

ANNUAL REPORT.

GEORGE COPPELL,
TREASURER.

5% N. Y. TAX REFORM ASS'N
131 BROADWAY,
NEW YORK

JOINT COMMITTEE,
REFORM CLUB (Committee on City Affairs).

NEW YORK TAX REFORM ASSOCIATION,
BROOKLYN REVENUE REFORM CLUB.

January, 1901.

The report of the Joint Committee on Taxation absorbed the attention of the Legislature of 1900. It recommended the taxation of banks, trust companies and mortgages for State purposes. As the Committee's bill raised questions upon which the Association had not adopted any policy, a letter was sent to all members requesting their opinion as to the proper course in relation to it. A majority of those who replied were strenuously opposed to the bill, a considerable number favored the bank and trust company tax and some favored the mortgage tax as a lesser evil than existing law.

In view of this division of opinion, the officers took no action on behalf of the Association. The Secretary sent information to such members as seemed to be especially affected by the bill, and by means of circulars, newspaper articles and speeches pointed out the effect upon the various economic interests involved, and the mode of enforcement should the bill become law.

The Joint Committee stated that their main purpose was to provide revenue for the State so as to avoid the necessity for the levy of a State tax upon property assessed by local officials. The evils of the existing system were so obvious to all that it seemed desirable to take advantage of this public sentiment by proposing a fair method of apportioning the State tax and joining with this measure a provision for local option. With the valuable assistance of other members of the Association, your Secretary prepared a bill for the apportionment of State taxes and local option in taxation, substantially on the lines heretofore advocated by the Association, which was introduced by Senator Elsberg. A copy of this bill was sent to all our members.

The West End Association and the United Real Estate Associations were the sponsors for the bill, and in consequence it received support in the real estate columns of the daily press, and certain opposition was avoided which might have arisen had the bill been fathered by our Association. The bill was somewhat hastily prepared, and has since been carefully revised, and for the last six months has been under consideration by the Committee on Taxation of the New York Chamber of Commerce.

The Committee submitted the enclosed report to the chamber at its meeting on January 3d and the report was unanimously approved.

The bills for the amendment of the Assessment Law and for the reduction of the Organization Tax, which had been heretofore introduced, were also presented by Senator Elsberg.

ORGANIZATION AND PROPAGANDA.

The second annual State Commerce Convention, held at Syracuse, on June 6th, was attended by our Secretary and by our Mr. Potter. The convention was composed of representatives of sixty-one Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce, nineteen mayors of cities and forty presidents of villages. The Secretary was a member of the Committee on Taxation, which presented resolutions which were unanimously adopted. They were in part as follows:

Resolved, That any burdens upon capital employed competitively should be equal. * * * *

Resolved, That as soon as possible all capital engaged in production and trade should be exempt from taxation, to the end that our manufactures may be developed, our labor kept fully employed and a home market created for our farm products.

Resolved, That the best way to reform the system of local taxation is to grant local option in taxation to the cities and counties of the State."

During the year the work of organization and education has been carried on chiefly in the following rural counties: Schuyler, Oswego, Oneida, Wayne, Cayuga, Ontario, Tompkins, Madison, Seneca and Onondaga.

In Schuyler County an address was delivered before the Watkins Grange, which was fully reported in the leading Watkins papers and a committee of fifty-two was formed, with Seaman F. Northrup, Esq., District Attorney of the county, as chairman.

In Oswego County addresses were delivered at their request before the Board of Supervisors and the Iron Moulders and Machinists' International Union, which organization, by formal resolution, endorsed our bill.

In Oneida, in the cities of Rome and Utica, a committee of 160 members was formed, an address was made to the Board of Supervisors, which resulted in the passage of a resolution by the Board endorsing the bill. Full reports of the address and resolutions were printed in the city papers.

In Cayuga County an address was made in Auburn by the Secretary, of which full reports were published in the papers and a committee of seventy was formed to co-operate with our Association.

In Onondaga addresses were delivered before the Board of Supervisors, and literature has been extensively circulated. A committee in this county was formed last year.

