

tions to the seat of Government have been the practice. Three years ago a new departure was made when small committees of the Executive Council made tours through the country for the purpose of meeting the public locally. The chief difference between the present inquiry and the one then carried on is the greater degree of change which is not unnaturally expected from an Administration the members of which are strongly pledged to fiscal reform, and to at least a partial elimination of the principle of protection from the customs tariff.

The course adopted three years ago and pursued now seems to be an eminently practical and rational one. No Minister, however able, can safely assume to be omniscient in trade matters, and the representatives of one industry are not necessarily capable of speaking with authority for others. To ask all tariff deputations to go to Ottawa is to make the acquisition of indispensable information needlessly costly and necessarily imperfect. The plan now acted on is much the better way of accomplishing the desired end—namely, to make the Ministers who have special charge of the tariff so well acquainted with the industrial and commercial condition of the country that any changes deemed by Parliament to be necessary in the general public interest shall cause as little disturbance as possible. Senator Sherman recently expressed the opinion that the work of tariff revision in the United States should be entrusted to a Commission; the Canadian method seems to be a near approach to his ideal, for it would be difficult to bring together a body of Commissioners more able to discern the real condition of the country, or more interested in arriving at safe conclusions respecting it.

There seems to be a prevalent disposition on the part of boards of trade, manufacturers, merchants, and farmers to approach this difficult subject in a spirit of moderation. If this can be maintained through the hearings and discussions of the coming months it will be a fortunate thing for the country. The problem to be solved will tax the intelligence and ingenuity of the whole business community, but its solution will be greatly facilitated by a spirit of mutual forbearance and a general desire to promote the welfare of the community at large. We have clearly arrived at a serious crisis in the management of our public affairs—a crisis made all the more serious by the uncertainty as to the policy to be adopted by the United States. Every consideration of patriotism demands that its gravity shall not be increased by petty struggles between various industries to get the better of each other.

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## Single Tax in the Presidential Campaign.

THE recent Presidential conflict marks a new parting of the ways. The slavery agitation, the question of reconstruction, the bloody shirt, have disappeared from American politics, and now the cleavage is on new lines, namely, democracy versus plutocracy. The silver question was merely an incident in the new formation of parties and it is unfortunate that this question was pushed to the front; for at the back of this rallying cry was a still larger problem which calls imperatively for solution.

Nowhere does history furnish a parallel to the rapidity of the growth of this continent. The opening of new territories, the construction of new railroads, the development of the steamship, the telegraph, the telephone and the postal service, the application of steam and electricity to methods of production, the growth of large towns with all the appliances of the most advanced civilization have proceeded at a rate that eclipses all past ages.

All this relates to the department of production. So ample appeared the resources of the continent, that the

development of these resources seemed to be the only question worth considering, and the subject of distribution was but little thought of. The happy-go-lucky boast that Uncle Sam could give everyone a farm kept the idea of social pressure to one side.

So long as there was abundance of cheap land on which the workmen could easily become his own employer, he would not submit to a poor share of the product of his industry; but that resource is quickly disappearing. At the same time a host of farmers find themselves struggling with mortgages signed when wheat was a dollar a bushel. The pressure is showing itself with indubitable signs in the large cities. The vast number of unemployed during some years is a necessary hotbed of discontent.

While thousands of farmers have seen themselves crowded from their homesteads to the status of tenants, while hundreds of thousands of workmen have seen employment become more precarious, there have sprung up a number of millionaires with fortunes of such rapid growth that it is difficult for the mind to grasp their extent and power. The farmer or the mechanic who found it difficult to make both ends meet might be excused for asking how it can be just that another man could procure a million or ten millions in a year.

Many people are beginning to see that "someone has blundered." How is it that the heritage of the people, the mines of coal, iron, gold, silver and copper, the oil and gas wells, the unearned increment of the vast cities, the combinations of railroads, telegraphs and other natural monopolies have all passed into the hands of a comparatively small proportion of the people?

All these are the factors that gave to the silver question its weight and backing, and unfortunately the defeat of Bryan does nothing whatever to solve these problems or to provide a remedy.

It would be difficult to furnish a better illustration than the recent contest of the inadequacy of our present method of voting on public questions. There may be half-a-dozen questions on which the voter is desirous of recording his opinion, but by a peculiar combination of circumstances, he is asked which of two things he prefers; which will he have, high protection or high silver? To thousands of voters the question presented itself in this form: "Which robbery do you vote for? Will you double the price of imports or will you double the price of silver?"

Until we allow the voter the opportunity of voting directly on any question, irrespective of party ties or party triumphs, so long will he often be compelled to vote, not for what he desires, but for what he believes to be the less of two evils.

So far as the discussion of the two parties was concerned it was singularly inconclusive. McKinley declared that legislation could not affect values and yet his whole tariff legislation had this object always in view. Bryan attributed the hard times to the appreciation of gold, but there were other values that had appreciated a hundred-fold more than gold of which he made no mention. They both professed to increase wages; but how McKinleyism could do so while Carnegie could get free access to the Italian and Hungarian labour market the apostle of protection explained not, and how Bryanism's sixteen-to-one would relieve the labourer from his present disabilities, the plucky candidate did not show.

Neither of the candidates nor their friends came anywhere near reaching the root of the matter. The movements of values that are producing the social cleavage are not by any means difficult to trace, nor does it require vast erudition for their understanding.

Steam, electricity, chemical and mechanical agencies have revolutionized the methods of production so that in many departments we can now turn out ten, a hundred or a thousand-fold the results of our great-grandfathers. Hence the marvels of cheapness in nearly all departments of production.

It is in the department of labour products that we find this tendency to greater cheapness and intenser competition; but when we come to the values of those natural opportunities, the land, the minerals, the forests, those things that cannot be increased, but for which an increased population is ever making a greater demand, there we find values advancing with leaps and bounds to figures truly fabulous. In