

he might be dismissed from our thoughts, or even tolerated; but he is practical, determined, and behind his careless exterior is a settled purpose and an iron will."

### News—Foreign.

#### SOUTH AUSTRALIAN NOTES.

(Special Correspondence—Cranford Vaugan, Adelaide.)

There has been an alarming slump in jingo stocks lately, which even the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York did not allay. This State, at any rate, will send no more troops to South Africa, and the general impression is that the money spent on decoration for the representatives of Royalty could have been put to a much better use. I had an encounter a week or so ago with a reverend gentleman upon the interesting question of Christianity and war, and it was surprising to see the number of people who are heartily disgusted with the attitude of the Church generally towards the Boer war. And with the death of jingoism, the road for reform has become clear again.

We are happy to be able to record the election of W. E. H. Coombe, an out-and-out Georgian, for the Barossa electorate in this State. Mr. Coombe will be a tower of strength to the cause, as he is a fine speaker, and has plenty of balance. He seconds the address in reply to-morrow in the House.

There has been a strong agitation to place municipalities under the Land and Values Assessment Act, but the legal opponents of the movement have cunningly inserted some clauses in the Act which practically make it unworkable. We are setting this right, but it means delay again. The farming areas were excluded from the operations of the act, but our friends in the District Councils are making a strong effort to secure the benefits of the measure for the primary producers, as well as for the cities. That success will attend our efforts here, I have no doubt, for figures have been prepared which show exactly what each farmer would have to pay, and by which he will be able to see the exact benefits in £. s. d. which flow to him from the reform. When the farmers once begin to see the benefits of land values taxation, our cause is won, for they constitute the great opposing force to our movement. Thus we see in this new move a great deal more than meets the eye; we are attempting to shift our Legislature by stirring up an appeal for land values taxation from the very last quarter from which it could be expected. Whatever the success of the manoeuvre is, you shall hear of it.

Next to the settlement of the tariff—a matter which promises to shift possibly the Federal Government out of office—the treatment of the Federal Territory is the greatest question of importance before the Commonwealth Parliament. There is, I believe, a large majority in both Houses averse to "alienating," as they call it, the land acquired for the new territory and city. I hope they do

not merely keep the shell and part with the kernel. What we are after, of course, is the rental value that will accrue, the retaining of which will offer one of the finest object lessons to the world possible. I can say, without fear of exaggeration, that a majority of both Houses of the Federal Legislature are with us. Care will have to be exercised, however, for speculators and land gamblers see many thousands sticking out over the settlement of this question, and a strong effort will be made to influence weak members.

Proportional Representation, another question which the single taxers have made their own, has made wonderful strides since the election of the Tasmanian representatives to the Federal Parliament under that system. The usual objection to its being "too cumbersome for the average elector" has been shivered into atoms by the returns of the informal voting which occurred in the different States. Under this entirely new system Tasmania has the smallest percentage of informal votes throughout the Commonwealth, the figures being, Tasmania, 2.23%; South Australia, 2.34%; Queensland, 4.4%; Victoria, 5.9%, and New South Wales (owing to multiplicity of candidates for the Senate), over 25%. Figures like these show either that the intelligence of the average elector is fully equal to the task set before him, or that Tasmania can boast of far more intelligent electors than any other State—a contingency which all the rest of Australia will hasten to contradict. Moreover, the conference of returning officers—the real opponents of the reform—favored the adoption of the contingent vote for single electorates. Now the contingent vote necessitates the same use of figures as the Hare-Spence system, and therefore the returning officers have cut the ground from under their own feet. Three members of the Federal Ministry are in favor of the reform, and a large number of members. Next week Sir Edward Braddon, possibly Senator McGregor (leader of the labor party), and many others, will speak for the reform at the Adelaide Town Hall. I look forward to its adoption by the States and the Federal Government in the very near future.

#### MANILA, P. I.

The officers of the United States Army at Manila have addressed a remarkable letter to Judge Taft of the Philippine Commission reciting the high cost of living in Manila. Rents have doubled and in some cases quadrupled, so that officers and their families find their salaries inadequate for any but the poorest accommodations. Many have been forced to live outside of Manila in consequence. The lands of the city are rapidly being taken up by a real estate syndicate and rents are going up. The officers point out that the only remedy is the taxation of land values in order that the syndicate may be broken up.

