

expenses had to be incurred because the land acquired lay far away from the centres of population, or how often compulsory powers had to be enforced to bring landowners to reason. But let the average price be what it may, on being told, we are no wiser than the man who was drowned in trying to walk across a stream of an average depth of three feet. We have recorded case after case where the price of land for housing schemes has been anything from £500 to £1,000 per acre, where schemes had to be abandoned within urban boundaries and transferred if proceeded with at all to outlying districts, where in Leeds and Portsmouth for example they had to add to the purchase price the cost of extending the boundaries, building roads, laying tramways and carrying gas and electricity to the new area. All that expense was extorted out of the ratepayers because it would have been still more expensive to buy any of the more conveniently situated "agricultural" land within the town, of which there are 10,232 acres in Leeds out of a total of 21,572, and 1,181 in Portsmouth out of a total of 6,100.

Why multiply examples? The over-crowded people in Fulham will no doubt in due course hear the "1½d. a week" trotted out on the platform with the Hurlingham Polo Ground right at their door, an estate rated at a mere song but impossible to procure for working-men's houses because, as Dr. Addison late Minister of Health said, the price would be prohibitive. And perhaps Mr. Wheatley himself will forget about the "1½d. a week" when next he serves up the case of the site that belonged to Lord Newlands in Glasgow.

Unrelated as it is to the question of land monopoly and consequent unemployment and low wages, the Bill stands condemned. It is wrong in conception, in theory and in practice. Not only will it not produce houses but it will bring confusion worse confounded to the building trade. It is difficult to understand how the Government and the Liberal Party in the House of Commons can reconcile their support for such a measure with their professions in favour of the Taxation of Land Values.

A. W. M.

We hope our readers everywhere will take the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Snowden on his radical pronouncement at the Cobden Club Dinner, 1st July, on the policy of real Free Trade—freedom to produce as well as freedom to exchange (see page 127).

Our Thirtieth Anniversary.—Mr. E. J. Craigie, Secretary, Single Tax League of South Australia, writes 19th May:—

"On behalf of the League I desire to offer hearty congratulations on the attainment of the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of LAND & LIBERTY. The paper is a mine of information on all phases of the land problem and its relation to human welfare. Its sound articles on general principles are much appreciated by readers in South Australia, and its world-wide survey of single tax propaganda enables its readers to keep in touch with the general progress of our movement. May the paper meet with the great success it deserves and long survive to hold aloft the beacon light of economic freedom."

THE QUAKERS AND THE LAND QUESTION

Charles H. Smithson's Religious Mission among the Friends

On 27th May Charles H. Smithson addressed the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends held at Llandrindod Wells. The subject under discussion was the implication of the Christian faith in relation to the ownership of land.

THE FRIEND of 6th June reports as follows:—

From London and Middlesex and Yorkshire Quarterly Meetings came two minutes on this subject, as the outcome of visits paid by Charles H. Smithson. London and Middlesex said, "We think that the question of the private ownership of land goes to the root of our relationship to our Heavenly Father and to one another and we ask the Yearly Meeting to give further attention to it, in order that any united view to which Friends may come may find suitable expression." Yorkshire stated that C. H. S. had spoken to them on the private ownership of the natural resources of the earth—land, minerals, air and water—and had pointed out some of the evils resulting therefrom. "He has persuaded us that whilst things produced by man from these natural resources may rightly become the property of individuals, the natural resources should not be in private ownership but should be the common heritage of all, and that the Churches ought to state plainly the principles involved, so that they may ultimately be applied through our laws."

Charles H. Smithson, in speaking to these minutes, said the great conception of human relationship was that of brotherhood, and the recognition of that relationship would be immensely strengthened if we declared we were all joint heirs of a joint inheritance provided for us by the Father of all, who had provided the land for the use of His people. The private ownership of this joint inheritance obscured the vision of the universal love of the Father for each of His children by making it appear to the minds of the vast majority of these children that they had been brought into the world unprovided for. We prayed daily for sustenance; it was only through the medium of the land that that prayer could be answered as far as the material needs of men were concerned. Believing as we did that all were equal in the sight of God, it was inconsistent to sanction laws which empowered some men to intercept the answer to that daily prayer by giving them the power to levy tribute upon others to use the Creator's bounty and the power to withhold that bounty unless the tribute were forthcoming. The power to withhold that bounty was described by Tolstoy as "the great social iniquity." As members of a Christian democracy we could not escape our civic responsibilities; it was our duty to see that the laws and institutions we supported were those based upon the Christian principles that we professed. That was what was meant by the saying, "We ought to carry our religion into our politics." His concern was that the Christian Church, particularly the Society of Friends, should make a declaration that the earth should be treated as the common heritage of all. It was not the function of the Church to associate itself with any political proposals, but he felt the duty of the Church was to enunciate the Christian principles upon which action should be taken.

By way of supplement to the report published in THE FRIEND as above, Mr. Smithson has informed us that there was not time to explain to the meeting how in a complex state of society it is quite possible to combine the advantages of the private occupation of land with the principle of equal rights in the Creator's bounty. Had time permitted Charles H. Smithson hoped to have shown that in order to apply this principle

it is only necessary, as land varies in its advantages, that the value of any such advantage should be taken for common purposes—from the occupier of a favourable portion of the common inheritance.

