

GOOD NEWS FROM ST. JOHNS,  
NEW BRUNSWICK.

The recommendations of the committee approved by Mayor Prink of St. Johns, urges the exemption of improvements and a rising tax on land, and they cite the examples of Vancouver and Edmonton. The *Daily Telegraph* of St. Johns favors the proposal and its leading editorial in its issue of August 8th urges it strongly. It says:

"As to the plan which they outline, of adopting the site-value method of taxation, it looks like the very key to the present situation. Its advocates say it would mean the building of larger and better homes and the stimulation of all branches of the building industry. It is a method which makes it impossible for the rich to throw their taxes over on to the poor, and that is something that all other systems have failed to accomplish. All authorities are agreed that such a tax cannot be shifted. This is one of its great advantages. At present all the taxes from invisible property come from conspicuously conscientious citizens, from guardians of the insane and infants and from widows' executors. No shrewd trader 'gives in' any considerable amount of notes, stock or money. He always escapes the most diligent assessor."

A. G. HUIE.

(See *frontispiece*.)

A. G. Huie, Secretary of the Sydney Single Tax League, N. S. Wales and Editor and Manager of the League organ, *The Standard*, is a native of the State. He was born in the Riverina in 1869. His father was a son of an Edinburgh merchant, and he came to Australia from Scotland as a young man at the time of the great gold discoveries in the early fifties. His mother was a member of an old English family whose parents also decided to try their fortunes in Australia. Much of the early life of A. G. Huie was spent in the wilds of the Australian bush. He went to several country schools at intervals when it was possible and read many books. He took

to writing to the press naturally. He argued for free trade and in time read "Progress and Poverty." About 1890 learned the meaning of real Free trade and became a Single Taxer. He earned his living chiefly as a carpenter. Work was often scarce and the meaning of want of employment became thoroughly understood. He stayed in the western districts of the State until 1898 when he decided that it was time to get out of the bush and so he came to Sydney. At the same time it must be admitted that the bush had peculiar attractions for this rather solitary man. He spent a great amount of time in moving about the bush alone. Company was irksome. Nature in all its wildness had a fascination of its own. In Nature's presence you can think undisturbed.

Arriving in Sydney A. G. Huie found great difficulty in obtaining employment, but at last a start at hard uncongential work was secured. He stuck to it and continued to extend his knowledge of public affairs. In 1901 he went to the Henry George Dinner for the first time. The promoters of that dinner were intent on forming a new league. They appeared to understand the game. They did not make the mistake of asking A. G. Huie if he would take the secretaryship for he had no thought of taking such an onerous position. They simply appointed him to act pro tem and of course subsequently no one else could be found to take it. Since that time the name of the secretary and the Single Tax cause have become practically synonymous. He wrote letters to the press, organized meetings and deputations, helped friends of the cause who were candidates for municipal or Parliamentary honors started *The Standard*, and so on. For seven years he acted in a purely honorary capacity. But latterly a number of the Single Taxers subscribed so that he could devote all his time to the work. The increase of work which had to be done after the Local Government Act was passed made such a course practically unavoidable.

After the League was formed the members held that the line of least resistance was local taxation of land values. How to bring its meaning home to the people was the task before the secretary. Of many

efforts made, probably the most effective was the following. He wrote a letter with a view of showing what amount of tax on land values would be necessary as a substitute for the rates on improvements for the suburb of Parramatta. Then it seemed to him such an ineffectual effort, for Parramatta was only one of 190 municipalities whose inhabitants could be reached. So he worked out the particulars from official sources for all the municipalities where a paper was published. In typing the letter about a dozen spaces were left vacant so that the local particulars could be written in. It was tedious, but that letter went into fully 100 papers. The bit of local coloring was invaluable. Every year after that until the Local Government Act was passed, when the municipal statistics for the year were published, Huie's special municipal letter was prepared and sent round. In 1903 Sir Joseph, then Mr. Carruthers, was leader of the opposition. He promised us Local Government and Municipal reform with rating on land values, if he attained power. We supported him. He became Premier in 1904 and dealt with the whole question most thoroughly, fully carrying out his promises. The rating on land values came into operation in the Shires or rural districts in 1907, and the municipalities in 1908. Sir Joseph had no more ardent supporter than the Single Tax secretary, who holds that the Liberal party made a colossal blunder when it failed to stand by the ablest political leader in Australia. Now we have local taxation of land values. It has been adopted almost universally except in the city portion of Sydney, and we are doing our best to bring it into line. We have now to advocate further steps in advance. There are two main proposals, each of which is a giant undertaking needing much effort, study and attention. One is to establish Free trade with taxation of land values to supply the revenue lost through the remission of Customs and Excise duties. And the other is to make the interest on the cost of State owned railways and tramways (constructed with loan money) a charge upon land values instead of upon the traffic as at present. The first is a Federal question, the second a State matter.

