lieve that they can be enlightened in the mass most speedily and convincingly by that clash of opinion which the Initiative creates—let these consider whether the Initiative in Missouri, California, Oregon and Washington has not proved of great and incalculable value to their cause. Let them remember the past, not for its disappointments but for its lessons.

The great virtue of the Initiative to Singletaxers is this, that whenever the people really want the Singletax they can get it despite legislative hostility or trickery; and that meanwhile it affords the best means of popular education on the subject, an education which incidentally trains all voters in the responsibilities of democratic citizenship.

Under the American theory, government depends for its democracy and consequent stability upon the springing up of new policies *from the people themselves.* This is the modern theory everywhere. Experience teaches that policies handed down from above, unless they spring primarily out of popular feeling, are of little value.

That being so, Singletaxers cannot expect as good results from representatives intrenched in power and tied up to predatory interests, as from the people themselves. For though great masses of the people be indifferent to righteousness when their own individual interests are at stake, their interests as a whole are sufficiently conflicting to leave the balance of power at the last with the righteous remnant.

When the people are wrong, it is usually because they are fooled. Many will agree to this and sigh. Many will supplement their sighs with "what's-the-uses" in cargo-lots as to the Initiative. But regarding the people in that respect, let Lincoln's wise words admonish all Singletaxers of the importance of the Initiative to their cause: "You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of them some of the time; but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

THE NEW YORK TAX REFORM ASSOCIATION.

Upon the adoption by the people of Ohio of their Constitutional amendment providing for the Initiative and Referendum in that State, we spoke editorially of the event as a decisive defeat for Allen Ripley Foote,* the noted lobbyist for monopoly interests; and in that connection we used this language regarding his intimacy with the New York Tax Reform Association: "Meanwhile he had got into close relations with the Tax Reform Association of New York—a body originated principally to secure home rule in taxation for cities and counties, *but which has drifted into opposition to that policy.*"

*See current volume, pages 866, 867.

Two letters in criticism of the particular statement which for purposes of distinction we now italicize, were promptly received from George L. Rusby, of Nutley, N. J., whose desire it is that we publish them. Inasmuch as they cannot be published without editorial comment, lest a mistaken impression be created as to our present attitude toward the criticized statement and its context, and as there has been no denial of any of the more important parts of the editorial in question, we should have been disposed to let the matter rest where that editorial left it. But our critic's judgment and integrity of purpose deservedly command high respect, and we accede to his wishes.

I.

Mr. Rusby's first letter, bearing the date of September 18, 1912, is as follows:

I was surprised to read your statement in "The Public" of September 13, 1912, at page 867, that the New York Tax Reform Association has drifted into opposition to the policy of home rule in taxation for cities and counties. Without waiting to discuss your statement with Mr. Pleydell, who represents the above Association, I hasten to assure you of facts that would seem to show your statement to be without foundation.

Not only has Mr. Pleydell, in all of my discussions with him on this subject endorsed the principle involved, but in my work here in New Jersey, in trying to secure legislation that would permit home rule in taxation for municipalities, he has given me valuable encouragement and assistance. I think I am in very good position to know his attitude on the question, and believe that the only thing in his attitude that could be construed as a basis for your statement is that he has modified his views as to the most practical methods, both in securing the necessary legislation and in the application of the principle itself.

For instance, he has modified his views to this extent—in which modification I thoroughly agree with him—that the municipality should be given power to exempt from taxation any desired class of property that is now taxed, but that it should not be given the power to introduce the taxation of new classes of property.

