

ment. with a greater faith in our fellow men, filled with a new ardor, and determined that two years and six months hence we shall win a greater—a more glorious victory than this one might have been: that we shall abolish taxation and substitute economic compensation, that we shall have enthroned the moral law and unthroned the tyrannies of the past. A gain of 3-12 of the total vote will win the day.

LOUIS BOWERMAN.

PORTLAND, Ore.

RHODE ISLAND

THE LOCAL OPTION BILL SLEEPING IN COMMITTEE—THE HENRY GEORGE CLUB TEACHING ECONOMIC TRUTHS—RHODE ISLAND SINGLE TAXERS SEND GREETING TO OUR OREGON COMRADES.

The Rhode Island General Assembly, for the year 1908, adjourned on May 26th, with the bill for local option in taxation introduced at the instance of the Rhode Island Tax Reform Association slumbering peacefully in the files of the committee to which it had been referred, namely: The Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives. As stated in a previous letter a public hearing was given on the bill which was largely attended and at which much interest was manifested. The members of the Committee were urged individually to have the bill reported to the House, but to no avail, as the result shows. It does not follow however that the work has gone for naught. People who had never given the subject of taxation a thought have had their interest awakened and the Single Tax will receive a larger degree of attention in Rhode Island by reason of this agitation than it has ever received before. This will be more and more apparent as time goes on.

The laws of Rhode Island are peculiar. This has been said many times before, but unlike some sayings that are often repeated it is true. One of these peculiarities relates to citizenship. The citizens of Rhode Island who exercise the franchise

are divided into two classes, property voters and registry voters. Property voters are privileged to vote on all questions and candidates, but registry voters are not allowed to vote in cities for members of the Boards of Aldermen or City Councils and in towns they are denied a voice in financial town meetings. Registry voters are required to register in person each year before the end of June in order to be eligible to participate in the November election. This brings the close of the registration period four months prior to the election and at a time when there is usually nothing special to direct the attention of the voter to his civic duties. The result, of course, is the disfranchisement of thousands of this class of voters, every year. Property voters are not required to register each year. Once registered their names remain on the list. This is a discrimination against the registry voter, and it should be corrected by requiring all voters to register annually; also the time for registering should be brought nearer to the time of election, say within two weeks. If this were done a much larger proportion of the electorate would participate in the elections.

The registry voter is denied a voice in questions involving the expenditure of money on the ground that he pays no taxes. He is being taught however that in reality he is the heaviest taxpayer, and that the problem that he must solve is "How can I escape the burden of taxation that is now crushing me to the earth?" A few of the members of the Henry George Club of this city have been holding open air meetings at Cathedral Square every evening during June for the purpose of urging citizens to register and incidentally showing them the answer to the above question. The citizen has been told night after night that the equal right to life involves an equal right of access to natural resources; that land is not property and cannot in equity become property; and that property in land is a negation of the individual's right to the product of his own labor.

The Single Taxer of Rhode Island heard with regret the news of the defeat of the proposed tax amendment to the constitu-

tion of the state of Oregon. Some of us were no doubt disappointed that the amendment failed to carry, but there is no cause to be cast down. The Single Taxers of Oregon put up a magnificent fight, and they deserve the highest praise.

32,000 votes out of 92,000 votes cast is a showing of which the Single Taxers of Oregon may well be proud. Handicapped as they were by lack of means, and with a territory to cover 80 times as large as Rhode Island, they have certainly earned the appreciation and gratitude of every Single Taxer in the United States. It requires neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet to foresee within ten years the Single Tax applied in Oregon as far as Oregon affairs are concerned. The 32,000 votes cast June 1st in its favor make an ample nest egg; they will grow into a majority almost before we realize it. If we had direct legislation in Rhode Island as they have it in Oregon, we could with our 400 people to the square mile get the Single Tax in two years. While its people are about the same in number as ours they are spread over 96,000 miles of territory, while ours is packed into an area of 1,200 square miles. It will be readily seen that the expense of propaganda per unit of population will be much less and its efficiency much greater in the case of Rhode Island. On the other hand it is much more difficult for us in Rhode Island to give effective expression to public opinion, or for public opinion to become effective here than in Oregon. Eight and one half per cent of the people here can block any legislation desired by the other ninety one and one half per cent. The Rhode Island senate consists of 38 senators, one from each town, and the lieutenant governor. Twenty towns with a population of less than 40,000 elect a majority of the senate, so that it is only necessary for the interests to control these 20 towns in order to defeat any measure they consider inimical.

It required an armed rebellion in Rhode Island to secure the right for others than landholders and their eldest sons to vote, and it may take another armed rebellion to secure any other substantial measure of justice here. It is more than 50 years since a Democrat has represented Rhode

Island in the senate of the United States. A few years ago Gov. Garvin was elected on the democratic ticket by a majority of 7,500 and both branches of the General Assembly were safely republican at the same election. There is small prospect here for any legislation in the interest of the common people under such conditions.

