, in other words the conditions were not suitable. Would the doctor say to his friend, "Old man you want that limb amputated, that is the only thing which can save your life, and that is not possible here, therefore there is nothing left but for you to prepare to die?" No, he would adopt some palliative, bind up the injured limb as best he could, take his friend on his back, and make for the nearest place where the amputation could take place. And that was what they must do with the body politic. Now he wanted them to keep that clearly in mind, because he should be compelled to approve of some proposals as palliatives, which he considered quite incapable of effecting a radical cure.

TAXATION.

And first amongst the proposed reforms he meant to deal with was the question of taxation. The fiscal question was being increasingly recognised as of the utmost importance, and here at the outset they found a damaged limb which required amputation, but any attempt to perform the operation would result in the death of the operator. The people of this country had become so infatuated with the fetish of protection, that to doubt its divine virtues was to be guilty in the eyes of many of something akin to blasphemy, still he hoped the example of New South Wales having returned from her wallowing in the mire, and the beneficial results which were even now accruing from the change, would lead our own people to see that they are not such a dangerous and desperate lot of beings as to need protection from doing that which they desire to do. But in dealing with the question of taxation, there is considerable scope for improvement and change, without touching the principle of protection, and as he

still desired to live he should deal with it for the present within those limits. There was the monstrous breakfast-table duties, and the still more iniquitous duty on kerosene, the latter of which would indicate that we desired the poor country settlers to live in darkness, in case they should take to a study of economics, and find out where their shoes pinched them. It was one of the most iniquitous taxes he knew of, and one which he thought should be the very first to be abolished.

THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF TAXATION.

A great deal has been said and written about the true principles of taxation. Many years ago, Adam Smith laid down certain canons of taxation, which contained a good deal of philosophic and economic truth, but these had never received very much attention, principally, he thought, because they did not suit the constitutions of those who in the past had controlled the levying of taxation. More recently a fresh doctrine had been enunciated, viz.: "That taxation should be imposed according to the ability to pay;" this is what Mr Vaile would call "charging according to what the traffic would bear," and on first blush seemed to have a good deal to commend it, and if it could be rigorously enforced would be a great improvement on the present system, but even that would violate sound principles, and in many cases operate unjustly. He supposed a case where two men started with fairly equal opportunities; the one was sober and industrious, the other a drunkard and a loafer. By and bye the sober and industrious man could bear a great deal more taxation than the other, but would it be just or right that he should be compelled to do so? He thought not. His idea of an ethically just system of taxation was this; that everyone should pay in proportion to the benefit he received. (Applause.) And then they might ask the question, what should be taxed so as to secure that result? Well, he knew of only two things which could be taxed, viz., labour and privilege, and as the privilege fund was extracted from the people in any case, that, in his opinion, was the only true source of taxation. In this country, about £270,000 per annum was collected by a tax on land values, which was in reality a tax on privilege, and the only one which the general government levied. The local bodies derived some of their revenues from this source, such as public house and other licences, gas and tramway services. The demand

has gone forth for a long time in Great Britain for a free breakfast table, and that was what he thought they should aim at here, for various reasons. The incidence of Custom duties, and especially the duty on such things as tea and sugar, was so atrocious, that he never ceased wondering that a civilised nation, making any profession of honesty or morality, should allow them to continue for a day. It meant that a man bringing up a family on 30s per week would consume nearly as much tea and sugar as a man with £30 per week, and would, therefore, pay as much to the revenue of the country, and in reality these things had become part of the necessities of life. In addition to the unfairness of the incidence of raising the revenue in this way, it violated every sound canon of taxation as laid down by the economists. It was expensive of collection. It took more out of the pockets of the people than the Government received, as the wholesale and retail profits had to be added. He believed it was under the mark to say that for every pound the Government received from Customs duties, the actual consumer paid 30s. Therefore, his practical proposal on the question of taxation was that a penny in the £ should be added to the present tax on land values, and the amount so raised be applied to the abolition of the duty on kerosene, the reduction of the breakfast table duties, and part in providing an old age pension fund, and, as this disposition of it would benefit every member of the community, he would propose to abolish all the present exemptions, which constituted it more or less a class tax at present. This tax on land values could be collected without any extra cost. 2d in the £ could be collected as cheaply as 1d. It all went into the coffers of the Government, and was in reality not a tax at all, but simply a collecting of part of the unearned increment which every sane person admitted attached to land, especially in the cities or where population was dense. The present land tax brought in about £270,000, of which £70,000 came from the graduated part of the tax. The proposed additional 1d would not be graduated, but by abolishing all exemptions it would produce about the same amount. £160,000 of the amount would be required for the old age pension fund, and the balance of £110,000 would suffice to abolish the duty on kerosene, and considerably reduce the duties on tea and sugar. This remission of Customs duties would be an immense relief to industry in every form, and with the