Mr. Rusby's second letter, dated September 23, 1912, is as follows:

Since writing and dispatching my letter of the 18th inst. (which action was taken entirely on my own responsibility), wishing to make sure that I had not therein misrepresented Mr. Pleydell, I sent him a copy, requesting him to let me know whether

I had correctly stated his position. I think it well to hand you hereunder a full copy of his reply to my inquiry:

29 Broadway, New York, Sept. 23, 1912.

My Dear Rusby:

I have yours of September 19, enclosing a copy of your letter to Mr. Post, in regard to his recent attack upon the Tax Reform Association. I appreciate your kindness in writing this letter to Mr. Post, whose attack was unwarranted, and in some respects, untrue. In the matter of home rule you have stated my attitude fairly well, except that perhaps I am a little less favorable toward the proposition generally than might be inferred from your letter, for the very practical reason that local assessment methods are now so bad that it seems advisable to retain as much outside pressure as possible in order to bring them up to a full valuation. However, this is a detail and there is no foundation for Mr. Post's sweeping statement that the Tax Reform Association has come out in oposition to the principle. The Association has simply found that for the State of New York at present the line of least resistance is through general laws.

(Signed) A. C. PLEYDELL.

Before me is a copy of the proceedings of the fifth annual conference of the National Tax Association on State and Local Taxation, held at Richmond in September, 1911. At pages 288 to 294 you will find that Mr. Pleydell took the leading part in a successful effort to prevent the conference from going on record against the principle of local option. The summing up of his argument, page 294, leaves, it seems to me, no possible doubt as to his attitude toward the principle involved. Far be it from me to interfere with the personal relations of individuals,—I have no time for that; but there is something more important involved here, and that is why I am going out of my way (1) to assure you from my personal experience of Mr. Pleydell's ready assistance in promoting the principle of home rule in New Jersey; (2) of his recent public attitude in regard to the same, as shown at the Richmond conference; (3) to assure you of his present attitude as set forth in his letter to me above quoted. And knowing you as I do, I believe that you will be glad to receive these assurances and that, in justice to yourself, to The Public, to Mr. Pleydell, to the New York Tax Reform Association, and to the cause the interests of which will be affected by the recent statement in The Public, you will welcome information that, it seems to me, furnishes you with an opportunity to withdraw the same.

In response to Mr. Rusby's suggestion for a withdrawal as outlined above, we explained to him that we could not make one because it would be misrepresentative of the facts. Yet we were averse to seeming to close our columns to a refutation from a trustworthy source of any statement of fact in The Public. So we told him of our willingness, if he desired it, to publish his letters, though with an editorial reply, provided we were first assured by him of Mr. Pleydell's consent to the publication in The Public of the letter quoted in his letter of September 23rd. To this suggestion Mr. Rusby replied as follows, under date of October 22nd:

I have communicated with Mr. Pleydell and have his assurance that he has no objection to my quoting his letter (dated September 23, 1912) to me, in any correspondence of my own that I may see fit to have published. He has not seen the correspondence referred to, nor do I think it desirable to submit the same to him before publication; I prefer to present the subject on my own responsibility and from my own individual point of view.

The exact point in controversy is whether or not the New York Tax Reform Association has *"drifted into opposition"* to the policy of "home rule in taxation for cities and counties." It is not whether it has *"come out* in opposition to the principle." The latter statement is only the form which the Secretary of the Association gives to the plainly different statement that Mr. Rusby quoted to him correctly from The Public. The New York Tax Reform Association *has not* "come out in opposition to the principle" of home rule in taxation; but it *has* "drifted into opposition" to that policy.

II.

For an appreciation of this controversy some knowledge of the history of the New York Tax Reform Association may be necessary. The story is of interest in itself, quite apart from any controversy over the incidental statement in our editorial which is criticized.

The New York Tax Reform Association was a Singletax evolution from the Presidential campaign of 1888.

In that campaign Singletaxers had tried, under the executive management of William T. Croasdale and with the co-operation of Henry George, Thomas G. Shearman and others of their way of thinking, to organize a Singletax movement. Their plan was to secure the signatures of persons supporting Mr. Cleveland for President on the ground that his tariff policy was in the direction of Freetrade and that they were Freetraders because they were Singletaxers. The resulting enrollment, about 11,000, was large for the time. Yet it seemed small to its promoters. Their expectations having been raised to a high pitch in the effort to swell the number of signers, discouragement followed upon the heels of disappointment. The disappointment itself was accentuated by Mr. Cleveland's defeat.

