

favor. "Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, High River and Regina," says this journal, "are among the cities that have adapted the commission plan to suit their own local needs. . . . Interest in the single tax system is growing keener. Again Edmonton is the leading exponent in the West"—excepting Vancouver and Prince Rupert, of course—"in fact, the whole of the Province of Alberta leans favorably towards single tax. Saskatchewan is more conservative on this point, but the heaven is at work there, too. . . . Municipal ownership is still a favorite plank in civic platforms. The failures are either inconspicuous or else the fault is not with the principle, but in some maladministration, or because of putting faith in manufacturers. And the successes are conspicuous and many. Street cars, electric lights, water works, hospitals, public utilities of all sorts are more and more being controlled by the municipality. One very important and commendable feature is that these municipally owned public utilities are also more and more being put under the management of experts."

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Organization seems to be the watchword here. Each Province has its Union of Municipalities, consisting of the officers of the various municipal bodies. These unions at their annual conventions pass upon various resolutions or recommendations to the Provincial parliaments, and recommendations so passed are regarded as mandatory upon the legislatures. Among the 26 resolutions passed upon at the last (fifth) annual convention of the Union of Saskatchewan Municipalities, I find the following: "Resolution 19.—Resolved: That the Provincial Government be asked to amend the land tax in towns and villages so that land shall be assessed at its fair actual value, and the buildings and improvements thereon at not more than 60 per cent, but that no greater reduction than 15 per cent shall be made in any one year."

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"Granges" and Grain Growers' Associations afford another example of organization. There is a Grange and Council of Agriculture for the entire Dominion, and each Province has its grain growers' association or grange. Known to the outside world up to the present, as well behaved, "industrious farmers," diligent in grain, hay and stock raising, minding their own business only, and, above all, conservative mossbacks, these farmers, through their organizations, are at this moment rousing the entire Dominion with a monster delegation to Ottawa, demanding from the government, no half-way measures, but a complete change of tactics. It is a well known fact that the Laurier government, securing its lease of power on the promise of "free trade as they have it in England," has during its seventeen years in office not done much to lower the tariff. The demand by the farmers' delegation to fulfill its promises was significant: "E. A. Partridge of Sinaluta, Sask., seconded the resolution. He pointed out that under free trade conditions, manufacturing could be carried out more cheaply than at present, and also discussed the question of raising a revenue under free trade, declaring himself in favor of direct taxation on the basis of land values." Who said the

farmers are opposed to the taxation of land values? That the best of us may be mistaken some of the time, would now, I am sure, be admitted by that great and good man, were he still with us, Professor Parsons, in his too great a zeal for another good cause wrote: "The single tax would be a blow to the farmers and home owners all over the land, a blow at the friends of democracy and progress." The farmers in Manitoba have had a measure of the single tax for twenty-five years or so, and now, through this delegation, they vote for its extension into Dominion affairs. Does that look like a "blow" at the friends of democracy and progress? That this was a representative demand may be seen from the fact, as reported at the time, that "the resolution was supported by representatives from each of the Provinces, S. C. Parker of Berwick speaking for Nova Scotia; S. C. Hathaway of Fredericton for New Brunswick, Robert Seller of Huntington for Quebec; Johnston Simcoe for Ontario and Jas. Spealman of Penhold for Alberta. R. McKenzie of Winnipeg, Thos. McMillan of Seaforth, and L. Brown of Pilot Mound of Manitoba also spoke in support of the resolution. A number of others rose to speak in favor of the resolution, but a delegate moved that no one else be heard in favor of the resolution, but that an opportunity be now given for those opposed. This was agreed to, and the chairman invited any person who did not approve of the resolution to take the platform. The invitation was repeated several times but there was no response, and the resolution was then carried unanimously, the delegates cheering enthusiastically."

It was feared that the Eastern farmers would not be entirely in accord with the radical measures proposed, but the reverse proved true.

P. M. CLEMENS.

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PROGRESSIVE SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Adelaide, So. Australia.

Harry Jackson, Crawford Vaughan, and I are Labor party representatives in the South Australian parliament. All of us are also members of the South Australian Single Tax League, of which Mr. Vaughan was for several years secretary and then president. Mr. Vaughan is Treasurer and Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Verran (or Labor party) government of this State, which came into power last June. Several other members of our parliament are believers in the teachings of Henry George, while a number who do not go all the way are prepared to support the taxation of land values in large degree.

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In South Australia at the present time we have a half-penny tax upon every pound's worth* of unimproved value as assessed for taxation purposes; while holders of over £5,000 worth of values are subject to another half-penny tax on every pound over the £5,000. For a short period—during a financial shortage—an additional farthing on the pound was imposed on the "all round" basis, but

*One cent tax on \$5.00 worth of land.

was not re-enacted (as it should have been) when the time for which it was imposed lapsed.

