

KIMBERLEY PEOPLE DEMAND LAND VALUE RATING

THE *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, July 27, gave a four-column report to the meeting of the municipal voters of Kimberley, which packed the City Hall, and decided almost unanimously "that this duly constituted meeting of enrolled voters, convened in terms of Ordinance 10 of 1912 as amended and Ordinance 17 of 1917, do hereby request the Kimberley City Council to introduce site rating within the limits of the municipality as from January 1, 1946." An opposition amendment to postpone consideration of the matter had only six votes. The Mayor, Mr. G. S. EDEN, presiding, announced that according to law a poll of ratepayers would have to take place and that would be on August 2. Mr. Eden in a long speech favoured the motion. It had been said that opinion in the Council was divided, but actually councillors were unanimous that the ultimate aim of the city would have to be the introduction of site rating. Where the councillors had differed was whether the change should be made immediately or be delayed and on that point it was for the voters to decide. As to the need for the reform he instanced the new Harts Township at Pokwani where business stands had changed hands at from £1,125 to £1,250, residential plots from £400 to £500, and an hotel site for £5,000. These prices were paid in an area where there was only veldt. It was contended that the rate of 7d. in the £ on the (capital) value of improvements was ridiculously high. The real hardship fell upon the individual who built or wanted to build a new house. The old valuations were hopelessly out of keeping with to-day's property market. Nobody would suggest that to-day's high prices were the true values, but would anyone accept that the 20-year-old figures were correct? The true and correct value lay somewhere between those two extremes.

Mr. F. H. BRUTON, moving the motion, said that Kimberley was paying possibly the highest rates in the Union and was showing no improvement whatever. The present method was wrong, inequitable, and a bar to progress. Lt. P. W. FOLLET, seconding, said that prior to the war very few buildings were erected in the city, due to the fact that the rating on improvements was too high. There were buildings in Kimberley unfit for human habitation and new buildings should replace these if a new system of rating were produced. Mr. A. SLOSBERG, whose speech evoked tremendous cheers, said the town had been procrastinating for the last 25 years and it was time it stopped procrastinating. Mr. A. C. KIDDIE, who introduced himself as a business man having grown up in Kimberley, said that if they went on to site valuation for the rates it would be the best thing possible for the town. For the

delay in having a revaluation of the city—long overdue—the provincial administration was also to blame.

When the decision was taken, a poll of ratepayers was at once demanded, in conformity with the law, and the necessary number of signatures were handed in. The poll duly took place and its result was announced by the Mayor on August 22. It gave an overwhelming majority by 1,055 votes in favour of the immediate introduction of site value rating as against 170 for delaying this step for two years. Although the poll was a small one there being 7,096 voters on the roll, and perhaps, as the Mayor said, the non-voters had demonstrated their confidence in the City Council by not stirring from their homes it is a deci-

LIBERAL LIBERTY LEAGUE AT KINGSWAY HALL

UNDER THE caption, A Call to Freedom, the League held a most successful meeting in the Kingsway Hall, London, on November 23. It was in the Lecture Hall, which was well filled. The Chairman of the League, Mr. Ashley Mitchell introduced the speakers, who were Messrs. T. Atholl Robertson, George Winder, Stephen Martin, and S. W. Alexander. They dealt with the true Liberal principles, the desertion of which by the leaders of the official Liberal Party had been responsible for the Party's decline and its collapse at the recent General Election. The League, it was explained, rested its faith on the liberty of the person and on equal rights and equal opportunities for all. Private enterprise had to be liberated from monopoly and privilege which were the real enemies of society, preventing the abundant production of wealth and causing its distribution to be so unfair. The road to better conditions and world peace was by the extension of economic freedom and not through super-imposed controls on the part of government or by putting industry or any section of the people under the care or assistance or discipline of the State. The League placed the Taxation and Rating of Land Values, with corresponding remission of taxation on the work of man's hands, and Free Trade in the forefront of its policy—Free Trade, no matter what may be the fiscal policies of other countries. It offered a challenge to that kind of "economic planning" which, relying on State action and domination, would subvert liberty and lead to the totalitarianism we had fought a bloody war to avoid. The Government's plans for the nationalisation of key industries and of transport were roundly opposed. This is a summation of the message from the platform, expounding the "Free Land, Free Trade, Free Men" for which the League stands.

sive instruction to the Council to proceed. We await news that this action has been taken.

NATAL

The Escombe correspondent of the *Natal Mercury*, October 3, reports a crowded meeting of ratepayers to discuss the recent raising of the rates. A committee consisting of representatives from Malvern, Escombe, Northdene and Cavendish was appointed to wait on the Town Board and make representations. It was resolved on the motion of the chairman, Mr. H. H. Kemp, that the Malvern Town Board be urged as from the commencement of the next financial year, August 1946, to arrange that the rate be assessed and levied in respect of the land alone, and in terms of section 107 (1) of the Local Government Ordinance No. 21 of 1942.

A remarkable and exhilarating feature of the meeting was the animated discussion which followed. There were many questions ably answered by the Chairman and others on the platform. Speaker after speaker in the body of the hall rose to make new points and to endorse this "Call to Freedom" in a spirited and determined fashion. They were of the general public, not members of the League, and one felt they spoke for the huge host of the people of this nation whose belief is in upholding and safeguarding individual rights and liberties as the one foundation of human progress and social justice. They call for freedom from unnecessary controls and State interferences, from landlordism and monopoly and privilege from repressive and penalising taxation. The vote of thanks, moved by Mr. L. G. Bowman, not only to the speakers but to the League for the service it had rendered in enabling these sentiments to be voiced, was given with great enthusiasm.

On each seat there had been placed the League's declaration on "Full Opportunity for Employment" and the new Manifesto, which is published in these pages, with its appeal to join and support the League. A collection was taken which, with the enrolment of new members, clinched the success of the meeting. The sales of books and pamphlets were also gratifying. Minimum membership fee is 5s. yearly and an earnest invitation is made for the goodwill donations from sympathisers willing and able to help the League in the furtherance of its campaign.

Another well-attended meeting was that held on November 22 at Palmers Green, addressed by Messrs. Ashley Mitchell and T. Atholl Robertson. Arrangements are in hand for meetings in Tunbridge and Maidstone.