

SHOT AND SHELL

MANCHESTER IS FINISHED UNLESS . . .

THE great city of Manchester is in sore straits financially. The *Daily Telegraph*, September 30, reported that Cllr. Harry Lloyd, chairman, had revealed that the city's finance committee was considering urging the Government to grant legislation for the introduction of a local income tax. "He said that Manchester, with other places would be finished as a local authority unless new ways of raising money were found. A total of £280,000, equal to a sevenpenny rate, would have to be met in respect of this year's wage increase. The city was now seriously considering other ways of getting money, and one method was a local income tax. No decision had been reached on this, but once his committee agreed the Government could be asked to introduce legislation."

Manchester's plight would be less acute if industrial de-rating were abolished. It costs the city more than £1 million a year, or the equivalent of a 2s. 6d. rate. Councillor S. Needoff (Liberal) urged the Council on September 7 to call a conference of local authorities adversely affected which, he claimed, would result in irresistible pressure being brought to bear on the Government to end what he called "this anachronism". Cllr. Needoff said that 33 authorities, with a population of 10 million, were losing revenue at a time when industry had never been so prosperous or buoyant. His attempt failed.

Reported *The Guardian*: "The leaders of the two main parties in the council — Alderman R. E. Thomas (Lab.) and Alderman Sir Richard Harper (C.) both advised against such a conference. They pointed to many previous resolutions calling for an end to industrial derating, and denied Councillor Needoff's claim that these had been pigeon-holed. The Association of Municipal Corporations was actively working on the problem. Alderman Thomas moved an amendment, which was accepted by 86 votes to four, calling on the Government to end the 'anomalous and unjust' system of industrial de-rating immediately."

On May 5 the Town Clerk wrote as follows to the Rating Reform Campaign: "The City Council yesterday considered your request for support in connection with the campaign you have launched to enlist support for the introduction of legislation providing for the levying of rates upon the site value of land. The Council decided to take no action in connection with the request but I should perhaps explain that the Finance Committee of the Council are already considering the general question of Local Government Finances and no doubt the rating of land values will be considered by them as part of this wider question."

A REPORT in the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, September 30, fortifies our confident belief that within 2½ years the rating of land values is going to become one of the most burning issues in domestic politics. Extracts follow:—

"Today, rating experts told the *Evening Chronicle* that, under revaluation, many householders will find the average three-bedroomed semi, with a present rateable value of about £20, will soar to £50 or £60.

"A Manchester accountant said: 'Present rateable values are based on 1939 rental value. The new valuation being prepared will be based on current rental values.'

"From the office of the superintendent valuer for the North West of Manchester came this guarded comment: 'It is logical to assume that as rental values have increased since 1939, so assessments will increase.'

"Many local authorities regard 1963 — when the new valuation list operates — as a crisis year in local government.

"A leading city official said: 'Many councils will jump for joy when they see their rateable values jumping up. It will undoubtedly be difficult for councillors to restrain themselves from thinking that they've a lot more money to spend.' An official in the city treasurer's department confirmed that the revaluation will put a larger share of the rate burden back on the householder. This will mean that, even if the rate figure in the £ drops — a likely result of the valuation — the householder will pay more rates on an average.

"Mr. Temple Mason, president of Manchester Chamber of Trade, said: 'Increasing pressures which tend to add to overhead expenses, could raise the question of firms and retailers transferring their businesses outside the city.'

"Today's reports confirm the warning given by the *Evening Chronicle* some months ago, that the new valuation would substantially increase the rateable values of modern houses. In Manchester, about 250,000 housing assessments will each have to be checked.

"The revaluation will lead to more insistent demands on the Government to cut or abolish Schedule A income tax, which is based on rental values. 'If these go up Schedule A must go up, which would bring a national outcry,' a city land agent commented."

HAYES AND HARLINGTON U.D.C.

