Not Unjust, but Unconstitutional.

The annual report of the Deputy Insurance Commissioner for the State of Washington contains some excellent recommendations to the Senate and House of Representatives, and among them is one of much interest to the "foreign" companies transacting business in the state of Washington. The Deputy Commissioner says:—

Two years ago, when the legislature enacted the discriminatory tax law requiring of foreign insurance companies three per cent. and of domestic companies two per cent. of their net premiums, the opposition to such a statute was predicated principally on the grounds that an injustice would be done the foreign companies by such discrimination. We did not then believe, nor do we believe now, that a discriminatory tax of one per cent. on net premiums, as provided in our law, is inequitable or unjust. If the opposition to this statute were based solely on this ground, we should strongly favor the retention of the law on our statute books. Washington, I believe, was the first state in the union to pass such a law, the state of Iowa following soon afterward. However, the peculiar wording of our constitution relating to the taxing of corporations and of personal as well as real property, makes this law of extremely doubtful constitutionality. Especially is this true in view of the recent decision of our supreme court relative to the exempting of personal property from taxation.

The argument of the court in that decision leads me to the conclusion that the same court would hold this discriminatory tax law unconstitutional. The foreign companies do not object so much to the slight discrimination made by our state as they do to the principle involved, and of course they will take advantage of their rights under the law to have this statute declared unconstitutional by the courts. These companies paid their taxes, amounting to $11,398.48 in 1898, under protest, thus reserving their legal rights, and if the law should be declared unconstitutional they not only would not pay anything on the business of 1898, but they would recover the amount named above, paid under protest.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Deputy Commissioner thinks the best interests of the State of Washington would be subserved by repealing the present law, and re-enacting the 1895 law, placing all companies on the same footing.

THE CLASSES AND THE MASSES.

The Workmen's Compensation Act and the Vaccination Act.

During the past six months we have devoted considerable space to comments upon two English Acts of Parliament, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Vaccination Act. We ventured to express the opinion that these acts would cause dissatisfaction and create considerable trouble. That a paternal government in its desire to legislate for the masses can make egregious mistakes has been fully exemplified by the acts in question, and it is doubtful if the undeniably clever, bold, pushful and brilliant Colonial Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain, has added aught to his reputation by his determined advocacy of the former measure. From a seathing article under the above heading in "The Review," an English insurance journal, we cull the following forcible objections to the policy of coddling the masses now pursued by the public men of both parties in Great Britain:—

The Government now in power is the strongest, probably, that has been known in England for many a long day. It is naturally taken as representative of the Unionist, Conservative or Tory parties as the case may be; but it certainly is not Radical, and is not, from an elocutionary point of view, supposed to be an ardent champion of the masses. But in two Acts of Parliament, the presumed wishes of the masses, as expounded through the mouths of their supposed representatives, were deferred to, and we have on the one hand the Workmen's Compensation Act, and on the other, exemption from vaccination, wherever a conscientious objector can be found.

The Workmen's Compensation Act imposed at once new and heavy liabilities on employers, and the Law Courts are full of contested claims at the present moment. The premiums ran up, and many employers refused to insure at all, and decided to take their own risks. Some paid the higher rates charged by the more prudent offices, whilst undercutting set in with great virulence, and by some offices, risks were taken at any price, provided that what is called "business" could be secured.

Now what has happened, not merely in Great Britain, but also abroad, is that masters are getting rid of all but the most able-bodied of their workmen. The middle-aged artisan who was allowed by his employers to remain on out of consideration for his past services will now find that he has to go. Contracting out is of course not allowed, and masters who wish to protect themselves from absolute ruin must either pay immense premiums, or get rid of all but the most active and able-bodied of their workmen. Dismissals of older men have become the rule rather than the exception, and many a workman of from 45 to 50 years of age may yet learn to curse the day when a benevolent Parliament determined to protect him at the expense of his employer.

* * *

With regard to the "conscientious objector," the result will be that life assurance companies will primarily decline to accept any risk on the life of an unvaccinated person, which will be a social catastrophe of the first water. His children will be marked from infancy as beng outside the great and beneficent scheme of life assurance. Next, the conscientious objectors who, through ignorance, refuse to allow their children to be vaccinated, will be compelled to move out from all tenements the proprietors of which place the health of their tenants before any conscientious scrupules, however, *bona fide*. The working man, therefore, is being expelled from his workshop on the one hand by the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Act, and, if a conscientious objector, he is being simultaneously expelled from his dwelling-house by his landlord.