

PROGRESS IN GERMANY.

The German Single Tax organ of Jan. 5th reports three more towns as having adopted the Land value Tax. One of 4,000, one of 15,000, and one of 24,000 inhabitants.

The last one voted, that is its town council, voted on it a year ago, and the measure was rejected, but this time it was carried by a vote of 16 to 1. The result of one years education.

The same organ of Jan. 20 reports the city of Wiesbaden, 65,000 inhabitants, as taxing all rental value over and above what was paid for land after April 1902.

This they call "Zuwachssteuer" which may be defined as a value which has attached to land since a certain time, which time the different communities fix and set for themselves. Some go further back than others, and no doubt, in time, they will reach to Adam and Eve's time.

For Feb. 20 it adds one town named Eller near the Rhine to the list. Also the town council of Marburg voted for Single Tax, but before it voted, the Mayor resigned, as he could not bring it in accord with his conscience of being responsible for a law that would confiscate honestly acquired property. His Honor looked at that law through a looking-glass where everything appears inverted.

At the annual Single Tax Conference, President Damaschke stated that there are now in Germany 260 communities with a partial application of Single Tax principles in operation, and from 50 towns we have the report that such measures are in operation. We may fairly claim that this matter is decided for Germany, and is only a question of time that it will be generally adopted.

F. BURGENDORFF.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

THE SOUTH AUSTRALIA SINGLE TAX LEAGUE NO LONGER ACTIVE—"JUST FOR A HANDFUL OF SILVER"—THE LABOR PARTY OFFERING SOCIALISTIC PALLIATIVES.

Owing in very large measure to the fact that several prominent members of the S. A. Single Tax League—including the one-time Secretary and President, and in a sense the mouthpiece of the League—Mr. Crawford Vaughan—have joined the Labor Party and under that flag been elected to Parliament, the work of Single Tax education is largely in abeyance. Very little, indeed, has been done during the past two years on pure Single Tax lines, the time and energy of the League being frittered away on unimportant matters and in supporting and apologizing for and explaining why these aforesaid staunch and valiant Single Taxers, whose denunciation of the L. P. and all its works was of the strongest and most vigorous type, should

make an absolute *volte face* and be content to be swallowed by that which so short a time previously was anathema and the unpardonable sin.

The L. P. has no plank in their present platform dealing with the land question, except that of a progressive land tax, which proposes to have the first £5,000 in value to pay the ½d. (halfpenny) in the £ land values tax and becomes progressive above that amount. And these aforesaid Single Taxers advocate this iniquity in and out of the House as glibly as if they knew no better. It is sad to think that after 20 years of faithful, and to a fairly large extent, successful effort in the education of the people on the only just basis of taxation or revenue getting, our work is being so largely nullified and made of no account, and this by those who once were foremost in advocating pure Georgianism. These men try hard to persuade themselves and the public that they joined the L. P. with the idea of reforming it, but the case is more analogous to that of the whale and Jonah—the real objective being something much less idealistic. "Just for a handful of silver, &c."

As individuals they have, of course, a perfect right to join any party they please, but as more or less representative Single Taxers they owed something more to their colleagues and the movement than if they had been merely rank and file men. The most regrettable feature about the whole business is the fact that on joining the L. P. they are compelled to pledge themselves to advocate it and vote for and support any parliamentary candidates selected by the party. They thus cut themselves off almost from any opportunity to advocate real reform or anything outside the L. P. platform. Even if they were not so pledged they could not in one place or meeting advocate the progressive Land Tax and at another the pure S. T. This would be too grotesque even for unphilosophical socialists, or State-own-everything men.

Speaking of politics in a more general sense, we have just been through an extraordinary election brought about by a forced dissolution on the franchise question. The franchise for the House of Assembly, the "Lower" or popular House, is adult suffrage, while that for the Legislative Council or Upper House is, roughly, a £25 qualification, e. g., paying house rent of 10s. per week. The dissolution is the first act in forcing the Legislative Council to grant a lower or £15 qualification. The Houses have just met again and the franchise bill is to be passed and sent up to the other House. Should it refuse to accept it, a double dissolution will be resorted to next year to convince them that the people are most desirous of this widening of the franchise, and that the Parliament is fighting for their rights. Of course it will be apparent at a glance that a mere reduction of the qualification is not necessarily a meas-

