

(Denmark), E. Högsbro Holm (Denmark); Misses A. M. and A. Kristensen (Denmark); George Musson (England), Richard Musson (England); G. P. O'Keefe (England); Mrs. John Paul (Scotland), P. C. Pedersen (Denmark); Hon. A. W. Roebuck (Canada); Dr. A. Schwartz (Germany), Dr. E. A. Shanu (West Africa), Mrs. D. Simmons (Jamaica), Mrs. Roswell Skeel (Arizona), Mather Smith (Transvaal); Frank Welch (England), Harry White (England).

H. G. Barber (Canada); Mrs. A. F. Beams (England); H. Bronson Cowan (Canada); Miss E. Burton (England); Mrs. G. de Wispelaere (Belgium); Dr. Curt and Mrs. Helge Fischer (Germany); Lady Grotrian (England), H. Kyte (England); F. A. W. Lucas (Transvaal); J. C. Ralston (Wisconsin); J. S. Thompson (California); F. Vitale (Argentine).

LIBERAL LIBERTY LEAGUE

The Annual General Meeting of the League was held at No. 3 Committee Room at Church House, Great Smith Street, Westminster, on March 8th, the business including reports and the election of officers for the ensuing year. The immediate activity to be undertaken was the launching and gaining of signatures to a petition for presentation to Parliament urging the establishment of economic freedom through removal of the restrictions to free imports, the abolition of taxation penalising trade and industry, and the enactment of legislation for the taxation and rating of land values.

The meeting was followed by a "Brains Trust," with the President of the League, Mr. Ashley Mitchell, as question-master, the members of the panel being Messrs. Frank Dupuis, A. W. Madsen and Stephen Martin. The subject was "Objections to the Town and Country Planning Act."

Membership subscriptions are now due and renewable, and with this intimation an earnest invitation is extended to all supporters to supplement their "dues" with donations in aid of the League's funds and giving assured encouragement to the campaign that is now under way. Cheques, etc., may be made payable to the hon. treasurer, Mr. W. E. Bland, at 4 Great Smith Street, London, S.W.1.

[The Liberal Liberty League is a politically independent body whose activities, communicated by its Officers, we are glad to report.—EDITOR, L. & L.]

PRODUCTION AND THE SINGLE TAX

(A letter in the LIBERAL NEWS, January 21st.)

Sir,—We are beseeched by propaganda to increase production. The fact that there has been an increase of only 1.5 per cent. in production during 1948 is evidence that appeals are failing to exert any real influence and the Four-Year Plan to meet our obligations for Marshall Aid, based as it is on 10 per cent. by 1952, will not be achieved.

May I draw the attention of all Liberals to an amendment carried at the Blackpool assembly calling for "the enactment of legislation to levy rates and taxes on the annual site value of land and the progressive reduction of these burdens on buildings, improvements, production and the reward of labour."

The fulfilment of this proposal means that the necessary revenue for all essential State services would be derived solely from the site value of land, leaving the products of labour free of tax.

It means the abolition of taxation on all industrial undertakings, income tax, purchase tax, import and excise duties.

No greater blow could be struck in the fight for economic liberty.

Obviously this could not be achieved overnight, but it takes very little imagination to visualise the immense impetus to human effort that would materialise from the first faltering steps.

STEPHEN MARTIN,

Chairman, Chislehurst (Kent) Division Liberal Association.

A free copy of "Land & Liberty" is an invitation to become a subscriber. Monthly, 6d.. By post, 5s. a year; U.S.A. and Canada, \$1.

SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT

Mr. JOHN CHRISTIE, Leader of the Labour Party, speaking in Parliament on September 8th, said: "It appears to me that land is overpriced. Capital is coming into the country which is being invested in farm land at prices which are being paid for these farms disproportionate to the true value of the land. If the Minister would consider some method of stabilising the price of land in order to secure that inflationary values will not be placed on it, it will have a very important bearing on the costs of the products of the various farms. . . . I would urge on the Minister the desirability of pegging that price if it is possible for him to do so, or at any rate to retain some reasonable balance in regard to the value of land."

Mr. VILJEON (Vryburg) said that: "Land values have in the last ten or twelve years undergone a gigantic change. In the Free State it has reached such a pitch that the ordinary small man with £10,000 capital is hardly able to undertake farming successfully on account of the high price of land. That is not confined to the Free State and even in remote parts there is a similar state of affairs."

The Minister of Lands (Mr. STRYDOM), in reply to Mr. Christie, said: "As the country develops and as the country's population grows, as well as the demand for land, whether it be in the cities or on the platteland, and as the productive capacity increases, so the price of land, whether it be in the cities or on the platteland, will rise and we cannot prevent it. . . . Now my hon. friend wants me to take steps, as he puts it, to peg the price of land. . . . but that sort of thing cannot be done by the ordinary practical person. . . . Just imagine, the country develops. . . . others become prosperous and increase their capital assets, but the farmer's assets must not be allowed to increase, his capital assets must be pegged."—Hansard.

Commenting on the above, Mr. MATHER SMITH, in *The Free People* (P.O. Box 4680, Johannesburg), of October last, wrote:—

"What a jumble! The word 'farmer' is used to mean the landowning farmer only. Mr. Strydom thinks that the high price a landowning farmer can demand for his land is part of his capital, but, as Mr. Viljeon pointed out, the price farmers have to pay for land prevents them from farming successfully. The payment for land leaves them with insufficient real capital with which to buy stock and implements. Then both Mr. Christie and Mr. Strydom use the words 'value' and 'price' as applied to land as if they were synonymous, but Mr. Christie and the other members of the Labour Party should know that prices can be reduced although the value remains.

"There can be no doubt but that the rate on site values in the cities and towns of Transvaal must tend to act as a brake on the prices demanded for land. In East London there is now a site value rate of 1s. 3d. in the £. So let them imagine just what would happen to land prices if that rate were taken off. Mr. Strydom is right. Prices cannot be pegged. That was tried in Australia and as it led, naturally, to a flourishing 'black market,' the attempt at pegging has been stopped. Mr. Strydom pointed out that as the population increased in numbers and in productive capacity the price of land will rise; but Mr. Strydom is wrong when he says that 'we cannot prevent it.' As Mr. F. A. W. Lucas, K.C., pointed out, land value is a living thing and we can no more stop its growth in a progressive community than we could stop the growth of a child.

"All land value is due to the presence and 'productive capacities' of the people. With progress that value must continue to rise and is reflected in land rent. The price of land is just rent capitalised, and the timid approach of the Labour Party to this fundamental question will do nothing to help the masses in any way. We assert that the rent of land belongs to the people. It is the natural revenue of the State and the first duty of Government is to collect it and abolish all taxation. Then the price of land, as distinct from the value, would fall to zero and the land would be free to all on equal terms."

(The Transvaal Labour paper, *Forward*, also gave considerable space to these views expressed by Mr. Mather Smith.)