

in the House to put the case clearly; and, whenever necessary, to lead a revolt when the politicians through ignorance or design are proposing anything which is likely to vitiate the work. Great credit is due to Josiah C. Wedgwood for the painstaking manner in which he watches the interests of our cause in Parliament where the tone and sentiment on Landlordism is being entirely changed. As our monthly journal *Land Values* says:

"Formerly it was easy to defend landlordism and the 'industry' of rent-collecting and land-speculation with dignity and pride, but now that defense can only be made shamefacedly and with a good deal of excuse and apology. This welcome change in the tone of the debates when the Land Question is being discussed is only a recent development, but it will go on from strength to strength, as the more Radical members are prepared to ignore party ties when principles are at stake."

The fourth Annual report of the United Committee, which consists of 72 pages of matter, has just been issued and is an interesting and encouraging document. From it we learn that "During the year the Committee have published 2,200,000 sets of leaflets (equivalent to more than 50,000,000 separate leaflets) which have been distributed in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland." At a meeting recently held not far from here an old Yorkshireman having listened to a discussion said, "Ah know nowt abart land valleys, but they must be summat in 'em, for they dew mak fowk talk." Yes, the old man was right, "land valleys," as he called them, are making "fowk talk" and think, in a manner that is creating a great volume of sentiment for our proposals.—F. SKIRROW.

VICTORIA.

At last Victoria has made a step forward in the taxation of land values, and during last month the whole State fairly seethed with the terms "capital value," value of improvements, "unimproved value;" and throughout the whole of Australia those words were more frequently used than ever before.

This was due to the fact that in Victoria on the 26th December last the Land Tax Act 1910, and on the 17th November two Federal Acts:—the Land Tax Act 1910 described as "An Act to impose a Progressive Land Tax upon unimproved values," and, incorporated with it, the Land Tax Assessment Act 1910, became law.

The Victorian Act imposes a tax of one half penny in the pound on the unimproved value of all land held by any owner in excess of two hundred and fifty pounds. For every pound of unimproved value in excess of £250 the exemption drops one pound so that it disappears altogether for the owner of land of unimproved value of £500. Under the Act owners of land of an unimproved value not exceeding £5000 are to be free from Income Tax in respect of all income from farm produce such as live stock, wool, meat, fruit, grain, etc., with fixed rates of Income Tax in respect of such income from lands between £6,000 and £9,000 of unimproved value.

The Federal Acts were passed by the Fisher (Labor) Government, and Mr. W. M. Hughes was the Lloyd-George of the Parliamentary struggle, and bore the brunt of the contest. The Federal Acts only apply to owners of lands of an unimproved value of £5,000 in the aggregate. In the case of owners who are not absentees an exemption is allowed of £5,000 and the rate of tax is defined as "For so much of the taxable value as does not exceed £75,001, the rate of tax per pound sterling shall be one penny where the taxable value is one pound sterling, and shall increase uniformly with each increase of one pound sterling in the taxable value, in such manner that the increment between a taxable value of £15,000 and a taxable value of £15,001 shall be two pence;" and so on the increment for each increase of £15,000 being one penny up to £75,000. Above £75,000 the tax is sixpence in the pound. In the case of absentees there is no exemption and the rates are somewhat heavier. It is understood that the Federal Acts will be tested in the Courts to decide whether they are constitutional.

Though the Federal Acts are not in accord with the views of Single Taxers, who are opposed to exemptions and graduations

and to the discrimination against absentees, the passing of these Land Tax Acts marks great advance. The acts may be improved, but they will not be improved out of existence, as to the general principle contained in them.

Returns under both the Federal and State Acts had to be in by the 1st March and for five or six weeks prior to that date hundreds of questions bearing upon the returns were answered through the papers by the Commissioners of Land Taxes.

The Victorian Act was passed by the Murray Government of which the Hon. W. A. Watt, the Treasurer, is perhaps the most influential member by reason of his office and ability, and is one of the most progressive. Apart from the exigencies of the financial position it is probably due to him that the State Land Tax Act has been passed, and he has given an earnest of further reform by publicly expressing his strong approval of rating reform and publicly stating that he felt certain, that, if a substantial body of municipalities asked for power to rate land values only, Parliament would grant it. A circular has been sent by the Lilydale Shire Council to other municipalities asking, for support for rating reform and a number of Councils have already expressed their approval. So that we now have some prospect of securing this belated reform.—A. C. NICHOLS, Eurora, Victoria.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA NOTES.

The subject of land values taxation has been much before the public during the past year. Those responsible for raising public revenue, whether for local, State, or Federal purposes have turned their attention to the perennial source, and have taken a few steps along the road to economic freedom; and although yet a very long way off from the Single Tax goal, there are evidences that a further advance will be made in the near future.

Dealing first with the broader aspect the year 1911 will be signalled by the imposition of a Federal Land Values Tax of 1d. in the £, payable on all land over £5,000, rising progressively to 3½d. on £80,000 and to 6d.

in the £ up to £100,000. Avowedly this was imposed for the purpose of breaking up the large estates and unlocking the land to labor, and to a certain extent the tendency is in that direction, although large land-owners are combining throughout the Commonwealth to test the validity of the Act. The exemption of £5,000 and the fact of its being an additional tax, not a substitution, stultifies to a large extent the relief to labor that this large installment of land values taxation, if levied on Georgian lines, would have brought about.

Regarding the State measure—In last year's Budget, the Treasurer stated that:—

"The taxation proposals of the Government are designed to take the burden from industry and production and place it upon values created by the energy of the people and the expenditure of public money. It is manifestly unfair and against the interests of the State that the man who uses his land, who develops the capabilities of the soil, whose energy converts waste spaces into habitable and productive areas, should be penalised by oppressive and inquisitorial methods of taxation, while the speculator, who benefits from these pioneering efforts, and the value of whose land is equally enhanced by the railways with that of the genuine land user, should so largely escape taxation." We therefore propose a remission of income on land and produce of land, £60,000; raising exemption under income tax to £300 per annum, £17,000; abolition of stamp receipt tax, £11,000; reduction of railway freights, £67,000; Increment tax 20 per cent. on increment value, total £155,000. . . . To make good the deficiency caused by these remissions, and in order to allow for a reduction in railway freights to an extent of £67,000, I propose that the all-round land tax be increased by ¾d. in the pound. The relief afforded the primary producer by the reduction of railway freights, as well as by the increased road grant, which has been provided for upon the Estimates, and the remission of the income tax, will more than compensate the average land user for the extra tax on the unimproved value of his land. It must not be forgotten that one acre in King William Street is worth many thousands of acres of farming