

The Liquor Question in Maine.

A favorable but close vote on liquor prohibition in Maine was cast on the 11th. This was not a vote on the question of preventing prohibition; it was a vote on abandoning it. The legislature of Maine adopted a prohibition measure in 1853 which was soon repealed, but in 1857 it adopted another which is still in force and which was strengthened in 1881 by a Constitutional amendment. It was on a proposed repeal of the Constitutional amendment that the referendum of the 11th was taken. The vote in the State at large gives a prohibition majority of 295.

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One of the twenty cities went "dry." This was Calais, where the prohibition majority was 93. But taken together, the twenty cities voted 26,748 for repeal and 14,640 against—an anti-prohibition majority of 12,108 in a total vote of 41,388. The rural majorities against repeal, however, were so large as to wipe out the city majorities for repeal. Fred N. Dow, son of Neal Dow, who was the father of Prohibition in Maine, is quoted as saying in the news dispatches that "in counties where prohibition has been best enforced it was best sustained."

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Conference of State Governors.

When Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey, called the third annual Conference of Governors to order at Spring Lake, New Jersey, on the 12th, the Governors of 19 States were present. The response to Governor Wilson's address of welcome was made by Governor Joseph M. Carey of Wyoming. Governor Edwin L. Norris of Montana, in discussing Executive powers, made the following suggestion for improving the Initiative and Referendum:

In many States the voters have in large measure lost confidence in the efficiency of legislative assemblies, and the Initiative and Referendum methods of legislation have been invoked as a means to procure laws that the legislature would not act on and to veto legislation that in the public mind was not wise or beneficial. At best, however, initiating legislation by and referring laws to the people is cumbersome and not easy to use. As a companion to and supplement of these methods, the power of the Executive should be strengthened by giving to him the right to present bills for the consideration of the legislative assembly. If the bills were not passed in form substantially as presented he should have the right to submit those bills direct to the voters at the next general election for their approval or rejection.

[See current volume, page 901.]

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Tax Reform in Eastern Canada.

The second annual convention of the Tax Reform League of Eastern Canada (formerly the

Tax Reform and Direct Legislation League of Ontario, the name having been changed so as to admit into the League representatives from the Province of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces) met at Toronto on the 5th, with ex-Alderman J. W. Bengough occupying the chair. When a new constitution had been adopted, the following officers were elected: President, John MacKay, business manager of the Toronto Globe; vice presidents, W. M. Southam, editor of the Ottawa Citizen, J. E. Atkinson, managing editor of the Toronto Star, Julian Sale, of the Julian Sale Leather Goods Co., and H. B. Cowan, managing editor of Farm & Dairy; secretary, A. B. Farmer, and treasurer, D. B. Jacques. A feature of the convention was a demonstration by E. W. Doty (representing the Manufacturers' Appraisal Company of Cleveland) of the Somers unit system of land valuation as used successfully in appraising land values for Cleveland, Columbus, Springfield, Denver, Philadelphia, and other American cities. The Somers system,* Mr. Doty explained, is not a system of taxation. It is merely the simplest way of applying common sense to the valuation of land. Asked if he believed in taxing land values, Mr. Doty replied: "Certainly, nobody can be in this work long without becoming a Singletaxer." In describing the Somers system as now in use in seven cities of the United States, Mr. Doty said, as reported in the local press, that it is founded upon the law of the constant effect of depth on the value of city sites, and consists of mathematical formulae and mechanical devices, for using that law so that the relative value of sites may be ascertained; that the system does not appraise, but leaves this to a public meeting where the owners and occupants of lots in a certain block are invited to give publicly their estimate of value, and that as a result of these gatherings the computation is made. In this manner, said Mr. Doty, the public practically does its own assessing; many of the evils and weaknesses of the old system are eliminated and equitable values are arrived at on a unit basis of so much per foot for a certain depth of lot. For purposes of illustration Mr. Doty exhibited a chart showing the values of the block bounded by King, Adelaide, Victoria and Yonge streets, and explained by this how the system would actually work in Toronto. [See vol. xiii, p. 540.]

