

New South Wales

THE BASIC WAGE

IN your issue of Jan.-Feb. I gave an account of the movement in New South Wales at the end of 1919, indicated the extraordinary position brought about by the Board of Trade's sudden declaration of a basic wage of £3 17-, or 17-more than the award made by the Industrial Court, and stated that Mr. Huie, the Secretary of the Free Trade and Land Values (formerly Single Tax) League, was about to try his luck as a candidate in the forthcoming general election of the State. Since then a great deal of water has run under the bridge.

In the first place, the Legislative Council refused to pass the Bill introduced by the Holman government to enable it to get over the difficulty caused by the Board of Trade's declaration and to refer it back for the purpose of having the basic wage made to meet the normal expenses, not of a married man and two children, but of a married man and his wife, with the proviso that an extra sum should be paid by the State out of a fund provided by the employers for every child up to a certain age. With the defeat of the Bill, the Board of Trade's declaration came automatically into force, wages made a sudden upward bound; freights, fares, and prices generally at once increased to a corresponding amount, so that the worker was no better off than before, while the non-worker, and all outside the charmed circle inside which the increased wages apply, are in a far worse position than ever.

About the same time the Federal government appointed a Commission to ascertain the normal expenses of a married man and three children with the view of proclaiming a basic wage on those lines for the whole of the Commonwealth. The injustice of basing wages on the needs of a married man and three children, the same wage to be given to a single man as to a married man with a large family, was apparent, and several protests from more or less influential bodies were made. Whether they will have the least effect remains to be seen, also how long it will take the public generally to see the fallacy of basing wages on anything but the value of the services rendered and of the product out of which the services have to be paid. In the meantime the people of Australia will be studying the question in the only way in which democracies seem capable of studying anything—by the light of practical experience. Of course we Single Taxers did our best to point out that there would be no need for any arbitrary declaration of a basic wage if land values were appropriated by the people who created them instead of by the so-called owners, and that if the land were thus made easy of access to the people they could employ themselves, and the opportunities of earning a livelihood would be so increased that wages would naturally rise without any artificial declaration by a Board of Trade.

THE SINGLE TAX CAMPAIGN

During the last few months two elections have been held in New South Wales—one for the Commonwealth Parlia-

ment and the other for the State. The Single Tax League determined to take a prominent part in both these elections. We did not nominate a candidate for the first, but we concentrated our efforts on the Western Suburbs, an important electorate within a tramride of the City, and during the whole time that the elections lasted we held two or three meetings a week in the open streets at which the President (Mr. R. H. McNeice), the Secretary (Mr. Huie), and a number of others gave stirring addresses on the problem of all others with which this and every other community is faced—that of the high cost of living caused by the war.

The Secretary issued a leaflet showing why food and clothing were dear and rents were high, pointing out that the only way in which the cost of living could be reduced was by removing the taxes upon food and clothes (instead of raising them as both the National and Labor parties proposed) and by obtaining the revenue from the ground rents which had been created by the community itself and belonged therefore by right to the community. "Any man who talks about reducing the cost of living while maintaining taxes upon the necessaries of life," read the leaflet, "is an impostor," a statement with which everyone who knows anything at all about the effects of taxation will agree. The leaflet was written in short, crisp phrases, full of exact statements showing how the different items were taxed, and must have been an eye-opener to the people generally who had been led to believe that the greater the protection the greater the prosperity, and that the more we prevented the goods of other countries from coming in the more employment there would be for those who were here. It was shown that as a result of the heavy burdens already laid upon production, together with other causes, millions of acres had gone out of cultivation, mines were being closed down, and although there was plenty of gold in the country even gold mining threatened to become extinct. It was further shown that by reducing taxes on the products of labor we would enable the people to obtain goods at a much cheaper rate and lessen the cost of production, and that by obtaining the required revenue from land values we would force idle land into use, make it more easy of access, promote production, and open up avenues of employment for the thousands of idle men who are wandering about looking for work.

HOW THE MEETINGS WERE HELD

Street meetings were very popular during the campaign. Each party had its selected corner, its favorite spot, which a rival candidate sometimes appropriated if he came that way in time. In this initial campaign the League incurred very little expense. The meetings were seldom advertised and there was no rent. The orator mounted a rostrum, perhaps a block of wood to enable him to keep his head above the crowd, commenced his address, people collected, and the rest depended upon himself. One of the best speakers on Mr. Huie's behalf was the President (Mr. McNeice), a man of wide experience with all sections of the community and of great "drawing" power.

