

## LAND VALUES CONFERENCE HELD IN GLASGOW

NOVEMBER 4th, 1916

Under the auspices of the Scottish League a conference to promote the Taxation of Land Values, with special reference to the financial and economic conditions arising out of the war, was held in the Trades Hall, Glassford Street, Glasgow, on Saturday, November 4th. There was an attendance of 700 to 800 persons, the hall being packed to overflowing. The platform was fully occupied. Corridors, and a large side-room, with an open door to the main hall, were requisitioned to accommodate quite three-score of late-comers, who stood all throughout the proceedings listening eagerly and joining in the applause, as argument and illustration were advanced by the various speakers. Among those present were Mr. J. Dundas White, LL.D., M.P., President of the League (Chairman), Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, M.P., Alderman P. Wilson Raffan, M.P., Mr. W. R. Lester, M.A., Mr. John Gordon, J.P., and ex-Bailie Peter Burt, J.P. The delegates, who numbered about 400 (including a number of ladies), were representative of County, Town, and Parish Councils, Co-operative Societies, Trade Union and Labour Organisations:—Bailie John Muir and Councillor Battersby, Glasgow City Council; Mr. John Ross, J.P., and Mr. Stephen Henry, J.P., Glasgow Parish Council; Lord Provost Don, Treasurer Soutar, Councillor Strymgeour, and Mr. William Blyth Martin (Town Clerk), Dundee City Council; Councillors J. K. Murray and John King, Motherwell Town Council; Provost Yudall and Councillor William Young, Galston Town Council; Bailie Daniel Ferguson and Councillor James McQueen, Renfrew Town Council; Mr. Jas. B. Anderson, Mr. Collin C. Blair, and Mr. Adam Cowan, Cathcart Parish Council; Mr. George Grant, Leslie Parish Council; Councillor E. Shinwell, G. F. S. Shanks, S. D. Fraser, and William Shaw, Secretary, Glasgow Trades Council; Mr. J. G. Campbell and Mr. William McDonald, Ayrshire Trades Council; Mr. J. Mitchell Quinn, Editor *Glasgow Observer*; Mr. Robert Blackie, London; Mr. David Cassels, Hon. Treasurer Scottish League; Mr. G. B. Waddell; Mr. David McLardy; Mr. C. H. Smithson, Halifax; Mr. Fred. Skirrow, Keighley; Mr. Chapman Wright, Birmingham; Mr. W. J. Young, Edinburgh; Mr. Isaac McKenzie, Inverness; Mr. A. W. Madsen, and Mr. John Paul.

Mr. JAMES BUSBY, the Secretary, being called upon by the Chairman, intimated that apologies for absence had been received from the following amongst others:—The Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson, M.P., Commander Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., Mr. Charles E. Price, M.P., Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., Sir William Byles, M.P., Mr. Alexander Shaw, M.P., Mr. W. M. R. Pringle, M.P., Mr. George Esslemont, M.P., Mr. Alexander Wilkie, M.P., Mr. Louis P. Jacobs, of London and Melbourne, Mr. Thomas F. Binnie, and Mr. John Nettlefold, of Birmingham, the well-known town-planning reformer, who, the Secretary stated, had written as follows:—

“There are two schools of thought in land and housing reform—one school believes in public land purchase, the other in rating and taxing land values. The patriotic members of both schools have the same object in view, *i.e.*, the cheapening of land. Business men know that the advent of a fresh and rich buyer into a market where the supply is strictly limited always results in higher prices. Public land purchase must therefore raise the price of land, not lower it. Rating and taxing land that is not being put to its best use on its actual value instead of on what it is now bringing in will obviously make it more expensive for landowners to hold up their land or allow others to do so in order to find the money for the increased rates and taxes. From which it follows that rating and taxing land values must cheapen land. As a town planner of many years' standing I am much disappointed that so little, I might say nothing, worth having has resulted for the poorer classes from the Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909.

In my opinion nothing worth having for the poorer classes will result from this Act until it has behind it the rating and taxation of land values. (Cheers.)

### FINANCIAL NECESSITIES OF THE WAR

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, this conference has been called by the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values to promote the Taxation of Land Values with special reference to the financial and economic conditions arising out of the war. What we desire is to call upon the Government to impose a direct tax on Land Values at the earliest possible moment. (Cheers.)

