

arms to aid us in procuring our own sustenance. What happens is that the economic regulations in force secure that only a minority of persons, daily reduced in numbers at that, might labour productively, whilst the rest of the population spends its time in consuming without actually doing anything productive. There are more than enough people everywhere, except in the fields, the mines, the factories, and in commerce. What is the reason for this phenomenon? Is it that we are idlers by temperament?

Nothing of the kind. It is that Labour, Invention and Capital are persecuted wherever they appear, and naturally enough, the easy way out is to let others keep us. If we continue this *modus vivendi* which we have adopted, the time will not be far off when we shall be forced to close the prisons and set up in their place Labour Camps wherein the prisoners might complete their sentences, seeing that any State "scrounge" or "hide-out," no matter how small the return it yields, appears more exciting and attractive than productive labour. Where one has to work, for a whole week in order to obtain a day's food, all incentive melts away, since one has to toil so hard for such a ridiculously small quantity of wealth.

Where the entrepreneur cannot move a step without Government permission and bureaucratic surveillance, all creative initiative is subdued by the fear of breaking regulations. Where heavy penalties in the form of taxes

are imposed on those who devote their energies to the production and exchange of wealth, and where, on the other hand, one rewards speculators withholding land from cultivation and development, exempting such sites from taxation, there can only result a mass of poor and ragged folk, interspersed with a few who are well-to-do and well dressed. This is the reason why every capitalist seeks to shelter behind some economic privilege and why the ordinary worker goes after a job in some Government department or syndicate, or, in the long run, turns to an idle existence so as not to produce even the little which he consumes.

In no part of the world are there either too many or too few people. What we really have is a surplus of prohibitive regulations, and what we lack is a rational political economy. To speak of other things is to deal in effects or purposely try to deceive the public.

If here in Spain, we really set to work, British industry would find in us a most valuable customer and would allow us such credit as might be necessary; Spaniards, on the other hand, would find the English people no mean consumers, since the multitude of things they would send us would be paid for by our own products.

The true position is quite clear, but we are so much living in darkness that we are blinded by the light of truth.

(Translation by E. G. P.)

## ACTION DEMANDED OF SCOTTISH LIBERALS

ANSWERING a "referendum," instituted by the Scottish Liberal Party, a Scottish Liberal (Andrew D. Haxton) has written to the organisers in the following manner:—

To the question—do you want to see your industry or profession nationalised? The reply is *no*.

To the question—do you think the Socialist Government is doing well? The reply is *no*.

To the question—do you think the Conservatives would do better? The answer is *yes*; but with this rider: It is better to preserve individual liberty and private enterprise, also to maintain the *status quo*, even with its defects of monopoly and privilege, than to institute control of the people and of the industrial economy by the State. At least, the Conservatives would not have passed such an Act as the one containing the Central Land Board with its disastrous Development Charge.

### *A Strong Scottish Liberal Party*

It all depends upon what the policy of a Scottish Liberal Party is. I was one of the old-time enthusiastic "Young Scots," and have seen with dismay the departure of the official Liberal Party from the beliefs and policy of the Party of those days. Unless the Party returns to belief in radical reform, and presents to the people some definite proposals to remove monopoly and privilege and not to bolster these up by adopting diluted socialism and toryism to try to lessen the evils flowing therefrom, the Party will remain hopelessly in the desert—and rightly, too.

The Party believed in the liberal way of life, which called for the removal of all privilege to one and the consequent disability to another—so giving liberty—equal liberty—to all. This, freed from all sophistry, called for Free Trade. It called for the Taxation of Land Values which would gradually lessen the power of land monopoly and restore to all their inalienable equal right to the use of the earth.

Now, what do we find? The Party are as thirled to protective tariffs as both the other parties: making dear what one man has to sell and another has to buy. The Party has lost the liberal belief that what is right must be done, notwithstanding the temptation to do what seems expedient—doing evil that good may come of it!

I read, or hear, no denunciation by the Conservative Party, or the Liberal Party, and announcing in no uncertain terms their determination to abolish the mad legislation which set up the Central Land Board.

Make these comparisons:—

The Taxation of Land Values would in effect say "You have a more or less valuable piece of land which is underdeveloped or undeveloped, which you are holding out of full use. You may do this if you like, but you'll pay your taxes or rates upon its value as if it were put to its best use." That would have forced such land into the market for development, or the possessor would have developed it himself, with the consequent cheapening of all land and abolishing the speculative value—with consequent encouragement also to buildings and improvement of all kinds requiring the direct use of land.

Now, take the Development Charge. The Act says "You have a valuable piece of land kept more or less out of use—an anti-social thing to do—but good luck to you, if you keep it unused you will not be troubled, *but*, if you, or any other one, dare to build on it, or otherwise use it for industry or improvement of any kind, we shall show you! You will be mulcted to the extent of the full capital value, not only of the site, but also taking into consideration how remunerative will be the industry you propose to carry on."

