

SOUTH AMERICA

Argentina

The latest news available is that a surprising victory has been obtained by the "Socialist" party, which makes taxation of land values and abolition of taxes on labour and industry its chief electoral demand: next issue of LAND VALUES will have the earliest full and authentic information.

Uruguay

Proposal to Rate Land Values in Montevideo

The exact proposal of the President, Sr. Batlle y Ordoñez, dated March 20th, is a Government Bill to amend the land tax in the metropolitan department of Montevideo. This tax has been in urban districts at 6½ per mille on land and improvements; it is now proposed to make it 10 per mille on land value only. As in Uruguay for some years there has been no tax in rural districts upon buildings, fences, crops, cattle, or any form of productive wealth, the result of the passing of the Bill will be to leave houses, &c., taxed only in a few of the secondary towns; the proposal has been welcomed with the greatest popular enthusiasm, and the very efficient Valuation Department of Uruguay has all the necessary preliminary work fully in hand. The assessed taxable land value is 85 per cent. of selling value only. This is absolutely first among fiscal reform proposals outside of the British Empire, and so far as it goes nothing could be better, especially as part only of a consistent land programme which, since 1905, has been the vital source of Liberalism in Uruguay.

M. J. S.

Mr. C. N. Macintosh, writing from Buenos Aires, 16th February, says:—

"Out here the Land Tax idea—that is The Single Tax—is gaining ground in a truly wonderful manner. Every day, one may say, fresh supporters are coming forward. To-day the movement counts in its ranks some of the brainiest and most progressive men in Argentina, while in Uruguay we are, I am convinced, on the verge of seeing Montevideo made a city that will raise all its Municipal Revenue by a tax on Land Values, as distinct from Land and Improvements.

In Rio Grande do Sul, the most southerly state of Brazil, the Governor, Dr. Borges de Medeiros, is a convinced Single Taxer, and is pushing forward legislation that will make his state if he lives to see it through, as much a Single Tax State as Alberta or any other Canadian State or Province. Of course such action has its limits when a State is a part of a nation—just as in the case of Canada—where the Provinces can do nothing re the Customs Taxes. Dr. Borges de Medeiros is in that position.

Again in Paraguay they have just adopted very advanced Land Taxation laws. Valuation by the owner. Tax on his value of land as distinct from Improved value. Government right to take over land considered as undervalued, on the ground of being of Public Utility for Settling People on. Surtax on all land that has not 20 per cent. of its value in improvements. This extra tax is 40 per cent. increase of the Tax on the land. Thus if the tax were £100, the extra on unimproved land would be £40, a good stiff penalty that will soon split up some of the 3 and 4 million acre estates in poor Paraguay—owned by some 100 people of whom 80 per cent live in foreign lands.

The land is a solemn gift which nature has made to man; to be born then is for each of us a title of possession. The child has no better birthright to the breast of its mother.—MARMENTEL (1757), ADDRESS IN FAVOUR OF THE PEASANTS OF THE NORTH.

TRANSVAAL

Mr. Mather Smith writes us from Barberton, under date 31st March:—

The Labour victory in the Transvaal Provincial Council Election ought to do a lot for our cause, as they are all pledged to the Taxation of Land Values on Henry George lines, and Mr. F. A. W. Lucas was unanimously elected leader.

There are now twenty-three Labour men in a House of forty-five, which gives them a majority of one, but they may have great difficulty in getting anything done as the executive is elected by proportional vote, so that there will be two Labour men and two South African Party (Dutch) men on the executive. Then the Administrator, who is also a S.A.P. man, has the casting vote, and it is pretty certain to go against Labour. On top of all that, the Union Assembly holds the power of veto.

HENRY GEORGE SENTIMENT IN BULGARIA

(C. M. Stoycoff in the PUBLIC, Chicago, January 23rd.)

In the spring of 1912 I went to Bulgaria, my native country, on a short visit. The war broke out before I could get away and I was compelled to join the army and march against the Turks. Last October I returned to Chicago.

Seven years before I first came to this country, the name of Henry George was very popular among the intelligent people of Bulgaria. Tolstoy's friends, who were publishing in Sofia a monthly, THE RENAISSANCE, printed therein articles about Henry George, his life and work. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL, different chapters from THE PERPLEXED PHILOSOPHER, SOCIAL PROBLEMS, and so forth, were published in Bulgarian. Tolstoy's THE GREAT SIN (A GREAT INIQUITY) was translated and over a thousand copies sold. A year or so after, some of the men around THE RENAISSANCE—all young idealists at the time—were put in prison for two, three or four years for refusing to serve in the army (military service there is compulsory, as you know); others went abroad and joined different colonies of sympathizers in Western Europe and Russia. After five years of hard existence the monthly was temporarily dropped.

While in Bulgaria last year I learned that almost everybody among the intelligent people knew something about Henry George; but that knowledge has come to them mostly through the enemies of the Single Tax, who never stopped to find out what it is really about. To enlighten the people on this question, Mr. Andreychin, the foremost among the friends of Tolstoy in Bulgaria, has undertaken to translate PROGRESS AND POVERTY, from the Russian version of Mr. Nikolayeff, of whom Tolstoy used to say that none in Russia was better fit to express in his language the teachings of Henry George. This translation of the great man's book cannot see the light for years to come on account of lack of money.

The Bulgarians are very tolerant, open-minded and progressive. The Roumanians, Greeks and Servians, who have been free for about 200, 150 and 100 years respectively, are far behind us on the road of Progress, though we were under the Turks up to 1887. In those countries there is not much religious tolerance or political freedom. In Roumania they blame the Jews for the misery of the country. In Serbia and Greece it is almost a crime to be a Socialist, while in Bulgaria that party is represented in Parliament by 40 members. Professor Dorsey from the University of Chicago, who was studying those people a few years ago, has a good word to say only about Sofia and the Bulgarians.

In 1910 the Minister of Public Instruction in France called the Bulgarian system of education one of the best in Europe. We have been independent for only thirty years and there are no illiterate persons under that age. In no country of Europe—some cantons of Switzerland being probably the only exception—can the people express their will on election day, with less obstructions and political tricks.