We have always been of the opinion that those who hold the land of the country ought to make a special contribution to the needs of the people, and the case for it is stronger than ever in the financial necessities of this great war, because there is also another principle, that those who hold the land of the country ought to pay for its defence. (Cheers.) We have advocated this cause in peace and we advocate it in war, because the war makes it even more urgent. Look at it only from the financial point of view. Here we are in days of £500,000,000 budgets, of a 5s. income-tax, and of other heavy taxes. What are we doing to increase our revenue? We are increasing the taxes on tea, on coffee, on cocoa and on various other things which are necessary items of food, not only for the rich but for the poor of the population, and by so doing the prices of food stuffs which even without such taxes would be far too high are made higher still. (Cheers.) Then we have miscel-

laneous fancy taxes. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has recently imposed a tax upon matches, a tax upon mineral waters, a tax upon music halls and cinema entertainments, and taxes upon various other things. And it looks as if we were going back to the aggregation of petty and harassing taxes which bore our forefathers down and from which Mr. Gladstone delivered this country long years ago. (Cheers.) We protest against these taxes. It is high time that the land values of the country should catch the eye of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. (Cheers.) This indeed is the practical expression of a very great principle. The principle is that in a real sense the land of the country is the birthright of the people of the country—(cheers)—and that the value which attaches to that land owing to the presence and demand of the community is a true source of public revenue and a proper subject of taxation. (Cheers.)

#### MEANING OF LAND VALUE

What is meant by land values? Take this place wherein we are gathered. Suppose that you remove the roof; that you took away the floors, that you demolished the walls, and that you took up and carted away everything that human industry had placed on or in or under the soil. What would you have left? You would have a certain number of square yards in an important part of the City of Glasgow, and the ownership of these square yards would carry with it the right of what lay below down to the centre of the earth, and also the unrestricted air space above; and in this community where competition is keen you would find that that land would possess a very high value and that a high value would be given for it. That is the value which we are out to tax. (Cheers.) Stated generally, the land-value of any piece of land is the value of the land which is there naturally, apart from improvements which have been made by the industry of man. How far the present system is from rating and taxing land, particularly when it is not being used, on its true value may be shown by some instances in our own immediate neighbourhood.

#### RATING AND PURCHASE VALUES COMPARED

The Corporation of Glasgow required some vacant land in the Calton district a few years ago. Like most people who want land they had to pay for it, and they paid £2,340. I do not say that was too much. But suppose that was the value of the land. Take it at 4 per cent., which was what the Royal Commission on Housing suggested some thirty years ago, and you have an annual value of £93. How much was that land being rated and taxed on in the valuation roll? Not £93, the full value, but £5. So that the holders of that land were practically exempt from taxes altogether. Our proposal is that land should be taxed at its true value. (Cheers.)

Sail down the Clyde. When you near the widening of the river, look over the starboard bow of the steamer to Kilcreggan. There you see a piece of land which is used as a fortification for the defence of the Clyde. The price the Government had to pay for it was £14,500. That at 4 per cent. gives an annual value of practically £600 a year; it being rated and taxed, not at £600, but at one-tenth of that—£60. One other instance and we are done.

Now look over the port bow towards Greenock. On that side you see ten acres of land with foreshore, purchased for use as a torpedo dépôt, a most important national defence. That land was rather costly; it cost £27,225. Now if you take that at 4 per cent. it works out to more than £1,000 per year. But the annual value on it on which it was being rated and taxed was only £11 2s. (A voice "shame," and cheers.) Round almost any town in Scotland you find land kept back from its best use. It may be rated and taxed on an annual value of perhaps 30s. or 35s. a year, but when you come to feu it you find the annual

feu-duty asked for it is nearly £30 or £35. That is what is crippling and strangling our Scottish towns and preventing their expansion. (Cheers.) In these instances I have quoted, if the prices paid were not too high, the valuations for rating were far too low. If the valuations for rating were fair, the prices paid were excessive. (Cheers.)

#### OPENING THE EYES OF MINISTERS

We have been fighting along these lines in Parliament over two Bills recently—the Acquisition of Land Bill and the Small Holdings Colonies Bill—and it has helped to open Ministers' eyes to what is going on all round the country to-day. But the people who must open the eyes of Ministers, yes, and a great many members of Parliament too—"Hear, hear"—are the people in their own constituencies. (Cheers.) Our first proposition is that, particularly in this time of financial necessity, the Chancellor of the Exchequer should devote his attention to the land question, and that he should have the land valued and taxed at its true value. (Cheers.) We put this forward in the first instance as a financial proposition. But it is more than a financial proposition. Those of us who are working for this cause see in it a principle which no other cause offers of opening up the natural opportunities for labour on the land. (Cheers.)

Take the case of Greenock, one of the most overcrowded centres in Scotland. If land like that of which I have spoken was rated and taxed at its true value of more than £1,000 a year instead of at £11 a year, do you think that land would have remained vacant so long? And so it is, with land which is being held back around our towns. If the owners had to pay on its true value they would bring it into the market to-morrow. An economic pressure would be brought to bear that would make the owners either use the land themselves or pass it on to other people who would use it. (Cheers.) We want to increase the available supply of land, and when you increase the available supply you will bring rents and prices down to what they ought to be.