The work of the League is largely educational. Formerly it was greatly hampered for want of funds. It is better now through the great liberality of Mr. Joseph Fels. The secretary simply plods along, working unobtrusively, mainly according to his own ideas, editing and publishing *The Standard*, disposing of literature, arranging for lectures at debating and other societies, working up open air meetings, making a speaking tour at times, writing to the press, and so on. It is as a writer to the press that he is at his best. Formerly his letters were criticised now and then. Latterly they are invariably allowed to go unchallenged. Critics used to come in for such a bad time that they seem to have realised that Huie's facts, figures and arguments are unanswerable and that to criticise is only to play into the hands of one who is ever ready to take up a challenge. Probably no one else in New South Wales has had so many letters in the public press for years as the Single Tax Secretary and yet he says that half of those he writes do not appear.

This sketch would scarcely be complete without recounting at least one little incident. When the municipal rates were being put on land values only in 1908 and the various polls demanded were being decided in favor of rating on land values only, a protectionist agitator thought he saw a chance to rally the land monopolists and to form an association to protect the interests of "property owners." He called a meeting of property owners and about a dozen attended, including A. G. Huie, who owns the suburban allotment where he lives and so is a property owner. The meeting was adjourned after some discussion in which he took no part. The next meeting was much better attended. The Single Tax secretary was again present. At the outset a large property owner who had been hit hard by land value rating drew attention to the presence of A. G. Huie. He thought that it was positively indecent for him to be at the meeting. The trouble they were in was very largely due to Mr. Huie. He considered that Mr Huie should be asked to retire. But Mr. Huie thought that as a property owner he had a right to be present

and proceeded to explain why. But the uproar was so great that he could not be heard and had to desist. Then the meeting discussed the matter. One or two thought that as he was a property owner he had a right to be heard. But there was little sympathy for such views. One excited individual after another had his say and denounced Mr. Huie, who, immediately he tried to speak, was howled down. Eventually a resolution to kick him out was carried by a large majority. The protectionist went for a policeman but apparently there was not one handy. Ultimately after another vain effort to state his case, Mr. Huie marched out and there was peace. The press gave the incident wide publicity. It was a fine advertisement. In conclusion here is a sample letter of Mr. Huie's to the public press which was sent to a selected list of over 60 papers and very generally published about a fortnight ago.

"THE FARMER'S HEAVY BURDEN.

"Speaking at the luncheon given by the Lord Mayor, Sir Carlaw Martin of the Scottish Agricultural Commission said: 'We are struck by the fact that the farmer is bearing a very heavy portion of the burden of the State. The farmer producing wheat has to send it to the world's market, getting the international price for it. He is competing with the Russian farmer, the Hungarian, the Canadian and the United States farmer. But the price he receives is determined by conditions wholly outside his control. So it is with the dairy man. He competes with the Dane, the Siberian, the Canadian, the Frenchman and the Hollander, getting their price. But on the other hand, the price he pays for every requisite of the farm, for fencing or machinery is the Australian price, which may be 40 or 60 per cent. more than the Old World price. In those few words Sir Carlaw Martin really condemns our iniquitous Customs tariff and high railway charges. Free traders have repeatedly shown that the tariff made the cost of production excessive, and placed our producers in a false position. Our farmers have to buy in a heavily protected market and sell in a free market. Our visitor comes along—a shrewd practical

man—and he puts his finger upon the same spot. We want population. Probably we could not get better immigrants than a favorable report by the Scottish Commission would induce to come. But a majority of us are temporally dolatrous worshippers of the wooden Joss Protection. For that reason the prices of what the farmer needs are loaded so that boodling town interests may get undue profits. We are following the old world example of accelerating the flow of population from the country to the town. We are inverting the natural method of national progress and growth. It should be the duty of the Government to look after the primary industries. These cannot be 'protected;' they can only be robbed by Customs taxation. It is easier and cheaper to promote the employment in the country than to make work, largely for women and children in town factories. The increasing employment of women and children is not evidence of progress but of national folly. While our resources are largely undeveloped, while there is scope for the energies of tens of thousands of men the protective policy of working the women and children is beneath contempt. Enable men to work our great primary industries under Free-trade conditions and they will establish homes. That would be infinitely better than hampering those industries to help protected factories whose employees establish fewer homes, usually under worse conditions."

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"WHEN I started Rector's on the site of the present Hotel Rector, at Forty-fourth street and Broadway, twelve years ago, I could have bought the property for \$400,000. Ten years later, I gave Charles T. Barney \$725,000 for it and got it at a bargain. Now the ground alone is appraised at upwards of \$1,500,000.—Advertisement of Rectors, (N. Y.) in Washington (D. C.) *Herald*."

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CHAS. F. ADAMS was elected honorary member of the Ethical Society of Tacoma. The only other honorary member is Stanley Coit, of London.