The half-penny tax on values above £5,000 represents the "first step" in what is termed the progressive land tax. This scheme of taxation was brought forward with the intention of "bursting up" large estates, and was graduated so that values held by one owner above the amount of £100,000 would have been subject to a tax of three pence in the pound* but our Legislative Council† (elected on a property franchise qualification) refuses to take more than the "one step."

While the object of the progressive land tax is very desirable, the principle that every owner should contribute in proportion to the land values he holds, is lost sight of; also, it fails to recognize that in the aggregate a number of small estates held out of use for speculative purposes, is as bad for the community as one large estate. However, the Federal Parliament is proposing this form of taxation, and with a Labor party majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, its passage is assured. That will remove this "bone of contention" between our popular House and our House of "Land-Lords."



From the enclosed "fighting platform" of the South Australian Labor party‡ you will see we propose certain exemptions from income tax, reduction of railway freights, and increased road grants, the deficiency in revenue resulting therefrom, to be made up by an increase of the land tax on the "all-round" basis. This will probably mean at least another penny in the pound, in addition to the existing half-penny.

We have a majority of Labor members in the House of Assembly, but only four members in the Legislative Council out of a total membership of eighteen. Two other members of that House may possibly support the proposals.

Friends and foes of land value taxation both recognize in the Legislative Council the only barrier to a further installment of the tax. Our position

*Six cents in \$5.00.

†Similar to the senate of an American State.

‡The platform enclosed is as follows:

FIGHTING PLATFORM.

Franchise.

Adult Suffrage for the Legislative Council, with the object of its ultimate abolition.

Industrial.

Compulsory Arbitration.

Land Settlement.

Progressive Land Tax on the lines of New Zealand. The State will drop this proposal if adopted by the Federal Parliament.

The right of the Government to Resume Land for Land Settlement and Public Purposes on the valuation accepted by the owner for taxation purposes, plus 10 per cent.

Finance.

Cessation of Borrowing, except for (1) Conversion of Loans, (2) Completion of Public Works already authorized, (3) Works which will show interest on Capital borrowed and provide for a Sinking Fund.

Taxation.

(1) Abolition of Income Tax on incomes derived from land or produce of land; (2) Raising Exemption on Incomes derived from personal exertion to £300 per annum; (3) Reduction of Railway Freights; (4) Increased Road Grants to Districts not served by Railways; (5) Deficiency to be made up by an all-round tax on Unimproved Land Values; (6) Increased Taxation of Absentees.

here in respect to the Legislative Council is worse than the position between the Commons and the House of Lords.

We have no effective dead-lock provisions in our Constitution. For years there has been a "dead-lock" between the two Houses on the question of effective dead-lock provisions. Bills are rejected or mutilated every session. It is largely on our policy of adult suffrage for the Council that we have secured a majority in the lower house; but the will of the majority has been ignored for years. A bill for an extension of the franchise for the Legislative Council to Adult Suffrage passed the House of Assembly in August last. Every constitutional means will be exhausted by the Labor government to secure reform of the Council; and if these fail and the Labor party survive the appeals to the constituencies (which will be necessary), other means than those within the four corners of our cast-iron Constitution will have to be resorted to in order to give effect to the people's will.

With the reform of the Council, the way will be made clear for many other reforms, the greatest of which is "land reform" per the medium of the tax on unimproved values.

CLARENCE GOODE.



BRITISH POLITICS.

London, Jan. 3.

We have just got through the throes of another general election, with sufficient success fortunately for the Liberal party. No doubt if the Liberal party had a fuller grasp of the importance of the land question, they would have shown the true position of the House of Lords in their capacity to control the use of the land and to bolster up land monopoly. But the party's education has not gone quite so far. Mr. Lloyd George was the only prominent statesman who emphasized the importance of the land question, and what he could do was surely not out of place for other Liberals to do. But it seemed that the "machine" decided it was to be an election on the one issue of the House of Lords, in order that no one might turn around afterwards and say that the people were beguiled by other cries.

The size of the majority does not matter much. It is sufficiently strong to carry democratic measures; and it is for advocates of the taxation of land values to do their utmost to make the pace for land reform. The whole question of local taxation will probably come under review in the present session. Mr. Asquith long ago said that the relationship between Imperial and local finance must be radically overhauled, and the system of what is known as "doles" to local authorities be put a stop to. How exactly the Government will carry out this readjustment, we don't know; but if they would only act on the Memorandum of the Land Values Group in Parliament,* they would speedily get things in order.

Very often the language of politicians is clothed in ambiguity, and when our leading men speak about adjusting local burdens one does not know whether they mean readjustment of local and Imperial taxation, or readjustment of local taxation itself. We

*See The Public, vol. xiii, p. 779.