

more and will have no more of Lormer.

A tax reform measure so important as to be almost revolutionary became a law in New York city on the 8th. This measure has been before the New York legislature since 1896, under the management of Lawson Purdy, of the New York Tax Reform association. During this time the details of the original bill have been changed beyond recognition, but the original principle has not been weakened; it has been strengthened. The same principle is operative in Massachusetts and California, but under the New York law it is better secured. By this law all assessments of real estate for taxation must be in two classifications, the value of land being classified separately from that of its improvements; and in addition the assessment of each taxed parcel, with its land valuation separated from its improvement valuation, must be published in the City Record, the official paper of the city of New York. Thus not only may everybody scrutinize the aggregates of tax assessment, by city, ward or district, but he may compare each realty tax payer's assessment with any other or all others. It needs no prophet to tell that this reform will not only prevent or expose a good deal of crookedness in assessing for taxation, but that it will aid very materially in discrediting the whole tax system which burdens land improvers while encouraging mere forestallers.

What the New York tax reform mentioned above may lead to is indicated by a novel movement now gaining headway in Toronto. In that Canadian city an issue has arisen which might serve the best of purposes in every city. The proposition there is to exempt all dwellings from taxation to the amount of \$700 of their value.

One of the results of this suggestion was excellent. It excited the opposition of the city assessment commissioner, who reported adverse-

ly, but in doing so gave facts and figures of the utmost importance. He stated that there are 43,560 buildings of all kinds in the city, and of these 13,105 would have the assessment of land and buildings reduced to less than \$400 by the exemption of \$700 of building value. That is to say, about 40 per cent. of the population of Toronto occupy houses that would be practically exempt from taxation. By a table he shows how the increased rate of taxation consequent on this exemption would on the remaining value increase the tax on property worth \$3,800 by ten cents, and on property assessed at \$10,000 the increase would be \$28.31; while all houses of less value would come in for a reduction, and the smaller the value the greater the reduction. In other words the homes of the industrial classes would be relieved of a part of the pressure of taxation, and those of the well to do and the wealthy and all vacant land would have to bear more.

In Toronto, as in all large centers, there is great scarcity of small houses at reasonable rents, although there is plenty of vacant land, the latter according to the same report being in Toronto of the assessed value of \$7,000,000. The consequent exemption of small dwellings and the increased tax rate on vacant land, would encourage the building of just the kind of houses the workers need, viz., houses costing \$900 with the land, and they would rent for from \$7 to \$10 a month. The erection of these houses would not only increase the demand for labor, but their building would, by entering into competition with the 13,105 small houses now built, reduce the rent of all from \$2 to \$8 a month. Averaging them at \$5, this would effect a saving of \$65,000 a month, or \$780,000 a year, to the occupiers of the 13,105 houses, to say nothing of the saving to the occupiers of the new houses. The whole of this would be a virtual increase in wages and would create an effective demand for other laborers' products to that extent. For it must be ever

kept in mind that the market for goods depends not on wages, but what is left of wages after payment of rent. We have here only mentioned the effect the building of small houses would have on the rent of similar houses, but the same effect would result to the occupier of all houses of less value than \$3,800, and the total saving to wage earners would probably be nearly \$2,000,000 a year.

The importance of this proposition lies in the fact that it would bring immediate and permanent relief to the classes that need it most, those occupying the cheaper dwellings. It would increase the demand for labor and add to the purchasing power of wages. It would discourage the holding of land idle, relieve the congested districts, contribute largely to depopulating the slums, and thus decrease the cost of both health and police departments in the cities. In this way also it would introduce the single tax policy as a practical issue and at the same time enlist a majority of the people in its support and compel its discussion throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Not one step appears to have been taken by the Illinois legislature toward the establishment in this State of the initiative and referendum for which the people voted last Fall. As the vote was not mandatory, but only advisory, the legislators had the right to reject it. But this neglect ought not to be forgotten by voters who believe in the initiative and referendum, when any of these neglectful legislators are again up for office.

There is reassurance in the tendency of conservative papers, now becoming quite marked, to condemn government by injunction. Time was when such papers were ready, at the drop of the glove, to defend judges for any usurpation of power, however extreme, so long as their object was the suppression of trade unions. But beginning with the recent St. Louis injunction and expanding with the still more recent