

R. A. Chamberlain, G. R. Chetwynd, L. J. Edwards, J. Evans, W. J. Irving, S. W. Jeger, G. McAllister, H. G. McGhee, R. W. G. Mackay, H. M. Medland, Mrs. L. Middleton, W. Nally, F. E. Noel-Baker, G. A. Pargiter, J. Paton, T. Reid, P. L. E. Shurmer, S. H. Smith, J. A. Sparks, M. Stewart, A. L. Symonds, D. G. West, W. A. Wilkins, Mrs. E. Wills; G. R. Thomson, Lord Advocate also attends. *Conservative* (15): L. D. Gammans, C. H. Gage, Sir P. Hannon, J. H. Hare, R. Jennings, E. H. Keeling, Sir H. Lucas-Tooth, J. W. F. Maitland, R. E. Manningham-Buller, A. H. E. Molson, W. S. Morrison, H. Strauss, C. N. Thornton-Kemsley, D. C. Walker-Smith, M. J. Wheatley. *Liberal* (2): E. Granville, W. J. Gruffydd. *Liberal-National* (1): F. Medlicott. *Communist* (1): P. Piratin. *Independent* (1): K. Lindsay. Discussion is being restricted by application of a timetable under guillotine procedure.

The companion Bill for Scotland passed its Second Reading after one day's debate (February 24) by 242 votes to 97. The fiscal powers of the Central Land Board and the arbitrary nature of the 'development charge' came under severe and deserved criticism. In that regard, the speeches of the Opposition members, J. S. C. Reid (Glasgow, Hillhead), Walter Elliot (Scottish Universities), A. Gomme-Duncan (Perth and Kinross) and C. N. Thornton-Kemsley will particularly repay a reading.

SOME PRESS COMMENTS

Initiative is a personal quality. Development is subject to unpredictable hazards. It is beyond the power of any committee or board to assess adequately in advance the improvement value caused by the creation of a new factory. Yet the whole of the planning scheme assumes prevision of this kind on the part of those who in future will direct and control the expansion and development of our towns and cities.—*Birmingham Gazette*, January 8.

With respect to the development charge; The kind of individual haggling that may occur, in which each side may be able to hold the other to ransom by a process of bluffing, is more appropriate to an Arab market than a Western democracy and carries palpable dangers of individual inequity and political pressure.—*The Economist*, January 11.

... Whether the flexible powers given to the Land Board to stimulate private enterprise, if necessary, by reducing the development charge to be levied, will expose the Board to intolerable political and other pressure from this and that quarter, remains to be seen. It is difficult, also, to foresee how far proper redevelopment may not still be obstructed under the Bill by inordinately high 'existing use' values.—*New Statesman*, January 11.

The following repercussions of the Bill were indicated in a long and informing statement to the *Financial Times* by Mr. T. J. Cullen, Chairman of the London County Freehold and Leasehold Properties; 'The Bill will create great uncertainty in the minds of developers. There will be hesitations and discussions. The prospective developer of a piece of land will have to establish with the authorities the amount of the development charge. Always at the back of his mind will be the fact that some change of plan may affect him adversely. All this will mean that those who require properties for reasonably immediate purposes will turn increasingly to existing properties, the more so since development which is regarded as within the range of existing use, including the repair of war damage, will be exempt from development charge. I foresee a prolongation of the life of existing buildings. Why pull down a block of flats that will comfortably last a few more years and build new ones on the same site if there is even a remote possibility that the improvement will involve you in a development charge? While allowing for the prospect of increased revenues created by such a re-development, the shadow of the betterment tax and the existence of planning powers will have a generally discouraging influence on enterprise of this nature. This longer life of a building will surely be reflected in property balance-sheets.' Here we see the gift which the Bill makes to other forms of land speculation and Mr. Cullen's summary remark deserves all emphasis; 'I am not concerned in this review with the long-term outlook but solely with the outlook in the reasonably immediate future—say twenty years—during which I foresee a definite improvement in the values of existing developed properties.'—*Financial Times*, January 10.