ure of reform. True, it may and undoubtedly will enable the Government to pass more measures of a State-socialistic character, but that it means real reform no one with the least knowledge of economics can believe for a moment. Even the L. P. tax is to be *added* to existing taxes, and not in substitution for them or any part of them, as strict justice demands. Moreover, the extended franchise, under the present block system, will simply mean that the number of voters who are at every election disfranchised, through voting for defeated candidates, will be greatly increased. Of course it is a glaring anomaly to have adult suffrage for the two Federal Houses—by far the more important bodies—and a restricted franchise for our own—in comparison—two-penny-half-penny Lords; but the reduction is not being advocated as a fundamental reform, or with the object of setting up some legislation which would be in that direction, but almost wholly in the interests of socialistic palliatives which haven't even the virtue of palliating.

The Government consists of two direct L. P. representatives and two Liberals, i. e., Liberals who are not connected with or owe allegiance to the L. P., but who are sufficiently in agreement with that party to run in ministerial harness with them. The Premier, The Hon. Thomas Price, up to the time of taking office, was the leader of the L. P. He is an emotional Welshman and has certainly infused a great deal of energy into the task of administering the Government, traveling much and speaking more, and occasionally, as is often the case with such men, "putting his foot in it."

While as an S. T. I find little in their programme to enthuse over and much to condemn, there are two items which I can support. First, the tramway question which is mainly rescuing the present horse trams from the private companies and converting them to electricity. It may be within the knowledge of your readers that some years ago the defeat of the famous—or infamous—"Snow Bill" was mainly the work of the late Mr. Cornelius Proud, assisted by other Single Taxers. This bill, amongst other things specified 55 years as the time which should elapse before the community could gain possession (except at exorbitant price) of the trams and the full rights over its own streets. The financial part, too, was so obviously in the interest of the shareholders and just as obviously against those of the people that the only wonder was that so many—sane and shrewd over ordinary things in their own affairs—should have been found supporting it. Happily the Snow Bill was defeated and since then several efforts have been made to get something like a workable scheme or system, but old abuses die hard and the horse trams and the private companies have been no exception to the rule. Not therefore till the present Government took office did the thing ever appear to emerge from the chaos

which had enveloped it since the decease of the Snow bill. The Premier, however, with characteristic energy, took the matter in hand, and at time of writing there really does seem to be greater promise of electrically propelled trams becoming an established fact in the near future.

And here due credit must be given to the L. P. S. T. members for standing well up in the interests of the people on this question.

The other item in the programme with which I can largely agree is the proposed amendment of the even greater iniquity than the aforesaid Snow Bill. I refer to the act passed some years ago inviting tenders from the world for the construction of a Railway from Oodnadatta to Pine Creek. Oodnadatta is the present terminus of the line running north from Adelaide and about 860 miles from the metropolis. Pine Creek is the present terminus of a short 146 miles line running south from Palmerston in the Northern Territory. This transcontinental line to join the present termini would be about 1,200 miles in length and the principal of construction is the Land Grant System. The land to be granted *in fee simple* is not to exceed 75,000 acres for each mile of railway constructed, i. e. a total of about 90,000,000 (ninety million) acres of land for the whole line. The present Government is not so much opposed to this principal of constructing railways as they are to some of the provisions of the act, and declare their intention of never accepting a tender until these defects are remedied. So far so good, but the absolute repeal of the act would be better. Negotiations have been in progress for some time between the S. A. Government or Governments and the Federal Government as to the taking over of the Northern Territory, but so far has not made a deal of progress, but the question is rather too large to more than mention at present. During the franchise campaign an offer of a tender for the construction of the Railroad was put in and much discussion in the public prints took place, but there seemed to be something not quite understandable by the ordinary man, as though neither party wished to show his complete hand. The Premier has since admitted that he knows much more than he is at liberty to make public.