The recent letter of the British consul at Manila to his Government is confirmatory of the complaint of our army officers. The British consul says:

"Expenses continue high, especially rents. Few new houses have been built, and the influx of American officers and their families still continues. The result of this is that the most ordinary style of house becomes an object of keen competition, and rents have been in many cases quadrupled in the past three years. The average rent of a small house in the suburbs, suitable for four or five persons, is now about £20 (\$97) per mensem.

"There are no openings for Europeans here except with capital, the number of destitute and unemployed Europeans being constantly on the increase. There is no difficulty in filling up posts of any sort from the American volunteers now being disbanded here in large numbers, many of them being men of superior education."

#### NEW ZEALAND.

E. G. Ell, of Christchurch, writing in the *Direct Legislation Record*, says:

"We have another instance of compulsory referendum with the initiative in the hands of the people in connection with the most important legislative enactment, with regard to local taxation, we have on the statute book. I refer to the Rating on Unimproved (Land) Values Act, which can be adopted by the ratepayers of any district on their initiative, under the following conditions: If a petition be presented to the chairman of a Road Board, County Council, Town Board, or to the Mayor of a Borough, signed by 25 per cent. where the rate payers number more than one hundred, but do not exceed five hundred, and by 15 per cent where the rate payers on the roll exceed three hundred, on the presentation of the requisitions the Chairman or Mayor, as the case may be, must make arrangements for a poll to be taken, and if a majority of those voting declare in favor of the adoption of the Act, the rates are levied thenceforth on the value of the land, exempting the value of all improvements on it from taxation. Thirty-six polls have been taken under this law in New Zealand up to the present."

#### FRANCE.

To provide for a deficit, the city of Paris has recently imposed a tax of one-half of one per cent. on vacant land in the hands of private owners. The *Evening Sun* is much grieved because of the tendency which will be created by this tax to build over the gardens which surround some of the handsome houses near the centre of Paris. It is characteristic of the *Sun* that it has no thought for those who are living in crowded rooms with insufficient light and air, because of land monopoly. Private pleasure grounds are out of place near the centre of a great city so long as the humblest citizen has insufficient lodging.

It is to be hoped that this special tax is sufficiently heavy to force into the best use all vacant lands in the city of Paris. So far as it does this it will be an example to France and the rest of the world.

#### MONTREAL.

(Special—T. C. Allum.)

I do not know whether or not the Single Tax organizations of the United States are in the habit of knocking off work during the summer months, but it has been the custom with us to do so here since our formation a few years ago. We usually come together again about the last of September or the first of October, as during the slack season we have no opportunity to fight with each other and lots of time to consider each other's good qualities. We come together at the end of the interval with renewed feelings of kindness and enthusiasm. Last night the opening meeting for the present season took place and a fair crowd, for this city, was present. Mr. R. B. Capon read a paper upon "The Progress of Single Tax Throughout the World" in which he reviewed the happenings of the past year in Single Taxdom, thereby furnishing the debaters with some new gunpowder. The next meeting will be held in two weeks' time, when we will carry out our customary program of reading papers, discussing the single tax philosophy and answering questions.

One of the good signs is that at present the newspapers are devoting much space to our meetings, and we hope if they continue to do so we may gradually work the people up to attending in greater numbers than at present.

There is really nothing at present in this vicinity of special import to single-taxers. The lighting franchises, regarding which we put up a campaign on our own behalf last spring, have practically been settled. The result has been that the city will get its public lighting in future for \$60 a light instead of \$120, as formerly, unless something unlooked for prevents the signing of the contract. Our Association by no means claims to be responsible for this reduction, as our fight was for municipalization, but we did a considerable amount to assist matters. As a matter of fact the company which is about to secure the contract tendered at \$95 a light, while another company in course of formation tendered at \$54. In face of the lower offer the Council was afraid to give the contract to the highest bidder (there were other tenders at medium prices), so some shuffle was resorted to, and eventually the \$95 folks secured the vote at \$60. So of course the real factor was the low tender. Of course the people will get the worst of the deal anyway, as there appears to be no provision to safeguard the private consumers and they will likely have to whack up pretty steep rates to reimburse the company for the favor it is doing us in lighting our streets for \$6 a year a light more than another company.