In those gloomy circumstances a consultation was held in one of the rooms of the building where Henry George's Standard was then published—on Union Square, New York. At this

consultation, some time in November, 1888, there were present Henry George, Thomas G. Shearman, William T. Croasdale, William McCabe, and possibly half a dozen others. The consultation developed two different but parallel lines of activity. One, advocated by Mr. Croasdale, was a permanent enrollment of Singletaxers. Subsequently set on foot under Mr. Croasdale's management, this eventuated in the Singletax petition to Congress and the Singletax Conferences of 1890 and 1893, of which we have already told in these columns.* Out of the other proposal, made by Mr. Shearman, the New York Tax Reform Association developed about two years and a half later.

Mr. Shearman's proposal was for securing progressive Singletax legislation through co-operation with non-Singletaxers. He argued that Singletaxers should take a leaf out of the tactics book of temperance reformers, by planning a campaign for local option in taxation. Believing sentiment in New York City to be already ripe for abolishing taxes on personal property, but realizing that lack of power to act upon the matter locally stood in the way, he thought that an effort to get such power for cities and counties would be supported by influential persons and interests, and that in this way a door might open for Singletax progress.

This proposal for New York was in substance the same as that which was adopted in Oregon two years ago and repealed this year. Of course Mr. Shearman made no reference to the Initiative, under which the Oregon Singletaxers have operated. This device for direct legislation and incidental popular education on public questions, was then unknown in our country outside of unfamiliar books. But he did suggest that power be obtained for cities and counties to determine for themselves, in some way or other, whether to tax or to exempt personalty, improvements, or land, or any two of those three kinds of property; and this is the power which Oregon Singletaxers have had and lost. Both in the getting and in the losing of it, they were opposed by the influence of the New York Tax Reform Association.

Following the consultation of 1888 noted above, Mr. Shearman, aided by other Singletaxers, undertook to secure local option legislation in New York. It was discouraging work. The interests against it were vigorous, those in its favor timid. But at the legislative session of 1891, a bill for the purpose was reported favorably by the House committee on taxation. Though vehemently opposed in the House by some members, that report was earnestly supported by others, chief among them being the present Governor-elect, William Sulzer. By default of another member, to whom the bill had been entrusted by Mr. Shearman and his associates, the favorable committee report lost its preference on the calendar late in the session and therefore the bill failed of a vote.

Meanwhile, plans were on foot among Singletaxers in New York City to organize along the lines of Mr. Shearman's home rule proposal. Mr. Shearman himself was back of these plans, and among those who assisted industriously was Lawrence Dunham, now manager of one of the branches of the Corn Exchange Bank.

While the home rule measure was before the legislature in 1891, Mr. Dunham sought the co-operation of John Claflin, then understood to be among the influential citizens of New York who looked upon the Singletax without absolute disfavor. Together with one of his associate committeemen, Mr. Dunham outlined to Mr. Claflin the general plan for an organization to promote home rule in taxation, asking him to become its president; but Mr. Claflin, though he took the matter into sympathetic consideration, finally excused himself. Similar efforts were made to enlist other leading citizens. These also were unsuccessful.

The advisability of having the Manhattan Single Tax Club call a meeting of delegates from various associations, as it had done with eminent success in connection with the Australian ballot reform, was then considered. Before anything definite in this direction had been undertaken, however, Bolton Hall prepared to launch an organization which promised to meet the wishes of all concerned.

Mr. Hall, also a Singletaxer then as now, had been co-operating with Mr. Shearman's associates in support of the home rule bill and for some kind of effective organization to promote home rule in taxation with a view to opening a way toward the Singletax in New York City. Finding insuperable the difficulty of securing a president among conservatives, yet believing that many of them would unite as contributors to the home rule project, he took upon himself, very much to the satisfaction of all, the responsibility of effecting an organization. The outcome was the present New York Tax Reform Association.

Early in April, 1891, Mr. Hall had formulated a declaration of principles for that organization. At his request this declaration was submitted to Mr. Shearman, who approved the project and with some alterations the declaration also. Mr.

