

## THE EFFECT OF PROTECTION ON THE TENANT FARMER

Capt. A. R. McDougal in Glasgow

The possible effects of a policy of Protection from the point of view of the tenant-farmer were discussed by Captain A. R. McDougal, Lauder, in an address to the members of the City Business Club, Glasgow, on 29th May, at the concluding lunch meeting for the session.

Captain McDougal (*Glasgow Herald* report), who spoke as a practical farmer, declared that if agriculture was protected it was inconceivable that other industries would not get it also, and those with the biggest business interests would get the best of it when it went to Parliament.

For the farmer it would mean an increased cost of living, and also an increase in the cost of land for those who wanted to buy, and an increase in the rents of the farms already tenanted. For that reason he held that all the financial advantages Protection might bring to the farmer would be lost in the course of four or five years, and would go into the pockets of the landlords in the shape of higher rents and higher land prices.

### HECTIC PROSPERITY AND THEN—RUIN

A greater danger was that the landlord as a business man would take advantage of Protection and sell his ground, making the farmer either pay his price or get out. At the end of five years it would probably be found that the farmers would be going along quite well as occupying-owners until the people grew restless at the increased costs of living and returned a Free Trade Government. Then the farmers would find they were saddled with high rents or with farms they had bought at exorbitant prices. Protection was a dangerous thing for farmers—a little hectic prosperity and then ruin.

Commenting on the recent mass meetings of farmers held throughout the country, Captain McDougal said he did not think the low price of oats was to any great extent due to foreign competition. There were two causes. First, the market had gone. The motive power on the roads was petrol, not oats, and the sooner the farmers realized this the better it would be for them. The other reason was that oats provided a bumper crop last year all over the country. In any case, added Captain McDougal, cheap oats suited the farmer far better than dear oats, because he could utilize the cheap oats for feeding.

The great stumbling-block to co-operation was the present system of land tenure, which forced farmers to be individualists. Co-operation, if it were successful, would only lead to increased rents. A reduction in the rents was the one remedy for the present depression. Rents were the only things which could be reduced without harming industry. They had risen since the war, and they had to come back to their level like everything else. What was the good of helping the farmer if he was going to pay a ridiculous price for his land?

Captain McDougal warned his audience not to be misled with the idea that agriculture did not get a fair deal. "The agricultural landowner," he said, "is the best-treated member of the British community."

### WHAT IS PROPERTY?

By W. R. Lester, M.A.

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## A CAMPAIGN OF MEETINGS



FRED SKIRROW

The speaking campaign in North-West Derbyshire, reported in another column, was an effective piece of spade-work. When Harry George McGhee mapped out this crusade and enlisted the support of local friends at the various stopping places he wrote to Fred Skirrow: "Here's your chance; can you face up to it?" The answer was never in doubt, and the campaign was undertaken forthwith. But it was more than one man's job, and A. W. Dakers was quickly brought into the service.

It was new ground and the speakers made the most of it. They carried their message into some two dozen villages and the new freedom they preached was excellently well taken. Apart from the speaking, the placing of suitable literature was of importance. Twenty thousand copies of eight different leaflets were circulated. It was all in the day's work which as a rule closed at 10 to 11 p.m.

In all this platform agitation, Fred Skirrow was equal to his Press correspondence and during the time several telling letters from his pen appeared in the newspapers he affects. It is recognized throughout the county that Fred Skirrow never allows his vast Yorkshire public to forget the case for taxing land values and untaxing industry.

### LONDON FREE TRADE CONFERENCE

A two-days' Free Trade Conference was held in the Caxton Hall, London, on 28th and 29th May, the place of meeting being changed from the Incorporated Accountants' Hall, as originally announced. Among the opening speakers on the various aspects of the case were Mrs Philip Snowden, Mr Ben Tillett, M.P., Mr Henry Bell, Sir Alan Anderson, Lord Lothian (Mr Philip Kerr), Lord Arnold, Sir Herbert Samuel, M.P., Mr W. B. Taylor, M.P., Mr George Hicks, Professor Gilbert Murray, Mr J. T. Davis, Rt. Hon. A. V. Alexander, M.P., Sir Hugh Bell, Mr J. L. Tattersall and other prominent Free Traders in business and political life apart from party attachments.

Mr W. B. Taylor, M.P. (Labour), warmly commended to the Conference Henry George's *Protection or Free Trade* and recited Mr Philip Snowden's foreword for the information of all present. In this he helped in the sale of the book, which was on the literature stall of the Conference. Able contributions to the debates were made by Mr W. R. Lester, M.A., and Mr Ashley Mitchell, both of whom stressed the argument for the extension of free trade to the freedom of production.

We are informed by Mr J. O'D. Derrick that the Glasgow office of the *Irish Weekly* and *Ulster Examiner* has been moved from 68, Bath Street to 97, Cambridge Street, Glasgow, C.3. Correspondents are asked to note the new address for all society reports, news and advertisements. The new premises are within a minute's walk of Sauchiehall Street.

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