

LIBERAL LIBERTY LEAGUE

A MODERN MAGNA CARTA

Promoted by the Liberal Liberty League is a Petition to the House of Commons, signatures to which are now being sought. The text is as follows:—

The Humble Petition of the undersigned sheweth, that the recognition of the inalienable human right of all men to be able to produce, own, sell and otherwise dispose of the products of their labour without let or hindrance from any man, is fundamental to the full attainment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

And Whereas the continuing denial to the people of this right is subjecting them to injustice and economic privation.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that the House of Commons will alleviate this grievance:—

1. By removing all restrictions to the free importation of food, goods, and raw materials.
2. By abolishing all taxes levied on the rewards of labour and the products and processes of industry.
3. By the enactment of legislation so that the revenue required for national and local services shall be obtained by taxing and rating the value which attaches to land apart from the buildings thereon.
4. By reducing the powers of government to the minimum requisite for the preservation of law and order.

Work in the collection of signatures is being undertaken by League members; Liberal Associations throughout England, Scotland and Wales have been invited to assist.

Quite apart from the question whether the Petition will be acted upon by Parliament, the educational value of this effort cannot be over-emphasised. It will provide an excellent opportunity of contacting many members of the public who are ignorant of the true solution of the problems that beset them. Coming as it does when 40 per cent. of the national income is taken in taxation, and there is much disappointment at the failure of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to provide for any reduction of the burden, this Petition should receive all the greater attention on the part of the public.

Readers of *LAND & LIBERTY* who would like to assist are invited to obtain copies from the League's address at 4 Great Smith Street, S.W.1.

Among other schemes projected for getting wider publicity for the effort is a series of small introductory meetings in different parts of the country. Arrangements for these will be discussed at the next meeting of the League's Executive. Donations are invited towards the cost incurred in launching the Petition.

For the Liberal Liberty League,

STEPHEN MARTIN, *Joint Hon. Secretary.*

WHO SHOULD PAY ?

In a letter to the *Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald*, March 4, Mr. E. M. Ginders wrote:—

"If we recognise the justice of the principle that those who benefit by a service should be called upon to contribute to its cost in proportion to the value of the benefit they receive, it follows that the bill for coastal defence works, such as those now contemplated along the Welsh coast, should be mainly defrayed by the owners of land in the respective areas.

"This should take the form of an annual levy on the capital value of their holdings, apart from improvements thereon. In this case the valuation roll would be subject to periodic revision in order to include increasing values, or otherwise, as they arose.

"As an example of the prevailing unsatisfactory and unfair system of dealing with such problems, the case of Hoylake may be cited. Up to the eighteen nineties this township was mainly fronted by sand dunes and without permanent sea defences. The sand dunes at the Meols end, regarded, at the time, as no man's land, were gradually encroached on by adjacent holders by the flimsy fence method. When the permanent sea defence and promenade was built, at public expense, about 1900, mainly by loan repayable from the proceeds of local rates levied on improvements, not only did the old sand dune areas become highly desir-

able and valuable building land, but all other land in the area steadily increased in value. For this benefit the owners of it, as owners, made no payment.

"On the other hand, the community, as occupiers of property, as purchasers and lessees of land, were not only required to pay for the improvements through their rates, but also to pay over again to the owners of land and to keep on paying them for this and other publicly provided improvements, indefinitely."

BERNARD SHAW AND HENRY GEORGE

The Editor, *LAND & LIBERTY*.

My congratulations on that able refutation of the "George Bernard Shaw and Henry George" letter—*LAND & LIBERTY*, January issue. I note that G. B. S., in the first paragraph, says: "I have never repudiated Henry George, nor denied my indebtedness to him for making an economist of me." Here we have a fine example of "damning with faint praise." The rest of the diatribe is "worse and more of it."

Shaw "repudiates" George after disclaiming any wish to do so. This reminds me that last night I was reading the biography of William Butler Yeats. In his memoirs he includes several interesting accounts of his meetings with the brilliant Oscar Wilde. He quotes Wilde—in a delightful aside—as having said: "Shaw has no enemies but is intensely disliked by his friends." In further connection with this difficult-to-accept letter (regarding George) another great writer, whose name I cannot remember, but whose lustre was not later beclouded (as was Wilde's) said: "May God protect me from my friends, I can take care of my enemies."

The Shaw "stabbing in the back" of Henry George, seems the product of a brilliant but sadly warped mind (when it comes to *economics* and man's relation to the land from which he draws his sustenance). Strange, isn't it, that he, of all men, should be sticking to the "Marxian" viewpoint, with its awful implications, as seen in Russia, and now seems to be getting the "upper hand" in England and the rest of the world. Shaw's impatiently worded letter contains opinions and statements which certainly do no honour either to that writer's intelligence, or integrity of purpose. To put the thing in a more charitable way, however, let us say that maybe it is *our* fault. Not having made our Georgeist literature more easily understood by busy men like Shaw?

Yours, etc.,

W. E. CLEMENT.

New Orleans.

"I had a two-hour conference with a Justice of the California Supreme Court in his chambers, and showed him December *LAND & LIBERTY* article on "U.S. Constitution," p. 204. He read it carefully. I knew he had made a very thorough study of the *Shelley v. Kraemer* (May 3, 1948) decision by the United States Supreme Court. He told me that he agreed completely with every word in this article which you published. Further, he agreed that the only way the States can obey this command in the U.S. Constitution (14th Amendment) is to rest taxation upon land values, irrespective of improvements, as George said. How very sorry I am that George is not here to know about it! And, to think this command has been in the U.S. Constitution since 1868, and was there all the time Henry George did his writing! How many passages he would have worded differently, had the Court interpreted this provision in 1878 instead of 1948!"—*J. Rupert Mason, San Francisco.*

Quite a number of compliments reached *LAND & LIBERTY* for the articles on the United Nations and Human Rights in the January issue. Mr. Johan Hansson, the Stockholm publisher, his firm, "Natur och Kultur," and producer of the well-known Swedish monthly magazine, *Samtid och Framtid*, wrote: "They were so good that I took the liberty of translating them and placing them in my magazine." There the articles occupy three pages. Prof. H. Gunnison Brown, of the Faculty of Economics, Columbia University, Missouri, wrote: "The last *Land & Liberty* (January) to reach me is excellent. I was so impressed by it—all of it, indeed, but the long editorial on the United Nations Charter is especially relevant to my present work—that I sent my copy, marked, to a son who is teaching economics this year in a New England college."