To prevent confusion of thought, however, in regard to this statement it is essential to remember that the value of "improvements" traceable to the private expenditure of labour and capital upon the land is not included. It is only after these improvements have been deducted that the value of any advantage of productivity or position should be measured for communal use. After this deduction has been made the economic advantage of purely rural land might be very small whilst in the centre of London and our large cities it would be very great; but whether large or small, whatever it is, the value should be taken for common use.

The economic effect of taking economic rent for communal use would immediately react upon such problems as overcrowding and unemployment.

It was only possible to lay the matter before the meeting as a broad question of principle, and the inadequate time for general discussion made it difficult for the meeting to record a considered judgment. The minute recorded was distinctly of a non-committal character and read as follows:—

Yearly Meeting, Minute 67.

Minutes of London and Middlesex and of Yorkshire Quarterly Meetings respecting the private ownership of land, minerals and water are received and have been spoken to by Charles H. Smithson.

In setting before us the fact that the earth and its natural resources have been provided by the Creator for the use of all His creatures, Charles H. Smithson has asked us to consider the many evils that result from the present application of private ownership.

While unprepared at this time to make a definite pronouncement on the general principle involved, we recognize the importance of the question and encourage Friends to give careful study to it in all its bearings.

The Quakers were the first of the Christian Churches to take up the question of chattel slavery as a subject involving a religious principle—but the same hesitation was shown in the early days of the anti-slavery movement to discuss the question as a matter of principle.

"You left journalism a profession," said Mr. Kennedy Jones, one of the founders of the DAILY MAIL, to Lord Morley, "we have made it a branch of commerce." And in his book on journalism, Mr. Jones proceeded to describe the kind of commerce he had in mind. "What sells a newspaper?" he asked. And his answer was: "First, war; secondly, a State funeral; and thirdly, a first-class murder." Or take Mr. Jones' great partner, Lord Northcliffe. A friend of Lord Northcliffe once reproached him with his method of conducting the DAILY MAIL during the Boer War. Lord Northcliffe promptly replied: "Prove to me that two-thirds of England is pro-Boer, and I'll make the DAILY MAIL a pro-Boer newspaper to-morrow."—H. W. Massingham, formerly editor of THE NATION, in the CO-OPERATIVE NEWS, 28th June.

* * *

To Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, M.P.,
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

DEAR "JOSH,"—Right glad I am to find you speaking out on the land question which lies at the root of so many social evils, and I hope we shall not be presently told you were "not speaking for the Government." Land reform ought to make a compelling appeal to the mind and heart of Labour, for land-hunger and poverty walk hand in hand.—JOHN BULL, 28th June.

THE ANALYST ANALYSED

By W. R. Lester, M.A.

Mr. Wheatley, the Minister of Health, has made an analysis of the rent payable on a working class house of the type it is proposed to build under the Government's Housing Bill at a cost of £500, which sum is to be raised on loan at 5 per cent. per annum repayable in 60 years. He wishes to show just where the rent charged for the house goes and how it might be reduced. His method is to find out how much of this rent is due to: 1st, land; 2nd, wages; 3rd, cost of materials and profits; and 4th, the £500 loan.

Having arrived at this, he divides each by 60 and finds that the land accounts for 1½d. per week per house, materials and profits 1s. 10½d., tradesmen's wages 1s. 3d., interest on the loan, 6s. 6d. The useless burden of finance is therefore twice as great as all the really useful services put together. So that, if it could be eliminated, the houses would be let at one-third of the rent now possible and no subsidy would be necessary because the rent would then be within the tenant's reach. "The burden of finance," he says, "trebles the rent, because 6s. 6d. per week has to be added to pay interest to bondholders who have done nothing but lend their credit. This charge," he says, "cannot be justified and under Socialism would not exist."

Such is the analysis of the Minister of Health. Let us analyse the analysis.

The situation is that a very large number of new houses are needed and Mr. Wheatley undertakes to provide them. But not having the money and being unwilling to add to taxation, he invites subscriptions to a Housing Loan on which 5 per cent. interest is offered, payable over a term of 60 years. Having got the money on these terms, he turns to the nation and tells it that an unduly high rent must be asked for the houses because of the demands of the unproductive bondholders and that were it not for this burden they could be let at an economic rent.

Now, for anyone to borrow money for house building and then say the cost of the house is the land, labour and materials *and in addition* the borrowed money, is absurd. That is to compute the same thing twice over. The money is borrowed to pay for the land, labour and materials which make up the house, so Mr. Wheatley is guilty of the absurd statement that the cost of the house is double the cost of the elements which constitute it.

Suppose Mr. Wheatley, desirous of starting a business in coats, enters a store with a view to acquiring a stock-in-trade. He finds that £2 is asked for each coat, which represents the wages, materials and profit in the cost. To this price he agrees. But, being short of cash, he asks the storekeeper to advance him the necessary loan and undertakes to repay him with interest over a term of years. A bargain is struck and Mr. Wheatley departs with the coats. He now proceeds to price his stock-in-trade with a view to making sales and decides that, if costs are to be covered, he must not only charge for the wages, cost of materials and the storekeeper's profit, which amount to £2 in all, but in addition the sum of all the interest payments he has to make to the storekeeper which amounts to £4. To avoid loss he says he must therefore charge £6 per coat. When his customers say they cannot afford any such price Mr. Wheatley tells them he is forced to ask it because of what he has to pay on the loan made to him by the storekeeper, though were Socialism in operation he declares he could sell at £2 instead of £6 as under Socialism usury charges would be abolished. In all this there is a screw loose and the same screw is loose in Mr. Wheatley's analysis of house rents.