The impression made by the League during this campaign

was all the stronger from the fact that both parties in the field proposed to raise the tariff if they got into power, whereas we proposed to abolish it altogether. Both sides said that greater production was the one thing needful to lower prices and to help us pay our tremendous debt. Yet they not only proposed to increase the amount which the producer already had to pay for his machinery and for everything he required, but also to exempt the man who held £5,000 worth of land from taxation, thus bolstering up land monopoly, preventing would-be producers from gaining access to land, lessening the avenues for employment and depriving the State of the revenue which is its due. For this state of things, it was pointed out, the man in the street was responsible, since it was he who sent the men into Parliament who passed these iniquitous laws. When the man in the street wakes up and sends men into Parliament pledged to bring in real Free Trade and all round land value taxation (without exemptions and without graduations such as mar the principle here) then, but not till then, will the labor problem be solved.

EVEN THE WOMEN PROTEST

The threat to increase the tariff was eventually carried out, and so thoroughly that a storm of indignation swept over the country when it was realized that the cost of living, which was already abnormally high, was to be further increased in order to still further pamper the Australian manufacturers. Our League issued a vigorous protest against the new tariff, as also did the Women's Unimproved Land Values League. The women did so on the grounds (1) that the trend of the duties would be to induce their children to earn their living in factories, which would be detrimental to their health; (2) that the tariff encouraged centralization in Sydney rather than decentralization throughout the country; and (3) that the expenses of freight and insurance, etc., in shipping our raw materials oversea to be returned to us as manufactured goods, was protection enough without any tariff. One result of the new tariff will be to discourage trade relations with other countries, such as America and France, and even with Great Britain herself, although it is of the utmost importance for our exports of wool and wheat that foreign intercourse should be encouraged in every possible way.

THE WESTERN SUBURBS CAMPAIGN

Very shortly after the Federal campaign came the State campaign, Mr. Huie again attacking the Western Suburbs, but this time as a candidate himself. Being the first election held in Australia under Proportional Representation it was an historical event. Under the new system the Western Suburbs was a five member electorate, one of nine, fifteen of three member electorates completing the scheme. Under the old system the Secretary, as an Independent candidate, would have had no chance as against the "machine," but under the new one it is different, and his chance was considerably improved by the fact that he was admitted to be the father of Proportional Representation in New

South Wales, and to have done more than anyone else to bring it about. The campaign was fought on similar lines to the Federal one, only in this case the policy advocated differed, and was summarized in my letter published in the Jan.-Feb. issue of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW. Mr. Huie had by far the most democratic programme of any candidate in the field, although few of the electorate probably realized how tremendously democratic it was.

One very sore point in New South Wales is the heavy price which the farmers have to pay for freight. Mr. Huie showed how freights and fares could be substantially reduced by charging the interest on the capital spent in the construction of railways and tramways to land values. More than that, he showed how all national works, such as those for water conservation and irrigation, could be treated in a similar way. Hitherto, the increase in land values which these improvements necessarily bring about has gone to swell the profits of the land owner instead of into the pockets of the community as a whole.

The only sound economic way to deal with the problem, said Mr. Huie, was to put a flat rate on land values apart from improvements, which would force a lot of idle land into the market, make it easy of access, and provide a lot of much required revenue for the State. He also advocated the abolition of stamp taxes, and the payment of the cost of hospital construction and maintenance principally from the rates. The Bill for charging water and sewerage rates in Sydney to land values, which the landowners have hitherto successfully obstructed, was also strongly supported by our speakers during the campaign, and will be till it is passed into law. Mr. Huie put up a strenuous fight, but he did not get in. There were twenty other candidates for the same electorate besides himself, and when the poll was declared he was found to be about half way up. However, the campaign must have done a lot of good. A great deal of sound educational work was accomplished, and when the next election, Federal or State, comes round, Mr. Huie will have a greatly improved chance.

The result of the election was the defeat of the Nationalists, including Premier Holman himself (an exceedingly clever politician but a pronounced opponent of the Single Tax), the advent of the Progressive or Country Party with 15 seats, and the growth of the Labor Party from 27 seats to 45, or exactly half the House. Mr. Storey, the leader of the Laborites, is now the Premier, but it looks as if another election must be held before long. It was mainly owing to Proportional Representation that the Labor Party and the Progressives made such an advance, but half the electors refused to vote, and a very large proportion of those who did vote (over 25,000) were disfranchised for non-compliance with the absurd and altogether unnecessary regulation by which the principle of Proportional Representation as adopted here was marred, the elector having to vote for every candidate on the list. The League is urging the new government to rescind the obnoxious regulation, and to allow the ballot paper to be formal if the figure 1 is placed beside the name of only one candidate. At the

same time the League urges the electors to show their preferences for all the candidates on the list.