#### THE KEY TO NATURE'S STORE-HOUSE.

On every hand we find natural opportunities shut against the people; we find Nature's store-house locked against them. We are not going to break in the door; we are not going even to force the lock. We have got the key, and the key is land values. (Cheers.) Our first step is to get a true valuation of land values. That will fit the key into the lock, and the taxation of land values will turn it. ("Hear, hear" and cheers.) We will then have broken down the monopoly and the natural resources of the country will be opened up to the people as they ought to be. That of course is not all. We must get this tax on foot as the beginning of a great reform; and we want to carry it further. As soon as the tax on land values is in satisfactory order we want to increase the amount of that tax, and at the same time to do away with those taxes which at present press heavily on houses and on buildings and on all other improvements.

#### ALLEGED LACK OF CAPITAL AND OF EDUCATION

We must beware of the Protectionist fallacy that attempts to promote agriculture by sending up prices and rents. (Cheers.) The way to improved agriculture is not to increase the price of the products but to decrease the cost of production, and you decrease the cost of production by cheapening the land and making it easier for the people to make the necessary improvements. Some people think that we overlook the question of capital. We do not overlook the question of capital. We put capital in its true place. In order to deal with the problem of capital we have to deal with the problem of the land from which capital is derived. The land monopoly brings us up against the capital monopoly, and in order to deal with the capital

monopoly we must deal with the land monopoly first. (Cheers.)

It is sometimes said that we overlook the importance of agricultural education. We are the last people to overlook the importance of agricultural or any other education, but we think that the most useful education would be the education which teaches the people about the fundamentals of the land question. So far as agricultural education is concerned, if you had two men, one with land and no agricultural education, and the other with agricultural education and no land, I know which would produce the more. (Laughter and cheers.) Some of the best agricultural production is from allotments and small holdings, which in almost all cases are worked by men who had no previous agricultural education. They bought in most cases a small gardening book and learnt from their friends who were working alongside them, and so the whole system went ahead.

#### SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

Some people say that to some extent land values are taxed by the income-tax. "What," they ask, "are you going to tax them twice over?" No; we have put forward a scheme of co-ordination whereby land values would be taxed only once. Other people ask how we are going to allocate the tax where there are various interests in the ownership of the land. We say that each interest should pay the tax in proportion as it receives the land values and we have illustrated it by various typical cases. It may be asked how we are going to collect the tax. We propose to treat the tax as a first charge on the land and have worked out a system by which it could be collected at less expense, with greater certainty, and with greater promptitude than any of the existing taxes. (Cheers.) We want to develop production. This in a sense is a development of Free Trade. Ladies and Gentlemen, we who support this movement stand for Free Trade. (Cheers.) We desire to go forward, and we intend at the same time to hold the ground that our fathers won. (Cheers.) When I say that we are Free Traders I mean that we are not merely anti-Protectionists. Even if an import duty is counterbalanced by an excise, we know that such taxation stops the free play of trade between man and man and nation and nation, and obstructs the processes that would bind mankind together. We know also that every tariff is the cause of dissatisfaction, of controversy, and possibly of trouble and of war. (Cheers.)

We are honoured this afternoon with the attendance of between 300 and 400 delegates from organisations interested in social reform, from local authorities, from town councils, from burgh councils, from parish councils. We welcome representatives from the City of Glasgow where we are met. (Cheers.) We welcome representatives from the City of Dundee and from various other cities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the general plan of this conference is that the mover and seconder of each resolution shall have ten minutes each and if names are sent up to the platform—the name of the delegate and the name of the association which he represents—it would greatly facilitate calling upon the speakers. With those opening observations I would ask Mr. Wilson Raffan, M.P., to move the first resolution.

#### THE FIRST RESOLUTION

Alderman P. WILSON RAFFAN, M.P., said: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, the resolution which I have to move is in your hands. It is in the following terms:—

That this conference condemns the increase in the taxation of food and the adoption of petty and harassing taxes on trade and industry; declares that those who hold the land should be required to make a special contribution towards its defence; calls upon the Govern-

ment to impose a direct tax on land values, and for this purpose to require owners of land to furnish a declaration of the present value and character of their holdings; and affirms that such a tax, besides providing revenue, would open up the land to the people and promote production, and, together with Free Trade, would prevent the unemployment that threatens at the close of the war.

It is indeed a great pleasure to me to come to Glasgow and find this great conference representing men and women determined again to unfurl the banner of the taxation of land values. You in Glasgow have indeed a splendid record upon this question. Thirty years ago you made up your mind that land monopoly was a foe to your city and to your country. You organised yourselves for the purpose of combating it. You instructed your representatives on your municipal corporation, who for over twenty years have always been to the fore in every movement for the taxation of land values. I am glad that to-day you are here again to show that you are not satisfied merely because this country is at war that the fruits of all your work should go for nought, that to-day, as insistently as ever, you demand that land values should be taxed. (Cheers.)