*See The Public of September 1, 1911.

Shearman suggested, however, the addition of the following clause to the declaration:

It is probable that no legislature will dare to enact a good system of local taxation until the people of the State are, to some extent, educated in correct principles of public taxation, and farmers especially are enlightened as to the bad effects of all taxation of personal property.

This suggestion was not because Mr. Shearman had altered his mind as to the desirability of home rule in taxation. It was because his experience with the New York legislature had led him to believe that popular enlightenment on the subject must precede any hope of securing favorable legislative action. The home rule project was in fact persistently pressed by the Tax Reform Association from its inception.

For minute details of the history of the organization, its records are, of course, the only proper recourse. The larger details, however, may be stated here. It was organized in 1891. Its membership consisted of voluntary contributors to its exchequer, and included some of the leading business men of New York. Its first notable secretary was Robert Baker, a Singletaxer and afterwards a member of Congress, its next being Lawson Purdy, also a Singletaxer and now President of the Tax Department of New York. Its third was Arthur C. Pleydell, a Singletaxer who had come from Philadelphia to be Mr. Purdy's assistant, and whose letter is embodied in Mr. Rusby's at the beginning of this article.

At first, the New York Tax Reform Association —organized by Singletaxers, always managed by Singletax executives, and supported by business men whose attitude toward the Singletax ranged from thorough-going approval to indifference, or possibly to hostility—had for its immediate objective the abolition of personal property taxation in New York City, and to this end the securing of local option in taxation.

Other highly desirable legislation came within its province in promotion of its objective, including separation of land values from improvement and personalty values in taxation assessments. This system of separation was probably unused outside of California and Massachusetts until New York State adopted it as a home rule measure for New York City. It was secured by the New York Tax Reform Association under the administration of Lawson Purdy as secretary.

In addition to all other work, however, the New York Tax Reform Association continued for fifteen years after its organization to promote the local option policy in which it originated and for the promotion of which it was organized. At any rate, it did not during that period completely drift away from that policy. On the contrary, it made frequent efforts to secure local option legislation in New York.

In 1894, under the administration of Robert Baker as secretary, it secured for its local option bill a favorable majority on a test vote in the House —54 to 52. But the bill was recommitted through a partisan appeal from the speaker of the House to his Republican colleagues. In 1900, under Mr. Purdy's administration, this Association obtained the unanimous endorsement of the New York Chamber of Commerce for the policy of local option in taxation, and efforts were made by the Association to secure action by the legislature in harmony with that endorsement. Not only did those efforts fail to secure legislative results, but, owing to the non-educative character of legislative proceedings, they failed also to assist at all in educating the people of the State in what Mr. Shearman had characterized as correct principles of taxation. The people didn't know what was going on. That they did not, was, of course, no fault of the New York Tax Reform Association. But it is suggestive of the educational value of those Initiative rights against which, in Ohio and Oregon, the New York Tax Reform Association, under its present management, has also set its face.

When Mr. Purdy withdrew from the secretaryship of this Tax Reform Association to take the presidency of the Tax Department of New York City under appointment by Mayor McClellan, and Mr. Pleydell succeeded him in the secretaryship, Bolton Hall, as vice-president, announced the fact and in doing so made this official statement regarding the original purpose of the Association:

Those communities that are wise enough to realize the gross injustice of attempting to tax all property at a uniform rate should have the privilege of modifying the system to suit their local needs. The Local Option Bill, introduced by this Association some years ago, is a practical method for accomplishing this result, and, now that the direct State tax has been abolished, we see no reason why such a law should not be enacted.

That was in 1906.

If the New York Tax Reform Association has since been active in pressing its local option bill in New York, or in promoting home rule in taxation in other ways or in other places, none of its activities in those respects appear to have been conspicuous.