HOW AMERICA CAN HELP

We Single Taxers in New South Wales are eager to make the utmost of the unparalleled opportunity for spreading our reform which the high cost of living undoubtedly presents, but we are crippled for want of funds. We specially want to fight the new tariff which will seriously injure the intercourse of Australia with America and other countries. It is to the interest of American producers and manufacturers, as well as to that of the Australian people generally, that this policy of commercial hindrance and obstruction should be replaced by one of free intercourse between all nations.

PERCY R. MEGGY.

John Z. White's Lecture Appointments

TERRE HAUTE, IND.: Thursday noon, Sept. 2nd, Kiwanis Club.

CLEVELAND, OHIO: Thursday evening, Sept. 9th, B'Nai Brith

YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO: Friday noon, Sept. 10th, Kiwanis Club.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.: Monday noon, Sept. 13th, Kiwanis Club.

AUBURN, N. Y.: Wednesday noon, Sept. 15th, Kiwanis Club.

JAMESTOWN, N. Y.: Thursday noon, Sept. 16th, Kiwanis Club.

AUBURN, N. Y.: Friday noon, Sept. 17th, Chamber of Commerce.

NEW YORK CITY: Wednesday noon, Sept. 22nd, Kiwanis Club.

UTICA, N. Y.: Thursday noon, Sept. 23rd, Exchange Club.

BINGHAMTON, N. Y.: Friday, Sept. 24th

CLEVELAND, OHIO: Thursday noon, Oct. 7th, Electrical League.

MEDINA, OHIO: Friday noon, Oct. 8th, Kiwanis Club.

EVANSVILLE, IND.: Tuesday evening, Oct. 12th, Credit Men's Association.

TERRE HAUTE, IND.: Wednesday evening, Oct. 13th, Credit Men's Association.

GOSHEN, IND.: Wednesday noon, Oct. 20th, Kiwanis Club.

ALEXANDRIA, VA.: Monday evening, Oct. 25th, Chamber of Commerce.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNA.: Sunday P.M. and evening, Oct. 31st, Friendship League.

BOSTON, MASS.: Tuesday evening, Nov. 2nd, Caledonian Club.

NEW YORK CITY: Wednesday noon, Nov. 3rd, Kiwanis Club.

COLUMBIA, S. C.: Thursday evening, Nov. 11th, Trinity Church.

COLUMBIA, S. C.: Friday at 10.30 and Evening, Nov. 12th, University of South Carolina.

BENNETTSVILLE, S. C., Saturday, Nov. 13th, 11.30 A.M., Teachers Association.

CLIO, S. C.: Saturday, Nov. 13th, 7.30 P.M., Teachers' Association.

PITTSBURGH, PENNA., Thursday, March 3rd, Outlook Alliance (WC).

A Tale of Two Cities

A COMPARISON BETWEEN TORONTO, CANADA, AND SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

THE taxpayers of Toronto who pay nearly three per cent. in taxes should compare their position with that of the citizens of Sydney, New South Wales, the most populous State in Australia. In that city there is no tax on the products of industry or on business. The man who puts it to its worst use is taxed as much as the man who puts it to its best use. There is no penalty for improving.

Toronto taxpayers pay nearly three per cent. taxes on the assessed value of their houses, shops, factories, and offices, and also on their business.

Sydney taxpayers pay no taxes on houses, shops, factories, workshops, offices or business.

A Toronto manufacturer puts up a factory at a cost of \$50,000 and pays a tax of \$1,500 on his improvement, besides a tax of \$750 on his business.

A Sydney manufacturer puts up a factory at the same price, and pays not one cent on the improvement or on his business.

A Toronto merchant rents a shop costing \$10,000 and pays a yearly tax of \$300, besides his business tax, which varies according to the business.

A Sydney merchant pays not one cent tax on his building or on his business.

A Toronto resident erects a house costing \$2,500 on a lot costing \$1,000. On the house he pays a tax of \$75.00, and \$30.00 on the land.

A Sydney resident pays no tax on his house, and only about \$20.00 on his land.

All municipal expenses are met in Sydney by a tax rate of two per cent., whether the land is kept vacant or used for a factory, a store, a home, an office or a workshop.

For more than sixty years the Toronto method of taxation existed in Sydney. Then a partial application of reduction of taxes on improvements was tried with such success that on April 13th, 1916, the City Council, with only two opposing, abolished the taxes on improvements.

A SINGLE TAXER believes that Henry George gave to the world the key to the solution of problems that torment and hinder us today. That being so no one who feels the power of this truth can remain an idle and disinterested spectator. The time has come for every believer to be up and doing.—*Land and Liberty* (London, England).