On the general question of the S. T. those who have not bowed the knee to Baal are not cast down or dismayed by recent events, feeling very confident that the seed sown will eventually bring forth good fruit. In addition we note with much satisfaction the splendid progress being made in your country, in U. K. and in other places, including the other States of this new Commonwealth. All these influences and all the good, faithful and disinterested work must sooner or later break down the present system—if that breakdown does not come earlier from the inherent badness of the system—and establish just principles in our municipal

and governmental institutions and between man and man. We derive some amount of comfort also from the reflection that S. A. with a mere handful—370,000—of people can have but a very small influence in either retarding or accelerating the reform, but all the same it is not very creditable to our S. T. L. that it should not be making much more effort than it is to put sound economic ideas into the heads of the people rather than allow those heads to be filled up with so much socialistic rubbish, which will all have to be cleared away before much benefit can accrue. It seems likely however that this socialistic phase will have to run its course before we shall be able to get the real thing. If this be so, we can only go on quietly dropping a seed here and there which may increase and multiply and produce the proverbial hundred fold results. We are told that "no good work done in the right spirit is ever lost," and so we may congratulate ourselves over the fact that for a good many years the S. T. L. of S. A. did good work and really had a much larger influence than the number of members would have seemed to justify, but Ichabod may now be written over the door.

J. E. S.

SWITZERLAND.

THE FREE SOIL MOVEMENT—THE LATE STEPHEN GSCHWIND, ITS FIRST PIONEER—DIRECT LEGISLATION OF DOUBTFUL ADVANTAGE TO OUR MOVEMENT.

Our dear little Republic has become noteworthy for many achievements in the progress towards Democracy, but on the main road to industrial freedom we are still very much behind the times. To tell the truth, there is at present no Single Tax movement at all in our country. There are a good many people who have read works by George, Fùrscheim, and some of the present German writers, and there are some who believe that Single Tax is the most needed reform, but they do not see their way how to promote the cause. Thus our movement here is sleeping.

There was not, as in many other countries, any sign of a similar movement in Switzerland before the clarion call of "Progress and Poverty" reached our country. But the German edition of that great book found many readers here. As early as 1885 the first lecture on the Georgian philosophy was held in Basle by Mr. Schär, to-day professor at the Berlin University. In 1888 the first Single Tax Society of Switzerland was started in Basle by Mr. Schär and his friends under the name of "Free-soil Society." At the end of the same year Mr. Fùrscheim made a lecturing trip through the country, which had as its result the founding of land reform societies in nearly all important cities of Switzerland. In the following year all local

societies were united into a national union for land tenure reform which had for its object the nationalization of the land. For some time a lively agitation was carried on. Twenty thousand copies of an ably written pamphlet describing the views and aims of the society were distributed throughout Switzerland. From April until December, 1890, the Basle land reformers published a daily to promote the cause, only a few copies of which have come down to us. But soon the enthusiasts had to learn the lesson they have been learning everywhere. They had to discover that the cause was better understood by those who would lose than by those who would gain by it. They had to learn that no matter how much they tried to make their proposals palatable to the vested rights, their work was looked at askance by the powers that be. They had to learn that working for our cause meant disfavor in public opinion. Newspapers ceased to support it, professors of political economy began to talk against it. The zeal of those inspired by the hope of an easily gained success soon faded away. Many there were who were willing to support a good cause costing nothing but money and time, but there were few ready to take upon themselves that martyrdom inevitably connected with a propaganda hostile to the rich and greedy. Many also had failed to conceive its true meaning. The breakdown of the movement in Germany which then passed through a period of stagnation also discouraged the Swiss land reformers. The movement practically ceased to exist. Only a few of its leaders remained faithful to the cause.

Most notable among these was Mr. Stephen Gschwind, a prominent co-operator and leader of the socialist party in the Canton of Basle country. He was the type of a man one often meets among the Single Taxers, a practical business man with a clever brain and a big heart. He tried his best to promote our cause. An attempt to lighten the burden of the small peasantry of his home canton by a reform of the mortgage laws on Single Tax lines was defeated in a popular vote by a rather small majority. In 1895 he proposed to the socialists' party's conference a reform of the party's platform such as to make voluntary co-operation on the one side and land reform on the other the chief demands of the party, and to drop the nationalization of the means of production altogether. Though he received a good deal of support from several prominent leaders, his proposals as well as the attempted reform of the platform were abandoned, because the party was too much absorbed by the political struggle for life. Unfortunately, Mr. Gschwind, who had won great esteem and love by reason of his charming personality and his singleness of purpose, died all too soon on the 28th of April, 1904, after a long and painful sickness.