duty on kerosene included would especially relieve the small farmers, and he doubted not would pave the way for further instalments of privilege taxation, until trade and industry would be entirely freed from the present robber rates and taxes. (Applause.) Having told them where he would get the money from for an old age pension fund, he would now tell them how he would disburse it, and here he would state that the figures from which he worked had been supplied by the Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association, an Association which had given a very extensive study to the whole question, and whose figures might be taken as fairly accurate. The number of people in the colony over 65 years of age was 15,000, 12,000 of whom had been 20 years in the colony, and that was the qualification which he would support as entitling anyone to a pension. They should provide that every person who had been that time in the country would receive such a pension whether rich or poor. (Applause.) Any other scheme would be to bring in another pernicious system of charitable aid. He considered the House was quite right in resisting any scheme that necessitated poverty as a qualification for a pension. (Applause.) He would therefore propose that every person over 65 years of age who had resided 20 years in the colony, should be entitled to a pension of 6s per week. It was not an extravagant sum, but it was as much as the colony would care to face at present, and might perhaps be increased later on. Small as the sum was, it would assuage an immense amount of distress and misery and secure a result worth twice the cost entailed. To pay that pension would take £163,000 per annum, but it would save from £40,000 to £50,000 at present paid each year under the existing charitable aid system. (A voice: "Oh!") Well, that was the sum estimated by the Christchurch Progressive Liberal Association. The amount thus saved and future additions could then be devoted to still further augmenting the Old Age Pension Fund in the direction of encouraging a spirit of thrift in the people. It should take the form of an annuity system purchased by the savings of the people, and might be in the form of a subsidy of £ per £ paid by the Government. This might be worked through the existing friendly societies at very little expense, without creating another Government department. In any case it was necessary that they should do something in the direction of re-

forming their present charitable aid system, which was sapping the manhood and womanhood of the colony. He considered that the present system was daily adding to the class of sturdy beggars. He had no sympathy with those who would not work, but had every sympathy with those who were able and willing to work and could not get work to do. (Applause.) Public sympathy was, however, being imposed upon by people who were quite able to work but who would not. This class of sturdy beggars existed by the indiscriminate giving of charity. If the old age pension system was adopted it would be easier to deal with these sturdy beggars, and there would still be ample scope for the exercise of private benevolence in attending to the pressing wants of deserving neighbours. (Applause.) He had always advocated the establishment of municipal farms, and it had been shown by the Salvation Army that these, like their Prison Gate Brigade homes, could be made self-supporting. Similar institutions should also be started for the women of the colony, but of course in an employment suited to their sex, though to do the women justice he did not think they were so inclined to sponge on society as some of the men were. (Applause.) This matter of charitable aid was a pressing question, and unless it was reformed they must reap a terrible harvest by and by. (Applause.)

TEMPERANCE REFORM.

The great temperance reform question followed suitably upon this problem of charitable aid. Many people believed that if they could but abolish alcoholic drink from the land, much of the poverty would as a natural consequence disappear with it. (Applause.) No one would deny that a great amount of poverty and undeserved misery originated from the drinking habits of the people, and if this could be abolished they would be enabled to lift them on to a higher plane. He might say at once that this movement to raise humanity had his cordial support and approval. (Applause.) The progress made during the past few years in this direction made the need for legislation less pressing. The work that lay before them was rather educational than legislative. Still there were, however, a few anomalies that required rectification. First of all there was the question of the bare majority as against one of three-fifths. He did not like to go from the liberal principle of government by the majority. At the same time, he

thought that if the three-fifths majority was used there was less likelihood of the vote taken at one election being reversed at the next. They found a similar principle working well in joint stock companies, where certain motions frequently required more than a bare majority to secure their being passed. It was therefore possible that the three-fifths majority might be retained with advantage. He believed the adoption of commercial methods in the management of Government affairs would be an improvement. He had found that many temperance people thought the three-fifths majority was the best system for the reason he had already stated. On that question he was prepared to act in accordance with what seemed to be the clearly expressed wishes of the people. (Applause.) In connection with this question, there were also other matters that required amendment. The demand for the inclusion of clubs in the local option vote was a reasonable one, and would have his support if he were elected. (Applause.) He did not see why a place being a private club should exclude it from the local option vote. He remembered when he was living on the diamond fields in South Africa some cute fellows discovered that the Colonial Secretary was bound to issue a club license if asked for by some 20 or 25 persons, and they began organizing clubs for the natives. Soon every third or fourth house was a club, and the whole place a pandemonium. The Sunday-schools had to be closed, and it was unsafe for ladies and children to be about, and life generally was not worth many days' purchase until the Cape Parliament met and repealed the Act. So he had every sympathy with the temperance party on this point. (Applause.)