#### TAPPING NEW SOURCES OF REVENUE

If it were true that before the war this was a desirable reform as the Prime Minister admitted, as the Minister for War admitted, as a great many Conservative leaders admitted, and as every Labour Member in the House of Commons admitted, if that were so, then surely the case is ten times stronger to-day. Surely, before we tax the tea of the widow and the old-age pensioner, and before we tax the wages and amusements of the people, we ought to say that those who hold the land of the country should be called upon to make a contribution. (Cheers.) Sir, if it was necessary to advocate this reform not merely as a means of securing revenue but as a means of promoting production, surely in the problems which face us in connection with the war, it will be more than ever necessary after the war to meet the interest on this enormous debt if our productive forces are reduced, as they will be, by the number of our comrades who have lost their lives in the war or come back mutilated and with limbs lost—surely the necessity for increased production is greater still. (Cheers.) And if as we believe by opening up the land to the people production will be increased, we ought to demand that the Government should now pave the way by strangling the landlord monopoly. (Cheers.) If the housing question was an important question before the war what will it be when these men come back? Sir, during the period of the war all building has been at an absolute standstill. You had a house famine before. It will be intensified enormously now.

#### GLASGOW'S HOUSING PROBLEM

Might I particularly direct your attention to the housing question which exists in your own city? You have a splendid record on this question. I know you have good reason to. There is perhaps no community in Scotland or Great Britain which has a housing problem so acute as yours here in Glasgow. (Cheers.) What is the position in which you find yourself? This great city of yours stands on an area of something like 19,000 acres. All the buildings, houses, business premises, factories, all the buildings stand on 14,000 of those 19,000 acres. You have 5,000 acres—3,000 of them called agricultural land and 2,000 suitable for building but entirely unused—you have 5,000 acres of land unused for building—over a quarter of the total area not built on at all. Though there is this great need for buildings for the housing of the people, over one-fifth of your total area is described as agricultural land. How do these respective properties stand on your valuation roll? The entire valuation



standing in the valuation roll of Glasgow is something like seven and a half million pounds. Upon that there is paid something like one and a half million pounds in municipal rates. What contribution towards that is made by the quarter of your land, the 25 per cent. of your land that is not built on? Its valuation stands in the valuation roll at something like £17,000, and its total contribution to the rates is just about £1,000, a sum so negligible that with your million and a half you might afford almost to do without it altogether. How does that affect your housing problem? It affects the housing problem in this way, that first of all you are hemmed in and crowded into the centre—while the landowners of this land, which is escaping the payment of rates and taxes, wait until the pressure is greater still, wait until the overcrowding is greater than ever so that they can raise the monopoly price higher and higher, and in the meantime they pay not on the valuation which they would state to any purchaser who wanted to build houses on it, but pay on this infinitesimal value which I have quoted to you.

The result of that is that as you come closer and closer into the centre your overcrowding grows greater and ever greater. In some of your outside districts the density of population is something like fifty persons to the acre, less, I think, than it ought to be if by economic pressure that land were brought fully into use. In the heart of the industrial districts the density of 300 persons to the acre, six times as high, and in some of your overcrowded districts there are 600 people to the acre.

#### LANDLORDISM AND CHILD LIFE

What effect has all that upon the life of the community? The chairman of the Housing Committee of Glasgow Corporation stated the other day that in some of the districts compared with others the infantile mortality was two and two-thirds as high. What does that mean? Of the 11,000 children in two areas—the birth-rate being exactly the same for each—who die before they are two years of age, 8,000 die in the crowded districts, where the density of population is 600 to the acre, and only 3,000 die in the districts where there is air space and sunshine—5,000 potential citizens lost to the community through landlordism which is throttling Glasgow and ruining the chances of its bairns to win their way up to be men and women. (Cheers.)

Let me say no man honours more than I do the work of your Public Health Committee—those who are setting up clinics and getting health visitors and providing lectures for mothers and all that sort of thing. By all means let us spread sanitary knowledge, but do not let anybody delude themselves into the idea that that can take the place of fresh air and sunshine. The people in Connaught and Connemara, as I daresay some of you here know who come from there, include many people—it is no disparagement to them to say so—whose standard of knowledge of sanitary science is not very high—no clinics, no health visitors, no lectures to mothers there, but the infantile death-rate in Connaught and Connemara is the lowest in the United Kingdom. (Cheers.)

#### NOT CLINICS BUT FRESH AIR.

I tell you that though you have a clinic at each street corner, a lady health visitor for every tenement, if you give lectures to mothers, and expectant mothers, once every morning and twice every afternoon—(laughter)—you will still have to grapple with this enormous infantile death-rate unless you see that the babies get sunshine and fresh air, and that they are given the heritage that God Almighty intended them to have. (Cheers.) I am glad you agree with me in that. I am delighted to know that there is a large number of representatives from trade unions here. Let me put this to them. I hope they will cheer it too, but I don't mind whether they do if they think about it.

