

of the Year Book of Land Reform and which is reprinted with the memorial in the issue of *Bodenreform* of 2nd February.

## IRISH FREE STATE Discussion in the Dáil

At the sitting of the Dáil (the House of Commons) of the Irish Free State on 7th February,

Mr RICHARD ANTHONY (Ind. Lab., Cork City) moved the following motion:—

"That the Dáil is of opinion that local authorities in towns and cities should be empowered by legislation to supplement their revenue by levying a rate upon moneys received by ground landlords in respect of ground rents."

He anticipated that many of the arguments used against land purchase in the old days would be used against this motion now. He felt, however, that the question was of such importance to the country as a whole that the Government should take the matter in hand at the earliest opportunity even though a prolonged inquiry was essential.

### NO CONFISCATION

"Here let me say," continued Deputy Anthony, "that this is not a motion designed or calculated to confiscate the property of any individual ground landlord. It only asks that some portion of the revenue derived from ground rents should be returned to the community through whose efforts this source of wealth was created and built up. It may be that at some future date, when a considerable volume of opinion is organized in relation to the taxation of land values, and when the relationship between unemployment and the land is better understood, when all parties in the State will have been brought to realize that nowhere except in modern civilized society are unemployed willing workers to be found, then will the opportunity arise for a movement wider in scope, more general in its appeal, and of greater importance, which will have for its object a tax on the value of land whether used or not 'in so far as it has a value for other than agricultural purposes,' and all land that is not specially exempted will be valued at its true market value apart from improvements." He emphasized the words 'in so far as it has a value for other than agricultural purposes' because they all knew that the history of land holding in this country differed in many respects from the history of land holding in other countries. For that reason he confined his motion to asking that local authorities in the towns and cities should be empowered to supplement their revenue for the purpose stated.

Having quoted from some authorities and Press reports, the Deputy continued: "It may, however, be safe to assume that considerably over a million pounds yearly were collected in the Saorstát, a large proportion of which was sent out of the country. Surely, the municipalities and local bodies had a moral right to demand that, at least, a portion of this sum should go in relief of rates. In Mercer Street, Dublin, £1,200 per acre was paid for slum-built real estate, and £212 an acre for land on which the owner had paid agricultural rates only somewhere beyond Cabra village and £1,000 an acre in Bray. Valuable land held for speculation escaped rates while other ratepayers had to pay heavy rates on their houses. They should endeavour to secure the community a portion of the value of land which is created by the labour of all the people and the expenditure of public money. Local authorities should be given the power to levy a local rate, the amount of which they should be free to determine for themselves on all land values within their area. This rate to be in addition to the rates under the present system. This form of land value taxation should be regarded primarily as a means of collecting the economic rent for the community, deflating land values, and so cheapening land, promoting the most profitable use of land, and facilitating the acquisition of land by public authorities. It is generally conceded that land value is created by the community and should, therefore, be taken—if not wholly, at least in part—by the community to meet the cost of social services.

"Under the present system the ever-increasing value in

land is passing into the hands of private individuals who do nothing to create it.

### SPECULATION IN LAND

"In recent years the speculation in land in the Saorstát must have broken all records, due, in the main, to the various schemes of public works such as housing. National taxes and local rates are paid for these schemes, but the increased values of land which they have produced are mostly appropriated by the landowners. It would be interesting to learn from the Minister for Local Government and Public Health what sums were paid by the Corporation of Dublin and Cork for land acquired for building purposes for housing the working classes, and what was the original cost of rated valuation of the lands so acquired. A plot of land on the outskirts of a big city and a plot of similar size in the centre may show a difference ranging from £100 to thousands of pounds per acre.

"It is evident the renter or buyer pays for the position of the land and the value of that position depends on the growth of the city in wealth and population. It is not due in any shape or form to the owners of the soil. Further than this the value is indirectly increased by municipal improvements made at the cost of the ratepayers. A new bus or rail service might easily raise the value of contiguous property. Lighting roads and other amenities all add to the value of land.

"In every big city there is a large amount of land that is kept waste ground in a very unsatisfactory way with a view to getting a better price when the owners find it ripe for development. Every new or additional social service established at the expense of the ratepayers enhanced the value of land in the neighbourhood, although the owners of this land have not contributed in any way towards the maintenance of these social services."

### EFFECTS OF PRESENT SYSTEM

The present system placed a burden upon the house occupier and the user of business premises; it increased the cost of housing and forced the working classes to live in inferior houses, because the combined rent and rates determined the rent to be paid by a worker. It tended to stop expansion of social services, because of the crippling effect of increasing rates upon local trade and industry. It discouraged building and general improvements, because any increase in rental value increased the rateable value. It encouraged the withholding of land from use, no rates being levied on vacant lands.

Mr MORRISSEY (U.I.P., Tipperary) formally seconded.

After a short discussion progress was reported and the House adjourned.

## IRISH LABOUR PARTY

Some discussion of land value taxation took place at the annual conference of the Labour Party in the Irish Free State, held on 12th February. According to the report in the *Irish Times*:—

The Conference agreed to refer for further consideration a motion from the Mount Temple Branch, proposed by Mr B. Kelly, demanding that a moratorium be granted in respect of all annuities due by owners of agricultural holdings of less than 25 acres, pending the revaluation of the land of Ireland, on which an equitable land tax should be based.

Mr S. O'Brien, Dublin, who seconded, said that the land annuities, as such, were finished and done with, and were carried on simply as a land tax. To secure a proper basis of a suggested land tax it would be necessary to have a complete revaluation, based on the quantity and quality of the land.

On the ground that it raised a number of serious issues that required further consideration, Mr T. J. Murphy, T.D., opposed the motion, stating that the revenue derived at the present time was refunded to the local authorities.

Mr P. J. Keyes, T.D., Limerick, said that the time would undoubtedly come when the present system would be replaced by a land tax.