The Bill bristles with technical and legal complications inseparable from the subject, and bears unmistakable signs of compromise and uncertainty. . . . While the appalling effects of planlessness, alike on our towns and our countryside, are patent, the danger in this generation is that of introducing interferences with the enterprising citizen which may be death of another and a worse kind.—*Time and Tide*, January 11.

6d. LIGHT ON THE LAND QUESTION. A frank inquiry, in conversational style, into the Land Value Policy. By an eminent London journalist.

LIBERAL LIBERTY LEAGUE

THE Annual General Meeting of the League will be held on Tuesday, April 15, at 5.30 p.m. in the Kingsway Hall, London, followed by a Public Demonstration on the claims of a Free Economic Society as against the Planned Economy which, destroying Liberty, is even now bringing disaster upon the State.

The series of meetings addressed by Mr. Ashley Mitchell and Mr. Wilfrid Harrison in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen during January, while not largely attended, had excellent notice in the *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, the *Greenock Telegraph* and other papers. The meetings were organised in association with the Scottish Liberal Party. Mr. Harrison stated and expounded the true principle of liberty as set forth in the League's Declaration. They had to distinguish between the right and the wrong use of power; the coercive State led only to enslavement. Socialism and Communism he said believed that Society was a machine which a few conceited experts could construct and run as one did an electric power plant but the liberalism that loved liberty could produce a better world for the children of men. Mr. Mitchell's speeches were devoted largely to the Town and Country Planning Bill which he condemned outright and it was interesting to see that Press reports gave his remarks precedence over those of Mr. Clement Davies (leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party), who at the same time was giving that Bill a welcome.

Mr. Mitchell said the Bill was so bad that he hoped the House of Lords would do its duty and reject it. Instead of liberation from land monopoly by straightforward taxation and rating of land values more public funds were to be poured out, this time to compensate landowners for land values that only the community could have created. Management was to be vested in a Central Land Board from which anyone who wished to develop land would have to obtain approval. The whole thing would make a travesty of local self-government. At the same time the existing burden of rates upon buildings and improvements was left unamended: a system which was the greatest barrier to improved housing and the extension and development of all enterprise. The greatness of Britain, he said, was founded by our forefathers by their freedom of thought, the spirit of free enterprise and free competition which was the lifeblood of all progress; it was not made by State control and by direction of officials. Private enterprise which was now treated as a sinister power was to be curbed and disciplined; we were offered 'economic planning' and monetary manipulation unconcerned about Budget deficits or the growth of public debts. The protectionist policy of the Conservative Governments between the two wars had laid the foundation, by the development of trusts and monopolies for Socialist measures and it was a natural consequence that we had a Socialist Government to-day. The only alternative to Socialism was freedom, freedom of opportunity, and unless we could make people realise that, the very idea of freedom was going to be forgotten.

Another January meeting of the League was that in the Chiswick Town Hall, extensively reported in the *Brentford and Chiswick Times*, January 24. Both the New Towns Act and the Town and Country Planning Bill came under sharp criticism from which, for desiring to push the scheme under the former, the local Town Council did not escape. Mr. S. Martin, the first speaker, said that the Socialist idea of planned economy could never work unless it controlled the lives of the people completely. He cited a case from his own neighbourhood, Sidcup (Kent) that of a man who long resident in the district who applied for and was refused permission to build a small factory. He was told he could build one in South Wales; in vain he pleaded that he wished to employ local labour. Other speakers were Messrs. Ashley, Mitchell, A. E. Bennett and A. W. Madsen. Land Value Taxation, the freedom of production and the freedom of trade were policies the League stood for. In the brisk discussion which followed a member of the audience protested that the views expressed were not those of the official Liberal party to which the Chairman (Mr. T. Atholl Robertson) replied that although the Liberal Liberty League was an unofficial body it claimed to represent liberalism in its widest sense.

The League is an autonomous body with office accommodation at 4, Great Smith Street, Westminster. Membership is open to all sympathisers who pay a *minimum* annual subscription of 5s. An earnest appeal is made to them, and to all present members, to do all they can by way of added donations to aid this League in its work.