It is not poverty only. Poverty is bad. No doubt if mothers had more to spend they might do just a little better. There is plenty of poverty in Connaught and Connemara. The money wage, probably the real wage, there is just as low as in these slums of Glasgow, and I tell you this, that if you were to double your wages, treble your wages, quadruple your wages, if land monopoly still continues there with its iron grip, you would still have these abominable conditions. (Cheers.) If you double, treble, or quadruple the wages you would so raise the general standard of comfort that the people with one room would want two rooms, the people with two would want three, and the people with three would want four, and so on, and there would be a great demand for new housing accommodation. That is true, but that means new buildings, and when you want land to put your new houses on you would find that your land values had doubled and trebled and quadrupled too by the demands of the landlord. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.)

#### VISION OF CITY OF THE FUTURE

Let me in a concluding sentence say that these things are of most vital importance to the future of this country. As you in Glasgow in the past stood by this great reform in the days before this terrible tragedy came upon the European nations, so I implore you in the work of social reconstruction, to which we must set our hands at the close of the war—aye, and even now, in anticipation of the close of the war—I ask you to remember that this is a real fundamental reform and trust that you will be as true to it in the future. Still maintain high civic ideals and seek if you can in your own time, and if it cannot be in your own time at any rate in the time of your children, to build up here a city, a city where the men will be sober and sane and strong, a city where the women will be gentle and pure and good, a city where every little child will get its chance and will live in a healthy, happy home, gently nurtured and gently tended, not unfitted but fitted the more for the more strenuous and purposeful life which awaits him in the years to come—a city where the slum and the sweeter will have absolutely disappeared—I ask you to work for such a city, and to-day to make up your minds to lay your foundation-stone of the city of the future by working for this great reform which alone can make it attainable for the people of this land. (Cheers.)

#### LANDLORDS POCKETING THE TAX

Mr. W. R. LESTER, M.A., in seconding the resolution, said: The substance of this resolution which I rise to second is that before taxing the food and the houses of the people we shall tax into the public exchequer what Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, has defined as the communal value of the land, the value which the people themselves have created, and which therefore rightly belongs to the people themselves. That is the substance of this resolution.

I often think that the title under which this movement has become so widely known, "the taxation of land values," lends itself to a good deal of misunderstanding and misconception, so, if you will bear with me for one moment, I would like to do what I can to clear the minds of any delegates here who have any misconception as to the meaning of the term. Our Chairman told us that land values are not taxed to-day except in a very small degree and in a very unfair way. That is perfectly true. But there is another aspect of it which I would like to enforce. That is that in another sense land values are taxed to-day 20s. in the pound, their full value. The fact is that your land values are taxed by the landlord. The landlord takes the tax, the whole of the land value, and uses it for his own private purposes. (Laughter and cheers.) Adam Smith, your great countryman, declared many years ago that in taxing land values what you mean is that you are going to make



the landlord pay rent for the land that he has the privilege of controlling. ("Hear, hear.") It is a rent-payment made by the landlord to the people. At present the landlord is simply a private tax collector. He goes round, collects the land values tax from every man, woman and child in this country, and instead of handing it over to the public exchequer as the ordinary tax collectors do, he keeps it for his own purposes. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.) I am sure everybody will agree that it would be nothing unreasonable if we ask him to disgorge and hand over to the public exchequer the tax that he himself has collected. ("Hear, hear.") That is the substance of what we mean by the taxation of land values.

#### A SPUR TO LAND DEVELOPMENT

I think a very good parallel could be drawn showing the effect of this proposal—a good parallel could be drawn between what we propose and what is done to-day in the coal-mining industry. You know that the ordinary company which leases a coalfield from the ground landlord is always obliged as a condition of the lease to pay a royalty of so much for every ton of coal raised, and in addition to that the company has to pay what is known as "dead rent," whether it is mining the coal or not. Many pay thousands of pounds to the landlord during the time they are developing the mine, while they are getting no revenue from it. I do not grumble at that. The landlord has an object, not altogether a bad object. He insists on this "dead rent" whether the mine is being worked or not, because he wants to be quite sure that the company will not rest on its oars and that the company will do its very best to bring up all the coal it can and as quickly as it can, and he knows that the best spur to make it do so is to insist on its paying this "dead rent" whether or not coal is being produced, and the result is the coal company puts its best foot forward and gets the coal out as quickly as it can. All that we propose again is that you, the people, the State, should treat the owner of the land, the man to whom royalty and fixed rent is paid—that we should treat him precisely as he treats the coal company—(laughter)—that we should demand that he shall pay a fixed rent, a dead rent, to the community, to the public exchequer, whether he mines coal from that land or not, and the same with every landlord, rural and urban, the landlord of every ground. To tax land values simply means that the land-owners shall pay a dead rent to the State, and that that rent shall be in proportion to the bare economic value of their land. The effect will be to stimulate production, spur the landlords to industry and increase generally the demand for labour precisely as it does when the landlord puts the pressure on the coal mining company, and it would have the same effect on all land throughout the country, whether in town or country.