Are not the two proposals as far apart as it is possible for two policies to be, so far as justice and wisdom are concerned? Further, the Taxation of Land Values says:—"You are to be taxed on the value of the site you occupy in the community, as that measures the value of

the benefit you enjoy by having possession of that stance in the community; but having paid the Land Value Tax or Rate, you may now build houses, shops or factories, add bedrooms or bathrooms or otherwise improve and develop, it is all for the good of the whole nation, and your assessment will not be increased. You will pay more only if the site increases in value, and that increase will not be due to what you do or spend, but on what the community do, in improvements, or in increase of numbers, or increase in general industry."

Now again, take the Development Charge:—Every new building by private enterprise, every addition (if over one-tenth of existing bulk or value), every change of use of *buildings*, is to be penalised by this iniquitous charge, levied *only* when *developed*—that thing that is most desired in communities of men of all kinds—takes place!

I am not surprised that the Conservative Party is saying next to nothing since the Act secures to the land-owners the whole of the *existing* economic rents, and to

those who have suffered loss of land value, £300,000,000 of the taxpayers' money is to be given. In fact, this Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, through its Central Land Board part, establishes land monopoly more securely than before and makes true land reform dangerously near to impossible until the Act is finally abolished (the bad with the good) by the inevitable communism which will surely come if justice is not instituted by radical reforms.

The buying of the land value, which was created by the whole people and not the owners, is to cost every man, woman and child in the country over £6 per head. *But*, a true Liberal Party would have instituted a "raging tearing propaganda" to have this Act (Central Land Board part) shown up in its true Socialist-Tory colours and roused the people to demand its repeal and the substitution of true land reform. Unless the Party advocate the latter, making it the chief plank, there will never be a Liberal Party of any consequence whatever.

## A MAGISTRATE OPPOSES STATE COERCION

ON July 1, Mr. R. W. Bell, of Acton, in Suffolk, and a Magistrate of Long Melford Bench, was prosecuted for the offence of "failing to affix a stamp on a National Insurance Card." It is interesting to note that despite the personnel of the Bench which tried the case—to which we will refer later—and Mr. Bell's having admitted the fact, it took two hours for the magistrates to come to the decision of fining him £10 and costs, in addition to payment of the compulsory contributions required by the National Insurance Act.

The facts of the case, many of which were not reported but for the accuracy of which we can vouch, throw considerable light on the tendencies of a coercive regime, and are likely to evoke some questions in the minds of those concerned with more than their present and immediate activities and advantages.

Before the Act came into force, in July last year, Mr. Bell informed the local agents of the Ministry that he did not intend to join the compulsory scheme, basing his refusal on the grounds that as a Christian he could not reconcile a measure of such universal coercion with Christian doctrine as he understood it. He did not know if the National Insurance Act, as in the case of some other coercive Acts, made provision for "conscientious objection," but as he understood that considerable powers of amendment and interpretation had been delegated by Parliament to the Minister he considered such an objection might possibly be allowed. Alternatively, as had occurred in respect of many other Acts, the validity of some of its clauses might not be established until after test cases in the Courts.

Mr. Bell was prepared to contest such a case. As he happened to be a Justice of the Peace he would be obliged if, before prosecuting him, the Minister would give due warning so that he could resign his Commission and thus avoid the anomaly of a Magistrate being prosecuted before the Bench of which he was a member. Meanwhile, if such a case happened to come before him, he could retire in favour of another magistrate or, if necessary, he was prepared to administer the law according to its current interpretation until he was more fully informed of the possibility of amendment or different interpretation.

At the subsequent prosecution, almost a year after this correspondence commenced, the Minister's agent declared that the Minister, Mr. Griffiths, had ordered the case to be brought only "reluctantly" and after "great thought." This great thinking, however, did not go so far as to give Mr. Bell any reply to his specific enquiry, nor did it extend to giving him any warning before he received a summons to appear before the Boxford—not Long Melford—Court.

To his original request, addressed to the local agent of the Ministry, Mr. Bell received only a sheaf of explanatory literature, none of which answered his specific enquiry. No other communication was received from the Ministry with the exception, months afterwards, of a letter from the Area Inspector intimating he intended calling upon Mr. Bell. The Inspector subsequently saw Mr. Bell's solicitors, but from that interview nothing definite transpired.

It seems, however, that the Ministry was not inactive. On February 21 of this year the Permanent Secretary to the Lord Chancellor wrote to Mr. Bell: "The Lord Chancellor has been informed by the Minister of National Insurance that you have declined to pay contributions . . . This has a bearing on your office as Justice of the Peace . . . I am to invite you to come to London to discuss your attitude."

Instead of going to London Mr. Bell replied that examination of his letters to the Ministry would show that his refusal on conscientious grounds to pay contributions would not affect his duties as Justice of the Peace until he received notice of prosecution, and as he would then resign the question would not arise. Although the Permanent Secretary in his reply said "he thought he had seen" all the correspondence, he considered it remarkable that a Justice of the Peace should claim a right to disobey an Act of Parliament on conscientious grounds, when Parliament has made no provision for a conscientious objection." In his next letter Mr. Bell remarked that as he presumed he would eventually be prosecuted by the Minister of National Insurance, with whom the Lord Chancellor seemed in close collaboration, it was somewhat unusual he should be obliged to carry on a correspondence likely to divulge to the prosecution all the grounds of the defendant's case.