If there is any one thing that the experience of the United States and that of the 46 commonwealths of which it is composed has demonstrated beyond cavil it is that representative government is a failure. Rhode Island has about as unfair a representation as could be devised, but it would be unfair to say that there is any more corruption here than in Massachusetts or New York or Pennsylvania. If we may believe the daily press there isn't a legislature in the Union except in those states that have adopted direct legislation, but that is rotten to the core. When the people of Rhode Island get to comprehend the rights which are theirs by reason of their being members of the human family they will make short shrift of anything which stands in the way of their attaining those rights. Until they are so educated it will be difficult if not impossible to get them to act in concert on any question, but immediately they are so educated they will no more be restrained from acquiring those rights by their antiquated constitution or their robbing system of representation than a herd of wild elephants on a rampage would be restrained by a pack thread stretched across its path.

This then is the work that lies nearest to our hand in Rhode Island. To promulgate the truth that every penny of land value appropriated by individuals is a robbery of the community, and that every penny of tax levied upon the products of labor is a robbery of the individual, and that the Single Tax will prevent both of these robberies. Figs do not grow from thistles, nor can justice be the fruit of a tree rooted in injustice, as is the existing system of taxation. We shall continue here our best efforts to make of our state the leader in the destruction of the present system and the inauguration of the Single Tax, to the end that all men may be secured their equal right to the use of the earth. At the same time we shall watch with interest and sym-

pathy the work of our brothers elsewhere who are engaged in spreading the truths of "Progress and Poverty", and shall always "rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep."

Registration closed last night with something less than 19,000 names on the list in Providence, which according to the *Providence Journal* of this morning leaves 12,000 who failed to qualify. The registration this year falls 1,050 behind that of 1904, the last presidential year, and doubtless the population has increased many thousands during these four years. During the five year period, 1900—1905, the increase was 23,000 or 13 per centum.

This shows a woful degree of apathy on the part of the electorate, which nothing but a clear conception of their rights as members of the human family can remove. Nothing exists, so well adapted to give a clear conception of those rights as a knowledge of the Single Tax philosophy. In trying to extend this knowledge we need all the help we can get, and we shall be very glad of the assistance of any Single Taxers who may find it convenient and agreeable to spend a part or all of their vacation season in this vicinity. They will, if they come here, be able to judge for themselves of the value of the opportunity afforded to secure that object lesson which will lead to the restoring to every one everywhere his equal right to the use of the earth.

GEORGE D. LIDDELL.

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

FROM EX-GOVERNOR GARVIN.

The campaign begun in Rhode Island by the American Single Tax League is progressing. The bill before the legislature, providing that any town or city might apply the Single Tax, failed of passage. This did not surprise us here, because, of the numerous important reforms effected in this State, not one was enacted without the support of a wide and aggressive public sentiment.

The attempt, however, to secure complete local option in taxation has been of great value, because of the endorsement

it received from leading men of the State. Since the adjournment of the legislature the R. I. Tax Reform Association has been endeavoring to bring to the attention of the public the merits of the Single Tax. That our campaign has not produced more noise in the world is due to the fact that we have been badly handicapped for funds. The dull times so affected contributions that we cannot offer to pay the expenses of visiting Single Taxers, not even the two dollars required to bring the speaker from Boston. And thus far, since Mr. Stephens was here in March, we have been obliged to depend upon local talent.

Every Sunday the two great daily papers of Providence have contained letters dealing with some phase of the Single Tax. On three Sunday evenings discussions have been held at headquarters.

Labor and business organizations have been addressed, but our chief efforts have been given to open air meetings.

Cathedral Square, Providence, was fixed upon as the best location for such meetings. It lies west of the centre of the city at the junction of the two principal streets. Beginning early in June these meetings have gone on every night. For several weeks, although good audiences would gather, the hearers seemed unresponsive. Invitations extended to the crowd to ask questions went unheeded, except now and then by a socialist. But before the end of June all this has changed. The attendance is larger, much more alertness is shown, and searching questions are the rule. "What is the Single Tax?" "How long has the Single Tax been known?" "What can we do about it?" "Why can't we have a headquarters?" and like earnest inquiries.

The result has vindicated the plan adopted of holding the meetings continuously in one spot rather than peripatetically. Without abandoning this location, we have in mind to occupy at once another site, which will accommodate residents of the east side.

The field is ripe to the harvest. Billy Radcliff could do an immense work here. Unlike Oregon, Rhode Island has no extensive rural sections difficult to reach.

But propaganda work of every kind, which calls for any expenditure, is at a