#### LAND TAX WILL CHEAPEN PRICES

I would like to give prominence to another effect of importance. This tax on land values is often confused with ordinary taxes, but the thing to notice and to make no mistake about, is that it has precisely the opposite effect to that of other taxes, because simply it is not a tax at all. I think all other taxes, almost every other tax as at present levied has the effect of increasing the cost of production and making living dearer, making prices higher. Every tax, on sugar or tea, the inhabited house duty, and the local rates on houses, every one of them has the effect of making living dearer. The tax on land values on the other hand would cheapen the cost of living by forcing more land into use, and therefore increasing the production got from the land, and it would lower prices. The present taxes raise prices. The land values tax would lower prices.

The present taxes act as a hindrance on production. At a time when we are being urged by the powers that be

to increase production, we tolerate taxes which more and more check and restrict production. Then again the ordinary taxes tend to lower wages, because they increase the cost of living. The land values tax tends to raise wages because it opens up opportunities and gives greater elbow room, more breathing space, more opportunities for employment. It would lessen the number of men who, in normal times, are begging for work at the works' gates. It tends to raise wages, while the present taxes all tend to lower wages. Our proposal as embodied in this resolution has the effect of increasing production, lowering prices, and raising wages, while the present taxes have the effect of limiting production, raising prices, and lowering wages.

#### RESULTS OF THE PROPAGANDA

Mr. JOHN GORDON, J.P., in supporting the resolution, said: I doubt not there are many in this hall who have attended similar conferences of representatives of public bodies, members of Parliament, and Parliamentary Committees of all sorts, and who may reasonably say to themselves, What is the good of it? and, When are we going to get the legislation for which we have contended at these previous conferences and have urged and laboured for on every occasion? Well, if you said that up till now we had had no success at all that statement would hardly be correct. We have had success even at home here in a measure, and if we have not got the valuation, the valuation is at such a stage to-day that if the country make it quite plain to members of Parliament that it is to be completed it can be completed cheaply, quickly, and without difficulty, in a year. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, the meeting is now open for discussion. In the meantime I have the name of Treasurer Soutar, Dundee, whom we are very pleased to see here, and from whom we will be glad to have a few words. (Cheers.)

#### THE IDEAS OF HENRY GEORGE

Treasurer SOUTAR, Dundee, said: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I did not expect to receive from you any particular welcome to this meeting, but I appreciate it very much. It is long years ago since I attempted, when I was quite a lad, to draw instruction and inspiration first of all from the man under the shadow of whose memory we must be meeting to-day, Henry George—(cheers)—from whom I drew my first ideas on the question of the taxation of land values. They are not altered yet, and with the metamorphosis through which the world, and Britain in particular, is passing to-day the ideas that some years ago were considered silly and absurd will come to be accepted as the truth, and prophetic of the actual necessities of Great Britain in the very near future. (Cheers.) As a humble member of the Dundee Town Council, and with a very lively and active idea of what might befall my head were I to commit so august a body to anything definite—(laughter)—I beg to state that these are my own personal ideas, and that I am not committing the Corporation of Dundee, but I have great hopes, having regard to the high intelligence of most of the members of it—one of whom I see at the door—(laughter)—having regard to their intelligence, I believe, when they read in the GLASGOW HERALD on Monday an account of the eloquent speeches by Mr. Dundas White, Mr. Raffan, and other gentlemen, whose names have escaped my memory, that they may be ultimately and in time convinced. (Laughter and cheers.) I thank you all very much for the kind reception you have given to Dundee.

The CHAIRMAN: I have received what is called an amendment to the resolution from the Possilpark branch officials of the Independent Labour Party. It does not seem to me to be an amendment but rather a different

resolution with no reference to the question of land values. In these circumstances I do not think it would be competent for me to put it to the meeting.

#### CONSCRIPTION OF LAND

Mr. JOHN GRAHAM said the resolution declared that those who held the land should be required to make a special contribution toward its defence. He said that seeing that the bodies of the workers were being conscripted in defence of the land, it naturally followed that the land should belong to the workers. Therefore, they claimed the land of this country for the people. Discussing the resolution he said it was thirty years since they started in Glasgow with the movement, and they were not a bit nearer. In his opinion it was quite as easy to get the land as to tax it.

