

from my home, not very far away into a colliery village. There I found a father, mother, daughter of 25, married, and with a child of two, another daughter aged 20 and a son aged 22. They were all living and sleeping in one bedroom. In another house in the same street was a family with a T.B. child attending a clinic, and they were six people, all sleeping in one bedroom. The local authority in the division has for years pressed upon the colliery companies to improve housing conditions and the street conditions. The dirty, filthy old earth-closet is still in operation. In the division we have sorrow, suffering and death. It is from places like this, from these dens, that we breed tuberculosis, that every sanatorium in Durham is full to-day, and has long waiting lists. How can it be otherwise? In all the urban areas there are long waiting lists for houses. In the Crook and Willington urban district the first applicant on the list has been waiting for nearly ten years for a house. They have 1,679 applications, and they have 2,000 people returning from the Forces. The total number of condemned houses was over 848. In 1943, the Medical Officer of Health reported to the Council that he estimated the immediate future housing needs of the area to be not less than 2,500 houses.

I felt that some of these things ought to be said from the representative of a division like mine, because all that has been said to-day has, of course, and probably rightly, been really representing the problem of the bombed areas. Men are being turned out of the factories at the present time. They are being sent to the employment exchange, which means that their spending power is reduced by pounds a week. Following on that is a lack of confidence, for as soon as you take away a man's job he loses faith. Men and women are thinking very seriously, and are saying with conviction that this House is rushing headlong into the abyss of 1918.

### SCOTTISH LIBERALS' CONFERENCE

THE ANNUAL Conference of the Scottish Liberal Federation was held in Glasgow on December 20. On the motion of Capt. A. R. McDougall, the official resolutions on "Social Security" and on "Housing" were amended by addition of clauses, as follows:

**Social Security.** "The Council further maintains that the full benefits of the (Social Security) scheme cannot be reaped unless the protectionist tariffs are reduced or abolished and unless the toll of inflated land values is countered by a system of taxing these values which will take for the public benefit those values in land created by the community."

**Housing.** "The Council points out that the Government have ignored the primary causes of inadequate housing which are the crushing rates levied on houses and improvements and the extortionate prices of land for sites, wayleaves and water. It further regrets that the Government have made no proposals for the derating of houses and the Taxation of Land or Site Values and points out that no housing policy can succeed until these fundamental issues are properly dealt with. Nothing would stimulate building enterprise more than the relief of buildings from rates and the raising of the required money from a tax on the capital value of all land, excluding improvements, following the practice successfully adopted in Australia and New Zealand and elsewhere. The Liberal Party will continue to urge this reform. Profiteering and speculation in land must be stopped, and the acquisition of land, wayleaves and water must be cheapened, compensation being paid on the basis of its present annual value, as assessed for rating and taxation purposes."

### TASMANIA

#### Rating Reform Advocated

Mr. E. J. Craigie, president of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, and former Member of Parliament for South Australia, addressed a largely attended meeting in Launceston, the capital of Tasmania, on October 16, which was well reported in the *Examiner*. He said that rating reform was one of the most important questions demanding the attention of the citizens of every town and municipality in the Commonwealth.

"Our present system penalises the man who puts his land to the best use and offers a special premium to men who hold their land out of use for speculative purposes," he continued. "The more a man wants to improve his land, the more, under the present system, he is regarded as an enemy of society and fined year after year for his improvements."

Under the unimproved value system, however, land would be put to its best use and there would be nothing to discourage owners from improving their properties. At present, if an owner of slum property decided to improve the buildings on it he would immediately be required to pay higher rates. As families grew up, it was often necessary for a home owner to add an extra room to his house. If he did so now, he would be penalised by extra rates.

The unimproved land value system of rating was very desirable from the point of view of the worker, said Mr. Craigie. Its adoption would encourage the erection

of new houses, shops and factories, thus opening many avenues of employment. From a business standpoint, too, every business man should support it because of the manner in which it tended to develop the building of new homes and therefore the creation of new customers.

By preventing speculators from buying land close to the city and holding it for a high price, thus forcing settlers out to the outlying suburbs, the unimproved value system had the effect of reducing local body expenditure on roads and footpaths and other services to the more distant suburbs.

#### Tested by Experience

Mr. Craigie emphasised that the unimproved value system was not new. It had been compulsory in Queensland since 1890, most local government revenue was raised by it in New South Wales, while in Victoria 14 areas had adopted it. In South Australia 20 local government bodies were rating solely on the unimproved value system.

In South Australia it was necessary to take a poll of landowners and tenants to approve of the introduction of the system. After two years landowners could demand another poll, to be taken among owners only, as to whether it should be continued. In all cases the second poll had produced a greater majority among owners only in favour of the unimproved value system than the first poll among both owners and tenants.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Craigie was moved by the Mayor (Ald. Clarke).

#### New League Formed

After Mr. Craigie's address a meeting was held, attended by delegates from progress associations and other bodies, to form a Tasmanian Rating Reform League. The object of the league will be to seek the exemption of all improvements from municipal taxation and instead the raising of municipal revenue by an ungraduated rate on the unimproved value of land. The motion for the formation of a Rating Reform League was moved by Mr. E. W. Sayer and seconded by Mr. C. Thompson. It was supported by Messrs. Quintal, M.H.A., E. D. Pinkard, J. D. Valentine and others. Ald. Oldham, who was one of several aldermen present, moving a vote of thanks to Mr. Craigie, said there was a considerable body of opinion on the Council was perfectly open minded on the question of rating reform. Those in favour of it should have no hesitation in putting proposals before the council, which would certainly give them very careful consideration. The meeting was presided over by Mr. J. W. Seaton.