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TORONTO, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1901.

## THE SITUATION.

Ex-President Kruger, in a public deliverance, admits the Boer cause to be hopeless; and Mr. Schalkburger, who stands in Kruger's place, while he is away in Europe, suggests, without taking the responsibility of advising, a general surrender. These facts give assured hope that the end of the war is near.

The Assessment Commission has made an interim report by way of bill. The report goes against the scrap iron rule. The Commissioners favor the rule that was in force prior to the legal decision which put certain properties attached to the soil on the scrap iron basis of value. That was the cost of reproducing and replacing the property *in situ*; and they think the latter principle of valuation the fairer. For real estate the bill provides two separate values, the value of the land and the value of the buildings. The principle is laid down that, except mineral lands, all real and personal property shall be assessed at their actual value, land and buildings to be assessed separately, but at their actual value. Will a short bill be passed this session?

Besides laying down the principle that both real and personal property should be taxed at their actual value, the Assessment Commission unanimously agreed in the view that persons who escape "a large share of taxation which they should justly bear" in effect cast their share of the municipal burthen "upon other ratepayers of the municipalities concerned." Whether the principle of taking real and personal property at its actual value be fully carried out now or not, the Commission have furnished rules for the guidance of legislators which will never be forgotten, to which there will be constant appeal, and which once applied will never be foregone. The assessment law had grown up by degrees into a net work of confusion, evasion and unjust discrimination, and could only be effectually reformed by laying the axe to the tree of monstrous abuse.

In striking contrast with the report of the Municipal Commission we may point to the utterances of Tom L. Johnson, as he is familiarly called, in Association Hall,

just about the time the Commissioners' Report was issued. Mr. Johnson is described as an ex-Congressman, railway magnate and multi-millionaire. Naturally enough Mr. Johnson does not want any tax on big houses, and as a condition of escaping he is willing to let small houses escape on the same terms. He wants stocks and bonds to go free of taxes, because he says, "You would not tax a deed to a lot and the lot also." The analogy is false, and the alleged facts are a confusion of real and unreal things. There is no question of taxing the deed; and if there were that would be no answer to the question asked, whether stocks and bonds which stand for real things ought to be taxed. A franchise worth \$8,000,000 Mr. Johnson would divide arbitrarily into plant and land: "If a franchise is worth \$10,000,000 and its plant is worth but \$2,000,000, then," he gravely tells us, "the other \$8,000,000 is land value." Is the moon made of green cheese? If you can make land by a simple act of riotous imagination, then the human race may multiply indefinitely without fear of population trenching dangerously on the means of subsistence; and it would be in order for Mr. Johnson to amuse himself, if so minded, by breaking the monument of Malthus. There are men in America, who, if they were not millionaires might be anarchists.

Mr. Moxham, general manager of the Dominion Iron & Steel Company, Sidney, C.B., in an address before the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, told the relative cost of assembling the raw materials for making iron—iron ore, limestone and coal—at different points; and he showed that Belle Island, the seat of his company's works, has an advantage of \$2.45½ over Pittsburg, the cost is lower by 79½c. than the next lowest in the whole world. This should be a guarantee that the works will, in the near future, be able to go alone and meet the competition of the world.

There has been a discussion in Parliament, academic in its character some think, vitally practical say others, on the danger of our great railways being bought up by American monopolists, and made subservient to their profit and convenience. That such a danger actually presses there are no visible signs, though what time may bring forth no one can say. It was Mr. McLean, M.P. for East York, who brought up the question, proposing, as a preventive, government ownership. The Minister of Railways took the opposite ground, contending that government ownership and political intermeddling must necessarily go hand in hand. Mr. McLean had taken the opposite view on this branch of the subject. It is possible that government ownership of railways may some day have to be considered seriously, though the necessity is not yet apparent.

Premier Ross, of Ontario, on Tuesday received a deputation, who talked in favor of a railway to Lake Temiscaming, though they do not appear to have made any definite proposition as to what they expected the Government to do. Mayor Howland thought "the time had past when governments were expected practically to build railways and then give them away," and that if a private company did not see their way to build these lines—there is more than one charter—the Government should do so as a public work. Mr. Bailey, the engineer of the road, estimated the cost at \$17,000 to \$20,000 a mile. Premier Ross replied: "We have not yet matured our scheme, but I think you can depend upon early action, with a view of getting into that country and opening it up for Ontario." The road, it was stated, would open up