From that original policy the Association would

clearly seem to have drifted *away,* even if thus far there be no evidence of its having drifted into *opposition.*

Some years after Robert Baker ceased to be its executive Secretary, the New York Tax Reform Association came into close relations with Allen Ripley Foote.* His relations with it began to be intimate soon after 1906, if not indeed a considerable time before. Nor was that intimacy merely personal or casual, as Mr. Rusby seems to suppose. It was advisory, confidential and influential. And as this intimacy grew, so does the Association appear to have drifted, at first away from, and then into opposition to, home rule in taxation. There is nothing very remarkable about it. The result was probable, unless the executive officials of the Association were wiser in their generation than Mr. Foote in his. That they were otherwise, is evident from many things, not the least among which are their assurances to some Singletaxers, of his being a straight-out Singletaxer of their own kind—one "believing," as a victim of such assurances puts it, "in education" for the Singletax, "rather than in direct or indirect political action." Mr. Foote has been in fact for years an acute, ubiquitous and virulent enemy of the Singletax—more so, perhaps, than any other person who has opposed the Singletax movement in this country. And, what is more to the point, no little part of his effectiveness as such has been due to his influential intimacy with the New York Tax Reform Association.

III.

Recurring now to Mr. Rusby's letter, we make no question that the Secretary of the New York Tax Reform Association has endorsed the principle of home rule in taxation in reference to Mr. Rusby's work in New Jersey and has assisted in it. Mr. Rusby's word for all that is enough. But it does not follow that the New York Tax Reform Association, or Mr. Pleydell, has refrained from opposing taxation home rule elsewhere. The fact is that the influence of this Association has been exerted against the local option policy in Oregon, and that its responsible management have taken much satisfaction in giving aid and comfort to the enemies of that policy and the enemies of the Singletax in that State. Further into this, however, we need not go at present. So far as the Secretary of that body is concerned—and it is upon the Secretary's own views that Mr. Rusby depends for his criticism of our editorial statement regarding the Association—the Secretary can be quoted as himself supporting our statement.

Two years ago, when preparations were under way to secure county option in taxation in Oregon for the purpose of bringing the Singletax before the people in the respective counties of that State, he wrote:

> I am not very enthusiastic about "home rule" in taxation under all conditions—it is only an expedient—and there are cases where it can be employed to advantage—but for the most part I think our best changes will come through general laws.

And in the very letter from this Secretary which Mr. Rusby quotes as a basis for suggesting a withdrawal of our statement, there is sufficient evidence that, insofar as he may represent that Association, what The Public said—not what he erroneously ascribes to it, but what it said, namely, that the New York Tax Reform Association has *drifted into opposition* to the policy of home rule in taxation for cities and counties—is true. "I am a little less favorable toward the proposition generally," he writes to Mr. Rusby, "than might be inferred from your letter, for the very practical reason that local assessment methods are now so bad that it seems advisable to retain as much outside pressure as possible in order to bring them up to a full valuation." Outside pressure regarding assessments is hardly consistent with local option in taxation for local purposes.

In view of the history of the New York Tax Reform Association from its organization by Singletaxers for securing local option in taxation as a step toward the Singletax, to its drifting away from that policy after taking into its confidence one of the most noted political agents of monopoly, and so on to its hostile attitude toward the fight for home rule and the Singletax in Oregon, we are obliged to regard Mr. Rusby's assurances as inadequate. Much as we respect them as far as they rest upon his own knowledge, and gladly as we welcome them for consideration, we do not believe that justice to The Public or its editor, nor to the New York Tax Reform Association, nor to the Singletax cause to which Mr. Rusby seems to allude as being affected, calls for a withdrawal of our original statement.

On the contrary, we believe that justice to all concerned demands the reiteration of that statement. The New York Tax Reform Association *was* "originated principally to secure home rule

*For an outline of Mr. Foote's career as a political agent of monopoly interests, see The Public of February 24, 1911, page 176.

in taxation for cities and counties"; Mr. Foote *did* get "into close relations with the New York Tax Reform Association"; the New York Tax Reform Association *"has* drifted into opposition" to its original policy of home rule in taxation.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

WORD FROM OREGON.

