

## THE MUNICIPAL CAMPAIGN

### Support from Portsmouth

At the meeting of Portsmouth City Council on 22nd September Councillor J. J. Mahoney moved, "That owing to anomalies which exist in the present system of assessing improvements upon properties and/or rent and other earning capacity of buildings and properties, for the purpose of levying rates for local government, this Council is of opinion that the incidence of rating should be based upon the full market value of land irrespective of the use to which such land may be put."

Councillor Mahoney said his object was the hope that the Council would support the idea fostered by the Taxation of Land Values Society, which did not belong to any particular organization.

Councillor J. P. D. Lacey, J.P., seconded, and said the question of land monopolies in this and other countries was at the root of troubles under which they suffered. A land value was a community value, and should come back to the community. The subject was past the theoretical stage, and in many countries the taxation of land values was in actual practice.

One member of the council inquired if it would be legally permissible for members owning land or houses to vote on the question, and the town clerk replied that he did not think such members would be ineligible to vote.

On a division the resolution was carried by 16 votes to 3, while 16 members abstained from voting.

Notice was given by Sir Harold Pink that he would move at the next meeting of the council that this "silly resolution" be rescinded.

## IRELAND

### The Association of Municipal Authorities

At the meeting of the Bray Urban District Council on 4th August it was resolved unanimously, on the motion of Councillor H. Hipwell, seconded by Councillor J. Duffy, that a motion in the following terms be placed on the agenda of the Annual Conference of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland:—

To request the Minister for Local Government to bring in legislation providing for the raising of Town and Poor Rates on Ground Rents and Unoccupied Sites.

To ask the Minister to appoint a Commission to go into the question of levying Rates on the basis of unimproved Site Values instead of the present method of Valuation.

At the meeting of the Association held at Tralee on 9th and 10th September, the resolution was moved by Mr Sean MacCathmhaoil, Town Clerk, Bray, who said that it was generally admitted that ground rents escaped payment of rates to the local authorities. He contended that it was unfair that occupiers who were subject to ground rents should pay the whole of the rates.

After making a reference to the desirability of a public register of title to land he continued:—

With respect to the taxation of land values this matter has been before the local authorities of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland for nearly 40 years now, and in 1902 a Conference was held of all the local authorities in Great Britain and Ireland, and they arrived at conclusions and brought in separate Bills in the House of Commons, one for England, Ireland, Wales, and one for Scotland, and these Bills came to Second Readings but owing to various clauses, principally vested

interests, they did not get any further. In the Finance Act of 1931, provision was made for a valuation of land value and it was intended by the Government that the valuation would be available for the purpose of local rating, but before it could come into operation the National Government came into power and the measure was suspended.

In February, 1906, 518 local authorities petitioned the Government urging legislation for a separate assessment and rating of land values.

In other countries the principle of land valuation for the raising of revenues both public and local has been in operation for years. In Denmark, New Zealand, the Australian Commonwealth, in the Transvaal, and in various other places land values for raising rates both local and public are in operation.

One of the best reasons for land value for local taxation is that it would equalize and distribute the local taxation equitably and there is no doubt that the present method of valuation, by assessing premises on the annual profits, is not the best, because it is a deterrent against carrying out any improvements or altering the existing value assessed on a premises, and unused sites escape from being taxed at all and are held in an undeveloped manner, whereas if it was a general unimproved site value, the unoccupied site would bear its equal share with the site which is in beneficial occupation.

It is within the knowledge of all those present that if a shop window is put in new, or the front of a premises taken down and rebuilt that the valuation will go up incredibly, and in this way the industry and enterprise of progressive citizens is handicapped.

Most of the greatest economists of recent times have expressed themselves in favour of taxation of land values. In the cases I have mentioned in the Colonies, of Denmark and other countries the definition of Land Value is "what the land is worth if no improvements existed upon that particular piece of land" improvements being buildings, erections, or any works or cultivated growth.

The Clerk of the London County Council in giving evidence before a Commission on this matter said: "I think that ground rents should be rated directly for all local services, and for this purpose the Valuation List should contain only the site value of each property."

Mr MacCathmhaoil concluded by referring to a report of the Finance Committee of the London County Council which examined the incidence of the present rating system and the question of seeking Parliamentary powers for rating land values with the result that a recommendation was adopted in favour of the rating of such values.

The Association accepted the first part of the resolution and referred the second part to its executive committee for examination and report.

## CONFERENCE MEMBERSHIP

The following enrolments were received in addition to those published in our September issue:—

F. Brownlow (N. Ireland), J. T. Fischer (New South Wales), J. L. Geddes (Scotland), Bolton Hall (New York), George Higgins (Victoria), A. C. Horstman (England), Miss Margaret E. Lamb (England), Mrs F. Lyng (Norway), Dr Mark Millikin (Ohio), A. B. Pittman (Tennessee), Leonard Recker (New York), Ben Riley, M.P., Mrs H. Spencer (England), A. S. Stokes (England), J. Sweeney (Scotland), H. Watkinson (England), Mrs Whittaker (England).

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