#### LANDLORDISM MEANS PLUNDER

Bailie JOHN MUIR, Glasgow, said: There is no possibility of labour and capital coming into any agreement among themselves that can possibly better the condition of things that exist in the community unless you have an opportunity to use the land. Let me give you an illustration. We, the ratepayers of Glasgow, built a dam up there at Loch Arklet to facilitate and better our water supply. To get that done it was necessary that we should have a lot of material for the purpose of building this dam. We hit upon a plan to take it up by electric current, and we ran it from the head of Loch Lomond up to Loch Arklet, by a copper wire along the side of the hill. The land over which this wire was stretched belonged to the Duke of Montrose. (Laughter.) What benefits we were to have from the scientific researches of the men who found out this wonderful power of electricity that was to save a great amount of labour!—and let me tell you, gentlemen, that hillside would not feed half a dozen goats for the purpose of giving you milk for your breakfast in the morning. (Laughter.) You, the citizens of Glasgow, had to hand over to the Duke of Montrose for this privilege—and you had to put it up yourselves—you had to hand him over £500 a year. ("Shame.") I wish you to notice, gentlemen, the power the landowner has to extract money out of your pocket for absolutely nothing. Now I read a speech once by a member of Parliament whose name was mentioned recently by a previous speaker. That gentleman, in a speech delivered at the Drury Lane Theatre dealing with the land question, said: "There are only two ways of getting possession of wealth. One of them is by producing it and the other way is by plundering it." Now, whether a man lives by applying the art of legal thieving and calling it rent, the men on this platform believe, nevertheless, that whatever beautiful name it may have, it is plunder. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.) Let me say this. Probably in Monday's paper it will be stated that we have allowed our predatory instincts to get the better of us, and that we are out to plunder the landowner. (Laughter.) The object we have in view is to keep the landowner from plundering us. Whatever methods you may take to get yer ain, whatever methods you may take to keep the landowner from plundering you, take the very best you can. Understand it is the institution we are out against, not the men. ("Hear, hear.") We ask you to give your whole-hearted support to this policy of taxing the landowner out, and let me tell you this, yince ye empty the nit of the kernel the shell'll no be much worth tae him. (Laughter and cheers.)

#### AN AGRICULTURAL RATING POINT

Mr. COUTTS, Dundee, said: I had something to do with the organising of Henry George's meeting in Dundee in

the early days, and I owe him much gratitude for what I learned under him. I am exceedingly gratified to see this important conference. I venture to make a suggestion to this important gathering and it is this, that we should take up the question of dealing with the Agricultural Rating Act which was passed by Mr. Balfour many years ago, and which caused something like four or five millions sterling of imperial taxes to be levied under the plea of depressed agriculture. The tenants are gaining profits at an elaborate rate and are having a large profit from their cattle, on their wheat, on their corn, and latterly on the potatoes—for whoever in the past heard of £70, £80 and £90 an acre being paid for potatoes? And yet the Chancellor of the Exchequer is paying out money to relieve these agriculturists of their rates. No Chancellor of the Exchequer relieves the men in the urban areas of their taxes. I call the attention of the leaders of the movement to this, and if the question is ventilated in these days when we are spending on the war £5,000,000 a day and the taxes put on the right back, it would lessen the cost to the poor. I have pleasure in making the suggestion.

The CHAIRMAN: If no other lady or gentleman desires to speak I shall put the resolution to the meeting.

The CHAIRMAN, after a show of hands had been taken, said: I declare the resolution carried practically unanimously with nine or ten dissentients in this great meeting. (Cheers.)

#### THE SECOND RESOLUTION

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, I have now pleasure in calling upon Mr. Outhwaite to move a second resolution.

Mr. R. L. OUTHWAITE, M.P., who on rising had an enthusiastic reception, said: Mr. Chairman and Delegates, the resolution that I have to move is in the following terms:—

That the conference views with grave apprehension the financial and industrial prospects of the country after the war; affirms the imperative and urgent need of opening up land under favourable conditions to labour; condemns the waste of Parliamentary time on futile measures like the Small Holdings Colonies Act; repudiates experimenting with holdings on barren and remote land when thousands of acres of fertile and convenient land are lying practically idle; declares that, as an essential precedent condition of success for any scheme of land settlement, Parliament must impose a tax on land values, and thus give practical expression to a policy which will open up land freely to agricultural production in all its branches, assuring greatly widened opportunities of employment, higher wages, and reduced cost of living.

Recently I came across two old recruiting posters which still remain upon the walls. One read "Your country needs you." I am here to say "You need your country." ("Hear, hear," and cheers.) The other was a poster depicting a Highlander in the war garb of the North, looking down upon a fertile valley and green fields and a smiling homestead and underneath was written—"Is not this worth fighting for?" Well, I am here to say that it is worth fighting for and that it is time the people fought in earnest for their own land. (Cheers.) The resolution says, and this is what I shall devote my time to, that "this conference views with grave apprehension the financial and industrial prospects of the country after the war." Let us first of all take the financial prospects:

