

above the building society rate) and will include a small maintenance expenditure.

While the merits of such a system may appear superficially attractive it must not be forgotten that the full, and in many cases very high, costs will have to be met. Clearly there will be a certain margin of land prices within which the housing associations will be able to operate. Competition for this category of land will indubitably increase and prices can be expected to rise. It has to be constantly pointed out that cheaper loans plus longer repayment periods will in no way ameliorate the worst aspects of the present housing markets. The need is for more, cheaper homes.

The most puzzling and perhaps most misleading statement in the booklet is that which speaks of providing housing at "cost rents." "A cost-rent society will provide housing at cost—without profit or subsidy. . . He (the tenant) will be charged only enough to cover the society's out-goings. . ." Since he will also be paying for repairs, maintenance and insurance in addition to market rates of interest to a building society plus an additional quarter per cent for the second (Housing Corporation) mortgage, one wonders where the "non-profit" idea comes in. Since profits consist of a recovery of overheads plus the current payments for wages, interest and land, it is nonsense to speak of this scheme as a non-profit one, for all these claims will have to be met as in ordinary private enterprise.

The housing societies will provide no immediate solace except to the owners of land and the building societies.

SITE-VALUE RATING VICTORY

A REFERENDUM POLL conducted in South Melbourne on November 7, resulted in a resounding victory for the adoption of site-value rating.

South Melbourne covers an area of 2,203 acres and has a population of 32,700.

The result was as follows:

For site-value rating	...	10,949	(62.7%)
Against	..	6,506	(37.3%)
Majority	...	4,443	

— Report from E. F. Halkyard, Australia.

Challenge Still Open

I AM SURE of this, when you take such a question as the Taxation of Land Values, that the party which first masters that question, which first makes it its own, which can show that it is really capable of dealing with it, and is really prepared to deal with it, and is not going to let itself be hampered by vested interests for exercising its intelligence upon it freely—that party will have a great and solid ground upon which to appeal to the country. — Sir Edward Grey at Leeds, 1899.

The Secretary Interviewed

THE UNITED COMMITTEE'S Election Manifesto (reproduced in the September/October issue of LAND & LIBERTY) was given some notice by *The Guardian*, the *Financial Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. One of the most interesting by-products of this manifesto, however, came by way of the curiosity of a Birmingham journalist, Anthony Hancox. Mr. Hancox, who writes for the *Sunday Mercury*, was sufficiently intrigued to come to London to interview the United Committee's Secretary, Mr. V. H. Blundell. As a result of his visit Mr. Hancox wrote a full-page article which appeared in his paper.

Describing Mr. Blundell's role, the writer told his readers not to be put off by the word "taxation" in the United Committee's title. "If we paid our taxes in this way, says a growing army of supporters, there would be enormous advantages." Mr. Hancox accompanied the Secretary on a short walk along Vauxhall Bridge Road where Mr. Blundell used the comparison between a new five-storey office block, a tiny one-storey house and a vacant blitzed site (all of approximately equal area) to illustrate the anomalies of the present rating system.

The article presented categorically the fundamental facts of land ownership, the results of the private appropriation of community created land value and the advantages of land-value taxation. Attention was drawn to the significance of the Whitstable Pilot Survey for site-value rating and the examples of land based taxes operating in Denmark, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Again quoting Mr. Blundell, Mr. Hancox wrote: "Here is the town clerk of Sydney, Australia, saying that land-value tax instead of rates on buildings has brought about a great transformation in his city — big expansions in residential, apartment and industrial building."

The article contained many examples of high prices being paid for land in the Midlands and referred to speculative transactions in land made recently. Emphasis was also given to the land factor cost in new homes and the regressive effects of the present property tax. In conclusion Mr. Hancox made a brief summary of the United Committee's views on the current land policies of the political parties: "Only one political party manifesto looks attractive to the United Committee — the Liberal Manifesto which commits the Party to introduce site-value rating."

There is little doubt that, as the article pointed out, interest and support for the United Committee's cause has gone up by leaps and bounds since the publication of the Whitstable Report. The *Sunday Mercury*, with Mr. Blundell's interview, has certainly added to the interest.

P. R. H.