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At an evening meeting of the convention, presided over by Vice-President Cowan, Mr. Cowan explained his interest in tax reform as dating from the insertion in his paper, Farm and Dairy, of a little item on the folly of taxing improvements. This item brought such a flood of letters from all over the country complaining of the tax on improvements that he was led to make a study

*See The Public, current volume, pages 137, 224, 370.

of the question and was convinced that to tax land values only is the true solution. Farmers, he added, readily take up with the idea. The following resolutions were presented to this meeting and strongly approved:

Moved by Clayton Hurlbut Preston, and seconded by A. B. Farmer: Resolved, that the Tax Reform League congratulate the Ontario Legislature on the progressive legislation enacted by the present Administration, by which the exemption of incomes has been increased, the farm lands exemption in cities has been abolished, and cities have been allowed to expropriate land affected by public improvements in order to secure the increased value caused by public expenditure; and that the Tax Reform League express their appreciation of the good work done for the cause of tax reform by Mr. A. E. Fripp, M. L. A., (Conservative) in his able presentation of the bill allowing municipalities to reduce taxes on improvements and increase taxes on land values; by Mr. A. G. MacKay (leader of the Opposition) and by Mr. Allan Studholme for their support of Mr. Fripp's bill on the floor of the House; and that the League respectfully urge the Government to consider the widespread demand for tax reform as expressed in the petitions of more than 370 municipal councils, 200 trade and labor organizations, and 200 Ontario newspapers and many business concerns, and to enact legislation allowing municipalities to reduce taxes on buildings, improvements and business assessments and increase taxes on land values, and thus prevent this important question from becoming a party issue in Ontario politics.

Moved by Allan Studholme, M. L. A., and seconded by Dr. J. H. Farmer, LL. D.: Resolved, that the Tax Reform League congratulate the churches on the increased interest they are taking in social problems, and commend to them a special study of the relation between taxation and the problems of the slums, overcrowding, and the de-population of the rural districts.

Moved by Alan Thompson, and seconded by Allan Studholme: Resolved, that the Tax Reform League express to Mr. Joseph Fels their gratitude for his generous financial assistance to the work of the League, and their appreciation of his great services to the cause of humanity by promoting tax reform throughout the world.

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British Conference on Land Values Taxation.

At Glasgow on the 11th a "Conference to Promote the Taxation of Land Values" met in Conference Hall of the Scottish Exhibition, with ex-Baillie Peter Burt in the chair. The Conference convened upon the call of the Executive Committee of the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values and of the United Committees [all Britain and Ireland] for the Taxation of Land Values. [See current volume, page 784.]

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The first official resolution, formulated by the organizing committee, was moved on the 11th by

the Right Hon. Alex. Ure, Esq., K. C., M. P., the Advocate for Scotland in the British Ministry, and seconded by James Dundas White, Esq., LL.D. M. P. It was as follows:

In view of the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to the valuation of the land apart from improvements being the necessary basis for the reform of local and national taxation, this Conference urges the Government to hasten the completion of that valuation, and to make it public, so that at the earliest possible moment the rating authorities of the country may be granted the power they have demanded, namely, to adopt the value of land as the standard of local rating.

"Rating" is the British term for what would in the United States be called local taxation.

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The second official resolution was moved, also on the 11th, by Charles E. Price, Esq., M. P., and seconded by Josiah C. Wedgwood, Esq., M. P. It was as follows:

That this Conference heartily endorses the memorial on "Land and Taxation Reform" presented to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 18th of May, 1911, and signed by 175 Members of Parliament, urging the Government to levy a Budget tax on all land values, part of the revenue from which to be used for education, main roads, police, and poor relief, thus lessening the burden of the cost of such services, now borne by the local rates.

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On the 12th Joseph Fels, Esq., moved, and P. Wilson Raffan, Esq., M. P., seconded, the third official resolution, which was as follows:

That this Conference affirms its deep conviction that the existing deplorable condition of the people in regard to bad housing, low wages, and unemployment in town and country is directly traceable to land monopoly, and is further aggravated by the present system of taxation and rating; emphatically declares its opinion that the only just and expedient method of removing these social evils is by the exemption of all improvements and all the processes of industry from the burden of rates and taxes and the substitution of a direct tax on the value of all land, a value which is entirely due to the presence, growth, and industry of the people.

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The foregoing information is derived from the advance program of the Conference. No reports of action on the resolutions have been yet received. On the evening but one before the Conference, the Scottish League held a social meeting in Charing Cross Halls, Glasgow, at which Crompton L. Davies and John Paul (executive secretaries of the United Committees) and their respective brides were the guests of honor. The annual Henry George commemoration meeting was held, also under the auspices of the Scottish League and at Charing