When the majority of the people understand a question they vote intelligently and for their best interests. The "composite citizen," as Senator Bourne calls the people en masse, is a reliable citizen even if he does "see ghosts" sometimes.

Oregon's composite citizen has decided that he doesn't wish to decorate the Initiative and Referendum with hobbles and handcuffs.

The legislature of 1911 thought the composite citizen might be deceived by a so-called "majority rule" amendment into doing that; so it offered, without any request that was ever made public, an amendment to fix the Initiative by providing that a Constitutional amendment cannot be adopted except by a majority of all the votes cast at the election. That is, the legislature presented an amendment meaning this: If the whole number of votes cast at an election is 140,000, then a Constitutional amendment must receive at least 70,001 votes in order to be adopted, even if no more than 400 ballots are actually marked against it.

But that amendment applied only to Constitutional amendments, and Big Business wants that brand of "majority rule" for laws that are voted on; so some of its agents Initiated a "majority rule" amendment to apply to laws as well as to amendments. The voters rejected both those amendments.

Big Business had two pet bills on the ballot—one to prohibit boycotting or picketing, and another to prohibit street speaking in any town of 5,000 or more inhabitants without a written permit from the mayor. Those pets were slaughtered by the voters.

After six unsuccessful attempts to get the ballot, the women of Oregon now have it, and there are many indications, even so soon after the election, that the women of this State intend to get acquainted with political questions.

While the Graduated Tax and the County Exemption amendments have been voted down by very large majorities, no Oregon Singletaxer is discouraged.

There is no reason for discouragement. The official vote is not yet known, but we do know that a very large minority can be depended on in the next campaign, and in succeeding campaigns until Oregon finally adopts the Singletax.

How did it happen?

It's as simple as one of Sherlock Holmes' deductions. The majority of the Oregon majority was stampeded in the last two or three weeks of the campaign by quarter-page, half-page and full-page advertisements in the newspapers and by hundreds of thousands of printed cards and circulars, making statements that were as far from the truth as a tariff commission's report. We were smothered by bald and crude but shrewd lies from men who had a large pocketbook interest in stampeding the voters.

Why didn't we "educate" the voters? The power of suggestion is great. A child is easily influenced by the suggestion that in a dark room something is waiting to grab and injure it. In past elections voters have been stampeded by the assertion that a Democratic President means "panic" and ruin. It is useless to ask why voters are not educated out of superstitions.

Into the ears of those who have but little land value, or none at all, the agents of special privilege shouted: "Don't you see that your taxes will be increased if sky-scrapers and department stores, bank buildings and money, factories and railroad locomotives and cars are exempt from taxes?" "Singletax means State ownership of all land. It means State ownership of your land. State ownership of land is the foundation of Singletax. If you don't believe it, read 'Progress and Poverty,' the Singletaxers' bible." Those are merely samples.

It's hard to say which were worse scared during the campaign—the foolers or the fooled; but the foolers are about as badly scared now as they were before election. They suspect something is coming next, but don't know what it is.

There be those who doubt the ability of voters to legislate for themselves, and would sooner trust a legislature than the people. I am not a member of that class. A legislature is as easily deceived as the majority of the voters; a legislature may be easily corrupted, while it is almost impossible to corrupt even a considerable minority of the voters.

In this fight Special Privilege had the active cooperation of the State administration—of every State officer except the Attorney General, and of the State Tax Commission and the legislature. I shed no tears because these public servants, acting wittingly or unwittingly as the agents of Big Business, took that stand; and I bear them no malice. The chickens they have hatched will return home to roost. It won't be long before they will be busy with whitewash brushes trying to paint out the 1912 spots on their records; and what punishment is greater than that of the man who tries to cover a "damned spot" that refuses to "out"?

One effect of the stampede was the repeal of the County Home Rule Tax amendment. It was advertised that the repeal of that amendment would "kill Singletax." The real effect, and the effect desired by Big Business, was to restore the taxing power to the legislature; but that body can't put the "emergency clause" on a tax bill. Anyway, the repeal of