

Mayor McNair Urges Immediate Advances In Taxation

WITHOUT waiting for inauguration day, Mayor William N. McNair, immediately following his election in November, telegraphed Governor Gifford Pinchot asking him to include in his call for the special session of the State Legislature, a provision for consideration of municipal tax legislation. This request was granted and three bills were immediately drawn by a committee representing the Mayor, and introduced in the House of Representatives at Harrisburgh. One of these bills covered the famous Five-to-One tax plan, sponsored by Mayor McNair during his campaign and which provoked a rather heated controversy. Another provided for the application of the graded tax plan on the present fifty per cent basis to the school taxes levied by the Board of Public Education, while the third bill called for the extension of the fifty per cent building tax rate to the levying of county taxes.

Prompt action was secured in the lower house on the first two of these measures and through the prestige of the incoming city administration, both bills were adopted by the house by an overwhelming majority, there being but one dissenting vote cast against the school tax measure and only seven in opposition to the Five-to-One city tax bill. There was every indication that one or both of these bills would also have been adopted by the State Senate, assurances having been received of strong support for these measures on the part of the State Senators from the Allegheny County delegation, despite the fact that these six Senators were all Republicans who had opposed the candidacy of Mr. McNair. Unfortunately, however, the special session of the legislature was extremely limited as to time and the date for final adjournment had been fixed so that the final legislative day fixed allowed less than one week for consideration and action by the Senate. And owing to minor amendments sought by Senators from Philadelphia, it was impossible to get either bill on the Senate calendar in time for a vote in the special session. These measures, however, will again be pressed either at the regular session of the state assembly opening in January 1935, or possibly much sooner, if Governor Pinchot should call another special session this year as now seems probable.

Meanwhile, Mayor McNair has made two very significant recommendations to the City Council which may result in immediate advance steps without waiting for any action of the State Legislature, emergency powers having been granted to the City Council with regard to the levying of taxes by ordinance of council. The Mayor has recommended to Council the imposition of a ten per cent tax on ground rents to apply to land leased under

terms by which the lessee pays the taxes in addition to the rental. Another important measure sponsored by the new administration for action by City Council would exempt new homes of \$5,000 valuation or under from taxes for a period of five years.

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Ralph E. Smith, Treasurer of the Henry George Club, is the new Morals Court Magistrate and Attorney Bernard B. McGinnis, another life-long Single Taxer, has been appointed a member of the Civil Service Commission.

The rapid growth of popular interest in the Single Tax during recent weeks has been the subject of much comment. The Pittsburgh public libraries find it quite impossible to meet the demand for "Progress and Poverty" and other works of Henry George and have placed orders for more of these books with which to supply the calls from their patrons. Single Tax lecturers are also much in demand. Francis W. Maguire, the alert Secretary of the Henry George Club, has taken the fullest advantage of his opportunities and as a result has placed thousands of pieces of pamphlet literature in the hands of the people and such literature is receiving more respectful attention than heretofore.

HENRY GEORGE CLUB HOLDS VICTORY DINNER

FOUR hundred persons participated in a testimonial banquet given by the Henry George Club of Pittsburgh, in honor of the Mayor-elect on the evening of Dec. 9, in the ballroom of the Hotel William Penn.

Cornelius D. Scully was the toastmaster on this occasion and the speakers included State Senator Marvin C. Harrison and former Councilman Peter Witt, of Cleveland, O.; Clayton J. Ewing, President of the Chicago Single Tax Club; Hon. William N. McNair; City Controller, James P. Kerr; Councilman, Robert Garland; David L. Lawrence, Democratic County Chairman; George E. Evans, President of the Henry George Foundation; William B. Foster, President of the Henry George Club; and Percy R. Williams, Secretary of the Henry George Foundation.

The dinner was a very delightful occasion and, though the list of speakers included very diverse elements of the political and business life of the community, there was a very remarkable unanimity of expressions favorable to the Pittsburgh policy of concentrating municipal taxes on land values and a general agreement that the time is ripe for a further extension of this policy.

THE relation of a State to its territory, which in modern times enters into the essential conception of the State, implies that the land cannot be looked upon, even provisionally, as a true subject of permanent individual appropriation.

PROF. SHELDEN AMOS, "Science of Law," 1874