

THE LIBERAL LAND CAMPAIGN

February 4th marked the turning point in the attitude of the official Liberty Party to the taxation of land values. The Land Enquiry Committee, which had been specially appointed to obtain information for Mr. Lloyd George on all the aspects of landlordism, had published the first volume of its Report dealing with rural conditions, and had advocated the main outlines of the programmes laid down at Bedford and Swindon. The rating question was discussed as Mr. Lloyd George had discussed it, but no policy for removing grievances was formulated. The Central Land and Housing Council, organised to promote the Government schemes, had been at work for several months and there was no sign in any of their literature of support for the taxation of land values. But after the Glasgow speech it was apparent that different counsels prevailed. The second volume of the Land Enquiry Committee Report, dealing principally with urban conditions, appeared in April, although originally expected in February, and in it 200 pages were exclusively devoted to a careful examination of the rating system, affirming in the plainest possible fashion the economic principles on which the case for rating land values rests—that the present system of rating discourages improvement, that rating land values would lessen this discouragement and at the same time give a powerful impetus to industry by making available to it land at present unused or inadequately utilised. The Report set out well the unique advantages of a national tax on land values, but while praising it in principle, the Committee were not prepared to advocate the national tax for fear that both rating and taxation of land values would have “confiscatory effects.” Their practical proposals (in regard to land values) were confined to legislation that would compel all authorities to impose a penny rate on capital site value, and to derive any additional revenues from site values only, with the option of raising by a rate on site values such further part of their expenditure as they thought fit. Although the proposals were partial and halting, the Report vindicated all the contentions in favour of the rating and taxation of land values, and it has made a notable contribution to the literature of the movement. The importance and value of this Report is fully discussed in the May (1914) issue of LAND VALUES.

Evidence of a considerable advance in our direction is also to be seen in the later activities of the Central Land and Housing Council, whose speakers and literature are now making more and more frequent references to the urgency of rating land values. A recent batch of leaflets, quoting numerous examples of unjust rating in London, might almost have been published by the United Committee. This recognition of our proposals, taken in conjunction with the remarkable progress in Parliament, has placed the rating of land values in the forefront of land reform proposals as the real fighting issue.

THE CARDIFF CONFERENCE

The Annual Conference to promote the Taxation and Rating of Land Values was held in the Cory Hall, Cardiff, on Monday, October 13th. It was followed in the evening by a public demonstration in the Park Hall, where some 3,000 persons assembled. It was preceded by an open air meeting in Cathay's Park and a reception in the Park Hotel on Saturday, 11th October, and an afternoon session on Sunday devoted to a discussion on

the relation of the peace movement to the land question. On Monday evening, after the public demonstration, the delegates entertained the Chairman at an informal supper, and presented him with a silver “call to order” bell as a memento of the occasion, and as a tribute to ability and success with which he had presided over the meetings.

As in previous years invitations to the Conference were sent to a large number of local rating authorities, particularly within the surrounding counties, and to trades unions, co-operative societies, temperance societies, Liberal Associations and other public bodies interested in land tenure and taxation reform. Three hundred delegates representing these bodies attended, and there were also present many visitors, including Members of Parliament and prominent public men. Mr. P. Wilson Raffan, M.P., presided, and he was supported on the platform by Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, M.P., Mr. J. Towyn Jones, M.P., Mr. Francis Neilson, M.P., Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., Mr. J. Dundas White, M.P., Mr. Sydney Robertson, M.P., Mr. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., Bailie Pratt (Glasgow), Ex-Bailie Burt (Glasgow), Councillor Hamilton (Glasgow), Councillor Smithson (Halifax), Councillor A. J. Howell (Cardiff), Councillor J. Stewart (Falmouth), and the late Mr. Joseph Fels. The Chancellor of the Exchequer telegraphed success to the meetings and apologies for absence were received from Sir Alfred Mond, M.P., Mr. Chas. P. Trevelyan, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, and Mr. Chas. E. Price, M.P., Chairman of the Parliamentary Land Values Group.

The Conference continued from 10.30 till 5 o'clock and considered and passed four resolutions, all being carried unanimously.

The first resolution was moved by Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, M.P., and seconded by Mr. J. Towyn Jones, M.P.; the second was moved by Mr. Francis Neilson, M.P., and seconded by Councillor A. J. Howell; the third was moved by Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., and seconded by Mr. Sidney Robinson, M.P.; the fourth was moved by Mr. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., and seconded by the late Mr. Joseph Fels. These resolutions were as follows:—

(1) In view of the great and growing burden of local rates, the unfairness of their incidence both as regards districts and as regards persons, and their obstructive effect on industry and development in town and country, this Conference declares that the cost of such services as Education, Poor Relief, Main Roads, and Police, which though locally administered are mainly national in character, should be more fairly distributed between rich and poor districts by levying a National Tax on the site value of all land in the United Kingdom, thus reducing the burden of local rates; and further that, as to the balance of revenues required for local needs, local authorities should be empowered to exclude all improvements from their assessments and to levy rates on the site value of land alone. This Conference further affirms that both the proposed National Tax and the proposed local rates on Land Values should be paid by each person having an interest in land value and in proportion to that interest.

