

president in 1904," he writes in the Commoner, "is not yet known, but it is known that whoever he is he will not be a democrat nominated by republicans for republican purposes only." For this stand Mr. Bryan has placed the democrats of the party under renewed obligations to him; and if the Bourbons were able to forget some things and to learn others, they would realize that in the fidelity of which that is a sample lies the secret of Bryan's persistence as a force in American politics.

A misleading news dispatch from the Virginia constitutional convention at Richmond was the occasion of a mistaken comment in these columns two weeks ago, at page 161. The dispatch commented upon reported that the convention had voted against incorporating into the oath of office of the delegates a pledge to support the constitution of the United States. It appears that the convention voted nothing of the kind. What it did vote in this connection was to take no oath at all to support any constitution whatever. And in so doing it made no departure from long established precedent in the state. It followed the example of every constitutional convention ever assembled in Virginia, including the reconstruction convention held under the shadow of the American war department. The theory of this practice seems to be that a constitutional convention is a meeting of the people, assembled to change their organic law, and that as such no oaths to support constitutions are necessary or appropriate. It is bound, of course, by constitutions superior to the state. If, for instance, the Virginia constitutional convention were to adopt an organic law for the state in conflict in any particular with the federal constitution, its action would to that extent—a majority of one or more of the supreme court so holding—be inoperative, oath or no oath. A still broader theory than that mentioned might be referred to. Oaths of office are useless survivals

of a superstitious era. Time was when they doubtless did operate upon the consciences of officials. Time was, also, when they were the technical evidence of the assumption of official obligations. But they serve neither purpose any longer. An official who had not taken an oath of office might be indicted or impeached for malfeasance; and no one imagines that superstitious reverence for an oath is any longer a guarantee of official fidelity.

In the British colonies, as well as in Colorado and Ohio, not to mention British cities and towns by the score, and American localities from which no data is yet obtainable, Henry George's principle of undermining privilege by taxing land values instead of labor values, is manifestly making gratifying headway. Within the past 18 months, the number of taxing districts in New Zealand which have adopted the single tax for local purposes, has increased from 14 to 60. As these additional districts had had the advantage of observing the operation and effect of the system in the 14 that adopted it first, their action is a pronounced tribute; and as most of them are farming communities, it very distinctly discredits the notion that farmers would be injured by the single tax.

Another British colony, far removed from New Zealand, in which the single tax idea has definitely indicated its popularity, is Natal, South Africa—in the very heart of the colony at that. By the death of Sir John Robinson, a vacancy occurred in the Natal parliament, Robinson having represented the city of Durban. Mr. J. E. Maydon was asked to take the vacancy, and consented to do so, supposing that there would be no opposition. This situation tempted the Durban single taxers to put forward Mr. Henry Ancketill, one of their number, to contest the election. A sharp campaign followed. Mr. Ancketill is an Englishman who had lived in the United States and been a friend and personal pupil of Henry George,

but he was not well known in Durban. Still, his character was irreproachable, and the contest was waged without personalities. It turned upon the direct and specific question of taxing land values instead of improvements and personal property. Mr. Ancketill declared:

I am more concerned to get my views before the electorate than in getting myself into parliament. I don't care how men vote; I do care how they think. If a man thinks right he will vote right; and if you alter the trend of political thought, you will not lack able men to send to parliament to represent you.

In that spirit and without political strength other than his opinions commanded, Mr. Ancketill contested the election as the representative of the single tax. Said the local paper that supported his adversary, referring to Mr. Ancketill:

He came forward as a comparatively unknown man, backed by no powerful interest, and relying solely on his opinions for his support. The result of the poll has amply justified his candidature.

Though Mr. Ancketill was not elected, and the single tax was therefore not endorsed, yet his vote ran up to 942 in a total of 2,036, his adversary being elected by a majority of only 152. The single tax sentiment in Durban must be strong to have yielded that result in a straight out fight for it. It doubtless is strong. And Durban is not the only place of which that can be said. Neither are the single tax districts of New Zealand. Although the single tax movement makes less commotion than it did when, in its earlier stages, it was a movement of speechmaking and mass meeting applause, it is everywhere making vastly greater headway in popular thought and legislative action.

Many comparisons have been made of free trade New South Wales with protection Victoria, the two great neighboring states of the Commonwealth of Australia. As a rule, these comparisons have been industrial in character; and they have always told emphatically in favor of the free trade