In Madison County an address was delivered before the Board of Supervisors, which was fully reported and addresses were made at other points throughout the county. A committee was formed in this county last year.

In Tompkins County a committee of 84 members was formed in the city of Ithaca and the village of Trumansburg. Addresses were delivered, which were reported in the local papers, and favorable editorials were published in the Republican paper at Trumansburg and in the Democratic paper at Ithaca. Senator Stewart, of Ithaca, pledged his support to the measure.

In Ontario County addresses were delivered by the Secretary in Geneva and Canandaigua, which were fully reported with favorable editorial comments. A committee of 103 members was formed in this county.

In Seneca County addresses were delivered before the Seneca Falls and Waterloo Granges. A committee of 98 members was formed in the village of Seneca Falls and Waterloo. The Chairman of our Committee at Waterloo, Mr. Leonard Story, has rendered valuable assistance, and public sentiment in Waterloo is greatly aroused.

In Wayne County addresses were delivered before the Granges at Wolcott, Sodus, Williamson, Ontario, Palmyra and Newark. Favorable articles were published in the Sodus, Palmyra and Newark papers. A Committee of 129 members was formed in the villages of Palmyra, Newark and Lyons. Addresses have also been delivered before the Supervisors of Wayne County.

All the members of committees, now numbering twenty-two hundred eighty-nine (2,289), are pledged to the platform of the Association, and to local option as a means of carrying out the platform. In the course of his work our representative, Mr. Potter, has had personal conversations of from five minutes to five hours with twenty-eight hundred (2,800) persons during the year. The effort is always made to enlist the support of the leaders of thought politically, commercially and intellectually in each community, and very little time is given to those who will not in turn influence others.

BUREAU OF INFORMATION.

The office of the Association is intended to be a centre of information on matters relating to taxation. Letters of inquiry have been received from many of our members and from many persons throughout the State, and from many other States, including Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Virginia, Ohio, Wyoming, Colorado, and the Province of Ontario. Literature was furnished to the Vermont Tax Commission, and the Commission has issued a report opposing double taxation. Literature was furnished which aided in the preparation of an address before the State Bar Association of Virginia, and an amendment to the Constitution of Virginia was prepared to enable the Legislature to reform taxation in that State. At the invitation of the Chamber of Commerce of New Haven addresses were delivered there,

and bills prepared on the lines of the Elsberg bill which have found favor with leading men in Connecticut. Information has been furnished to State officers in New Jersey, Wyoming and Colorado.

Assistance given to other States counts for much because of the commanding position of the City of New York. Reforms effected in other States furnish valuable object lessons for us here, and materially assist us in effecting like reforms.

Your Secretary attended the Convention of the League of American Municipalities, held last month at Charleston, and read a paper on taxation. He was a member of the Committee on Resolutions, and resolutions were adopted declaring for the amendment of the Constitutions of all the States which prevent reform in taxation; that State taxes in excess of such as are derived from specific taxes should be apportioned to the several counties on the basis of the local revenue of each county, and that the counties and cities should have local option in taxation. The representatives of several New York cities, who attended the Convention, promised assistance in this State.

YOUR ASSISTANCE IS EARNESTLY REQUESTED

to aid in securing the passage of Senate Bill No. 28, introduced by Senator Elsberg, "For the Apportionment of State Taxes and for Local Option in Taxation," endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce and printed in full in the enclosed report. Please write to your Senator urging him to support the bill vigorously.

Mr. Elsberg has also introduced the bill to Reduce the Organization Tax and the bill to Prevent Discrimination in the Assessment of Real Estate, by requiring the statement of the value of land and the full value of the real property. Both these bills were approved by the State Commerce Convention and we beg that you will request your Senator to support these bills.

LAWSON PURDY, *Secretary.*

"A bill with the obnoxious, inquisitorial features of the listing system has been introduced by Assemblyman Smith of Columbia County. Local option is the only safeguard against such assaults on the general welfare."