THE "ability-to-pay" principle, so-called, cuts little ice with those who demand that national and local government revenues should be drawn from the publicly-created rental value of land. They base their reformist arguments firmly on the just principle of contribution according to the value of "benefits received". Nevertheless, they may find useful as a talking point the considered view of the Hayes & Harlington U.D.C. The

Clerk to the Council wrote as follows on 3rd October to the Rating Reform Campaign:—

“My Council deprecates the inequities which result from the present rating system as a source of local revenue which takes no account of such matters as the ability to pay and, therefore, would prefer to see the whole rating system reviewed with the object of remedying the shortcomings. The Council therefore, whilst it appreciates the objects thereof, does not consider that the rating of site values as an alternative to the present rating system is of itself an entirely satisfactory solution of the wider considerations involved of which it would form only one aspect.”

During recent months at least fifteen municipal Councils have expressed themselves as being in favour of local rates being levied *exclusively* on the site value of the land (apart from buildings and improvements). Two others favour the introduction of a land value rate to supplement the present rates on buildings.

FULHAM SAYS IT AGAIN

FROM the *Agenda Paper of the Fulham Metropolitan Borough Council, September 24*: “Rating of Site Values. We beg to report the receipt of a letter (2.7.60) from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government acknowledging the Council’s resolution on 22nd June last (p. 40) reaffirming its support for the introduction of legislation aimed at the levying of local authority rates exclusively upon the site value of land, and drawing attention to a reply given by the Minister to a question in the House of Commons on the subject in which he indicated that the rating of site values had been examined by a succession of Committees and

Commissions since the beginning of the century and reported against by each one of them; and that the Minister saw no reason to reject their advice.

“In this connection we have now to report that following an approach by the Greenwich Council the Metropolitan Boroughs’ Standing Joint Committee have asked the constituent Councils for their views on whether the representations which the Council made in 1947 in favour of the rating site values should be renewed and we have informed the Standing Joint Committee of the Council’s resolution of 22nd June.”

Mr. Charles Morley, retired after 40 years with the United Committee, sent the foregoing. The document is open to the public in the Fulham Public Reading Room where he noticed it. The action taken by Fulham and Greenwich Councils is in response to a request addressed to them by the Rating Reform Campaign.

RECONSIDER SITE VALUE RATING

From the *Kilburn Times*, October 7.

LABOUR Cllr. Ernest Wistrich urged Hampstead Finance Committee during the council meeting last week to reconsider their recommendation not to make representations in favour of the rating of site values. The committee had been asked to consider the desirability of this by the Greenwich Borough Council in July. Said Cllr. Wistrich: “I do not support the Greenwich system of exclusive site value rating, but I do think there are good grounds for using it as an *additional* method to the present system.” He gave three reasons for its use: (1) tax on land encourages its most efficient use; (2) it acts as a deterrent against those who buy land for speculative reasons; (3) it brings into the

WHO'S WHO IN THE RATING REFORM CAMPAIGN

Major Gilbert Treen

Representative for Bognor Regis

Major Gilbert Treen first read the case for rating land values last November in the *People's Guardian*, the official organ of the People's League for the Defence of Freedom. Now aged 62, he retired recently after more than 40 years spent in the Army, at the War Office and on service with the Foreign Office in Upper Silesia.

Twice Mentioned in Despatches during the first World War, he was serving as a temporary Lt.-Colonel under Field-Marshal Montgomery when the second ended. He has the distinction of having helped to form two new Corps—the Army Catering Corps (as a result of which he is well-known in first-class hotels all

over the world) and the Royal Army Nursing Corps—as well as three regimental associations. Still later he became responsible for all Army printing at home and abroad. He was well known also for his extra-regimental activities, particularly with live entertainment, for the troops in Great Britain and B.A.O.R. At one time he owned one of London's little theatres which gave new plays to the West End—notably the world premier of “The Late Edwina Black” with Katherine Lacey in the lead.

Politically independent, Major Treen confesses to “a tendency to Liberalism”. At an election he



sends each candidate a Questionnaire and votes for the one who undertakes to support what he wants! He claims to be a “ginger group” of one; with hundreds of letters to local newspapers his pen constantly flashes to expose stupidities, lunatic spending and dictatorial methods of politicians and councilors alike.