THE WOMEN'S FRANCHISE.

The temperance question was supposed to have a special interest for the women, and certainly they and the innocent children have to bear a large portion of the undeserved misery which it entails. Following therefore the temperance, it was natural that he should speak of the great woman's question. In this country the women have got a long way ahead of their sisters in many parts of the world, but much yet remained to be done to secure to them political, social, and economic equality with their brothers. Having secured the franchise, no good reason had been shown why they should be denied representative rights (applause), and he should support that, though he did

not expect to see the privilege largely taken advantage of. (Applause.) If only one woman desired to exercise her full rights of citizenship, and the electors thought her a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament, he did not see why she should be debarred on account of her sex. Many said "What do women know about politics?" and the same question might be asked about a great many men, but he was glad to see the activity of women in endeavouring to make themselves acquainted with the rights and wrongs of political questions. (Applause.) Still, they could not be surprised if the women were not yet fully educated in political matters, especially if they considered some of the results of the actions of the male voters, who had possessed the franchise so long. (Applause.) He would like to suggest a short platform of three planks which the women, as a whole, should aim at securing by the exercise of their political rights. The first is to see that only men of good moral character and sober habits get elected to represent them. The second, to secure the amendment of every law which denies them equal civil rights with men; and the third, to secure equal pay for equal service in all departments of the State. (Applause.) That was, he thought, a good fighting platform, and its attainment would be a boon to the women themselves and a blessing to the State.

NATIONAL DEFENCE.

This he considered a very big question. He was not by any means a bellicose man, and believed the warlike spirit of past ages had retarded the development of man to a higher plane, still he did not believe in going with an umbrella to fight a man who had come armed with a rifle. Some time ago he advocated the formation of rifle clubs, and with a little encouragement from the Government they would have been a success, but his inquiries then had revealed to him a deplorable state of affairs in this colony, and one that was absolutely dangerous, the outlook being a serious one when they considered how near this colony was to New Caledonia. In the event of a war with France, a good many thousands of the biggest cutthroats in the world could be landed on our shores in a few days, and to meet them they had under 5,000 Martini Henry rifles, and about 30,000 of the old Sniders, but there was no ammunition for the latter, and it was doubtful if they had enough skilled men to use the former. He was told by the volunteers that good shooting was at a low ebb in this colony.

Any attack on New Zealand would be made by small forces, and, with an efficient body of volunteers, and rifle clubs whose members were able to shoot like the Burghers of the Transvaal, they should be able to keep themselves free from invaders.

LABOUR MEASURES.

With respect to the large class of legislation known as Labour Bills, they must exercise a good deal of caution, and see that they did not create greater evils than those they tried to cure. He believed that with proper conditions labour required no special legislation, but unfortunately they did not possess those proper conditions and they must apply special palliatives to the special evils which existed. Several of these Bills, such, for example, as the Factory Acts and the Shop Hours Bill, were working without friction, where the administration of them was in the hands of careful and competent men like the local inspector Mr Ferguson. As for the the Eight Hours Bill, if this were passed, making eight hours a statutory day's work in all trades, with time and a half for overtime, it would operate all right in the organised trades, but in many branches of labour the rate of pay would simply be fixed in accordance with the new conditions of labour. That might, however, be got over by fixing a minimum rate of pay for all overtime, either for adults or minors. The Arbitration and Conciliation Bill which had been passed, might do much in the future in the way of preventing industrial wars. As for the Masters and Apprentices Bill, there were some glaring anomalies in the measure, and it would require great care to frame it so that it would not do harm. It was very serious to shut out from the possibility of learning a trade boys and girls growing up. It would require radical amendment before the Bill could safely be passed. With regard to all these measures he would be guided by the principles he had already laid down, and judge every proposal by the necessity of the circumstances, treating every case with due regard to the rights of individual liberty.

STATE FIRE INSURANCE.

