

der their commission form of government) who is in charge of local taxation, a long stride in tax reform is announced by Mayor Rice in his official message. Explaining local taxation in this message Mayor Rice says:

During the present year the Somers system* of taxation has been established in Houston, at the suggestion of Commissioner Pastoriza. It seems to be a very efficient system, just and equitable to all. The tax board has adopted the system of assessing land values at 90 per cent and improvements 25 per cent of their value. Under this system the valuations have increased from \$77,000,000 to \$123,000,000, which is very great. All tax problems are difficult and very few, if any, satisfactory. I would suggest to the citizens to thoroughly investigate this system and understand it. If it is satisfactory, so much the better; if not, then some better plan should be proposed. The city council will not be arbitrary, but will be glad to listen to any one or all citizens upon this subject. Last year the tax rate was \$1.70 per hundred. This year it has been reduced to \$1.30 per hundred for all purposes, being the lowest rate of any large city in the State.

Initiative, Referendum and Recall in Texas.

A conference of Texas Democrats held at Dallas on the 18th adopted resolutions declaring that—we favor the amendment of our constitution in such a way as to incorporate the Initiative, Referendum and Recall therein; that our efforts to secure this amendment shall not involve an alignment with nor opposition to any other measure, nor shall this organization promote or oppose, as such, the candidacy of any man for office; that we recommend that our friends proceed with the work of obtaining signatures to petitions; and that we take such steps as may be necessary to place a demand in the platform of the Democratic party for the submission of the amendment providing for the Initiative, Referendum and Recall.

The conference had been called to order by George Clifton Edwards of Dallas, who is prominently identified with the Socialist party. D. J. Neill, former president of the Texas Farmers' Union, was permanent chairman, John Maxwell permanent secretary, and the following campaign committee was appointed: D. J. Neill, John Maxwell, William Hoefgen (president State Federation of Labor); H. F. Ring, C. W. Woodman, Joe Myers, F. B. McCurdy and T. H. McGregor. [See current volume, page 180.]

Pending Coal Strike in the United States.

A conference between owners of American natural coal-deposits and working miners in Cleveland on the 21st referred the controversy tentatively to a committee of two owners and two miners from each of the four States involved—Illinois,

Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania. [See current volume, page 276.]

The British Coal Miners' Strike.

The Government bill in Parliament with reference to the coal miners' strike, which was introduced by the Prime Minister on the 19th, came before the House of Commons for second reading on the 21st. [See current volume, page 275.]

When before the Commons for second reading on the 21st, this bill encountered a hostile motion by Arthur J. Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law's predecessor as Tory leader. Mr. Balfour characterized the action of the strikers and of the Government as "a colossal revolution." His motion was defeated, and after debate the bill passed its second reading near midnight by 348 to 225, the Labour party and the Irish party voting with the Government. The "committee stage" of the bill was finished in the early morning hours of the 23d. Nearly all amendments submitted had been either defeated or withdrawn, so that the bill was ready for final action in its original form substantially.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister postponed final action and called a conference of natural-coal-deposit owners and striking miners for the 25th. T. P. O'Connor, M. P., explains this as follows in his cable letter of the 23d to the Chicago Tribune:

The Government, after considerable hesitation and after a serious struggle within the Cabinet, refused to place in the bill the figure of \$1.25 a day as the minimum wage which the miners pressed upon them. This refusal was imposed upon the Government by the conviction that such naming of a figure of wages in an act of Parliament would bring immediately a similar demand from all other workmen in the country, and would reduce all elections to an auction between the political parties as to the price at which they would buy the support of the workmen. Further, many of the Liberal employers and all of the old fashioned economists warned Premier Asquith against such rash legislation. This refusal was backed by the House of Commons and ultimately the matter seemed settled until the Labour leaders made a dramatic and pathetic appeal to Asquith to grant this concession or some approach to it to enable them to close the disastrous strike immediately. After a scene of tense emotion which reduced the House of Commons to the stillness of the grave, Asquith announced that the final stage of the bill would be postponed till Monday and that another conference between the miners and coal owners would take place on that day.

The Miners' Federation promptly accepted the conference proposal, and on the 25th the conference convened.

*See The Public, volume xiii, page 675; volume xiv, pages 173, 224, 230, 242, 323.