(2) This Conference hereby declares its unflinching adherence to the principles of Free Trade, meaning thereby the complete freedom of trade from all hindrances and restrictions; it affirms that this freedom can only be fully established when the land, the source of all wealth, is made free to labour and capital, and when all taxes, whether imposed for revenue or for protective

purposes, which fall upon industry and improvement are removed; and therefore demands, in the interests alike of agriculture and manufactures, that public revenues be raised from the value of land which is due to the presence, growth, industry, and expenditure of the community.

(3) In view of the repeated declarations and pledges of the Liberal Party during the past twenty-five years to abolish the remaining duties on the food of the people—the duties on tea, coffee, cocoa, dried fruits, sugar, &c.—and to substitute for them an equivalent tax on the value of the land, this Conference calls upon the Government and its supporters in Parliament to give effect to this policy at the earliest possible moment, thereby freeing the earnings of the people from vexations and unjust taxation.

(4) This Conference affirms its deep conviction that the existing system of rating and taxation, by permitting the withholding of land from its best economic use, is directly responsible for overcrowding, low wages, unemployment, and the arrestment of desirable schemes of rural and urban development, such as small holdings, allotments, housing, and town planning; and emphatically declares that the remedy is to be found in rating and taxing land according to its value and not according to the use to which it is put.

In the discussion that followed each resolution a number of delegates and others took part, including Mr. J. Dundas White, M.P., Bailie Pratt (Glasgow), Councillor Hamilton (Glasgow), Mr. A. Keeling (Rhondda) and Mrs. Wedgwood. The proceedings were maintained at a high level of interest and earnest attention throughout. The Conference and the magnificent demonstration in the evening were well reported in the Press and the impression they made upon the public was that the land values movement had gained great strength in Wales as elsewhere; that the local authorities, with the strenuous example of Glasgow to lead them, had not slackened in their demand for powers from Parliament to rate land values and remove at least some of the burden of taxation from improvements; that the attack on land monopoly by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was welcomed as opening a new epoch in political agitation; but that indictment and exposure of the fruits of privilege and mere palliative proposals would be of no avail. If the issue was to be joined, reformers had to recognise that all the self sacrifice and devotion of members of local bodies, all attempts to raise wages or improve housing conditions would count for nothing unless there was fundamental alteration in the system of taxation and rating which would abolish the power to hold land out of use and remove the present unjust burden of taxation and high rents from the earnings of industry.

THE LAND VALUES PRESS BUREAU

The Press Bureau has, as in past years, been one of the most valuable assets of the movement, as a means of increasing popular understanding of our question, and it has greatly extended its influence among the reading public in all parts of the country. It has provided, free of charge, 486 explanatory articles, items of news, notes on current topics, and special communications to daily and weekly newspapers, magazines and trade journals, besides provoking or joining in correspondence wherever the opportunity arose. The total number of newspapers on the direct service of the Bureau has been increased from 245 to 301 since our last Report was issued, and in addition there is a special

list of 204 papers, including the most prominent in the Kingdom, which publish occasional articles of a more particular nature. The communications of the Bureau are sent by request to a number of journalists, speakers, secretaries and others in Great Britain, and to Colonial and foreign correspondents many of whom pass on the material to local newspapers where reports or descriptions concerning the British fight against land monopoly are watched with peculiar interest.

Of the many informing statements published through the Bureau, Joseph Fels's "Open Letter to an Enterprising Business Man" is entitled to special reference. It was first sent to the Press in May, 1913, and nothing we have yet issued has been given such extensive notice. After publication in all the papers served by the Bureau, it was reproduced in many trade, technical, and commercial journals and was the means of opening up long-continued correspondence. It was printed in leaflet form, posted to several thousand leading business men in various districts, and distributed with much zeal by our people at many public meetings. Wherever it went it arrested attention, brought letters of commendation to Mr. Fels and requests to the United Committee for more information about the subject.

In January arrangements were made with sixteen newspapers to publish a series of twelve cartoons, the work of Mr. Andrew McLaren. This has been the first attempt at anything of the kind and has proved a most effective and popular piece of propaganda, which we should like to see encouraged and extended.

"LAND VALUES."

LAND VALUES, the monthly journal of the movement, commenced with the June (1914) issue its twenty-first year of publication. It has an influence in political and journalistic circles that cannot be gainsaid. Its chief features include: Notes on the Taxation of Land Values bearing on the events of the day, editorial articles on the political situation, special articles relating to the philosophy and practical application of the Taxation of Land Values, extracts from notable political speeches and writings, reviews of books and official papers, reports of debates in Parliament on the land question and kindred subjects, news of the movement at home and abroad. There have been nine 48-page, two 40-page, and one 32-page issues during the period covered by this Report, and all this material has provided a mine of fact and argument to the student and politician, besides being of the greatest educational value to all interested in the subject. Hardly a day passes but some compliment comes to us verbally and by correspondence in praise of the splendid service LAND VALUES renders the movement in this country and in all parts of the world. Frequently these tributes are accompanied by regrets that the paper is not more widely read or by suggestions for extending the circulation. We share the regrets and welcome the suggestions, appealing to readers everywhere to spend an effort in procuring new subscribers. To assist them we will gladly provide specimen copies to be posted or handed to interested parties, or supply a local newsagent with the paper on the recommendation of a supporter who thinks he can in that way interest his friends in his own neighbourhood.

LAND VALUES can always be obtained at the offices of the Committee or at the offices of any of the Leagues for one penny, by post twopence, or two shillings per annum post free. A yearly subscription of three