In the future, no doubt, State fire assurance could be carried into effect, but at present there were more pressing reforms, and it could well wait. He was a believer in local option in all things, and if a Bill were ever drafted to give local bodies power to introduce the principle of State fire insurance in any particular district, it would, he

considered, be a good thing to give it a trial. It would be an experiment, anyhow, and could do no harm, and the colony generally would be a gainer by the experience of the district in question.

LANDS FOR SETTLEMENT.

He laid stress on the importance and urgency of not selling any more Crown lands, and he said he could not support the Lands for Settlement Bill. The practice of the Government buying up large improved estates in various parts of the island, then selling them, was a pernicious one. As for the Loans to Settlers Act it was unwise, to say the least, to borrow money to lend to farmers or anyone else, but it was the result he chiefly objected to. Every addition to the amount of capital invested in land values tended to enhance its capital value, and if this measure had succeeded in reducing the rate of interest, that also increased land values, and made it more difficult for the landless worker to get a piece of land either for agricultural or residential purposes. But the rate of interest being lower in Australia without such a measure than it was here, disproved the assertion that it had lowered the interest charge.

CONCLUSION.

In his concluding remarks Mr Fowlds said that administration must be just and pure, and without regard to political colour. Favouritism in the public service he denounced as wrong, and he considered that having once passed the civil service examinations, priority of application should secure priority of appointment. He referred to the banking inquiry now proceeding, which he said was a huge mistake for the country. If someone's name had been blackened it was no gain, and it had been the means of bringing out a very unworthy proposal in the direction of revealing the contents of private papers in connection with the Bank's business, a proposal which if it had been given effect to would have been a violation of all the rules of private confidence and of honour. It was monstrous to propose that private papers should be thus examined. Finally, Mr Fowlds said that he was perfectly willing to leave himself in the hands of the electors. If they thought he could effectually serve them in Parliament they would no doubt elect him, and if not he should probably be in as good a financial position at the end of next year as if they had, and his wife and family would certainly commend their decision. He reiterated what he said when he first

received the requisition to stand, that his opinions on political questions had not been picked up from the man in the street, and while he could not say that they were unalterable, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, it would be more light rather than the exigencies of a political contest that would compel him to alter them. He would like those who would support him to rally round him, and he informed them that he did not intend to spend money in paid canvassing. If he should enter Parliament, he intended to take as his motto the golden rule, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." He would support this or any Government in so far as their policy coincided with the policy he had laid down, but he believed the true policy for the future was grandly stated in the words of Dr. Norman McLeod:—

"Trust no party, side or faction,
Trust no leader in the fight;
But in every word and action,
Trust in God and do the right."

(Prolonged applause.)

QUESTIONS.

Mr Fowlds then answered a number of questions put by members of the audience. He said he would be in favour of bringing the hotels under the provisions of the Shop Hours Act. He thought householders should have votes at municipal elections because they paid the rates in the rents. He was in favour of the single tax as a principle, and had indicated in his address the extent he was prepared to go in a present application of the principle. He would support a measure for the abolition of grand juries, as he believed they were ornamental without being useful. He did not think there should be a law to prevent shopkeepers from hanging up goods in the street outside their doors (laughter), as he thought such a practice was "a boon and a blessing to men." (Laughter). In reply to Mr W. G. Garrard he did not think Parliament should be abolished altogether (laughter) though he had set forth in his speech his reasons for wishing to reform it. He would be in favour of bringing in the old age pensions as soon as possible. He would vote for the repeal of the C. D. Act, but believed that some measure would have to be passed in the future for dealing with the matter, the provisions of which should apply equally to both men and women. (Applause.) In reply to a question as to whether he was in favour of the award being paid in the case of the late J. H.

Field in connection with the contract for printing the rolls which had been recommended by the Petitions Committee, but not carried out by the Government, Mr Fowlds said, without knowing the merits of the case, he considered that as a general principle when a Parliamentary Committee made a recommendation that payment be made in satisfaction of any claim or grievance, that recommendation ought to be given effect to by the Government. Mr Fowlds expressed himself strongly in favour of the weekly half-holiday. He

could tell them that when he once kept a little shop in Victoria-street, and when the half holiday was unknown, the monotony of the routine of getting up in the morning, remaining in the shop all day and going to bed again when the work was finished, made life hardly worth living. The benefit of the half-holiday could not be valued too highly.

On the motion of Mr J. Bollard a hearty vote of thanks was accorded by acclamation to Mr Fowlds for his address, and after the customary vote of thanks to the Chairman the gathering dispersed.