#### A VAST NATIONAL DEBT

We are to end this financial year with an increased national debt of £3,400,000,000. We are told that the war has to be fought to a finish and that it is in consequence

to continue we know not how long, but for a very considerable period of time, and before that object can be accomplished we may be absolutely certain that the National Debt will have been increased by some £5,000,000,000. We are paying now for our money 6 per cent. There has been no conscription of wealth for the purpose of the war. (A voice: "Shame!" and cheers.) But the money-lenders of the City of London, holding the State up to ransom, are now extorting 6 per cent. for a State security for which they had previously 3 per cent. interest. Six per cent. Not to exaggerate I would say an average of 5 per cent. But we will have to contribute at least one per cent. for a sinking fund, so that in the course of time, by future generations, the debt may be paid off. Six per cent. on £5,000,000,000 makes £300,000,000 a year. Then by the time the war is over and victory is achieved there will be many widows in the land and many disabled people. The Pensions Fund, a new claim upon revenue due to the war, is certain to total a vast sum. I would put it at as low a figure as £50,000,000 a year. That means we will have to find the revenue necessary to cover a sum of £350,000,000. But I will cut off £50,000,000 if you like, in case I may be exaggerating. Let us say we have to get an additional revenue of £300,000,000. Previously we had a revenue of close on £200,000,000 to provide, so that we will have to raise in future, not £200,000,000 a year, but £500,000,000 a year.

#### THE ONE SOURCE OF WEALTH

Now that vast and enormous increase of revenue can only come from one source. It can only come out of the wealth created by the workers. ("Hear, hear.") And the future of the workers, if you retain the old economic system, the future of the workers with £500,000,000 a year to be wrenched from the rewards of their labour—that future must be one, in my view, of economic slavery. They were bondsmen of the landowners in the past. A vast tribute was taken from them in the past but there is a new tribute to be levied—that of the bondholder, that of the man who is lending to the State during this war. And those are two tributes which you will have to render and for which you will get nothing in return. For the money represented by the debt is all shot away. (A voice: "Our return is liberty.") Yes, liberty; we are here to tell you what true liberty is. You never had it. (Cheers.)

In the future you will have to pay this greater amount out of the wealth created in this country, and from this follows, I hold, two results. If you are to have reforms, if you are to have conditions anything like tolerable, that tribute which you formerly paid to the landowner for permission to live in your own country, that tribute must be diverted into the Treasury to help to pay for the cost of the defence of the country. (Cheers.) That will not be in itself sufficient, far from it, to meet the new revenue requirements of the State, and I would point out to some friends here—perhaps used to thinking that the taxation of land values was exclusive of the proposals which they had for the taxation of great incomes and who consequently opposed us—I say those days have gone. When we have taken all the value of the land in the United Kingdom by way of taxation, a great amount of revenue will have to be raised by way of income tax or other methods. But in the first place we must turn into the Treasury the tribute levied at present by the landowner.

The greater need of the future will be to increase the production of wealth in this country; not to increase the production of wealth as is suggested by the employers, so that they may have higher profits by compelling their workers to work longer hours, but greatly increased wealth which will go to those who produce it. (Cheers.) You will have to increase the production of wealth and the only

way to increase the production of wealth is to open to the hands of labour the source from which alone wealth can be purchased, and that is the soil of the country. (Cheers.) And we hold that this system of the taxation of land values will not only turn the landlords' tribute into the Treasury but that we shall end the dog-in-the-manger system in this country whereby a man holds up land which he will not use himself and will not allow others to use.

#### THE SUTHERLAND LAND OFFER

Lately we have had some measures of land reform in the House of Commons. We have had a Small Colonies Bill, which was a bill to purchase land at the high inflated war prices and put the soldiers upon it. That means, if you buy the land on the high price basis, and put the men on it, they will pay a high rent and rates and taxes, and it means making such men the slaves of the soil. To the man who fought to save this land from German possession, you say: "Before you can use an acre, you have to pay £50 or £60 an acre to the landlord for permission to do so." Well, you may accept that position—I don't think this audience will, and I think the soldier himself will have something to say. ("Hear, hear.")

Mr. Tennant has also brought forward a proposal. He told us that a Noble Duke, the Duke of Sutherland—(some laughter)—the owner of over a million acres, was making a present, a noble and free gift to the people, for one purpose—that the discharged soldiers and sailors should have an opportunity of earning a livelihood. Well, I got into trouble. (Laughter.) I framed a question asking what these thousands of acres stood at in the valuation roll of Scotland, and having at last extorted this fact from Mr. Tennant, together with some insults from him—(laughter)—I discovered that this land, on the basis of its rating, was worth 3d. an acre. (Laughter.) Now that is the great proposal, that the soldiers and sailors who have gone through the agonies of this warfare, when they come back for a share of the land which they have fought to save, it is land worth 3d. an acre according to the valuation roll, on which they are to earn their livelihood.

#### A DANGEROUS ADMISSION

I think there was a dangerous admission in this suggestion that this land was suitable for the soldiers and sailors. That was what I wished to get disclosed. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.) If the barren hills of the Highlands, shown to be worth only 3d. an acre, are suitable in the eyes of the Government, and of the landowners, for the use of man, then there is not an acre of land in the United Kingdom that is not fit for use. (Cheers.) It means that all the land of the deer forests, the millions of acres in the North, are, in the eyes of the Government and the Duke of Sutherland, fit for the use of man. (Cheers.) We shall sweep away the deer forests. And we know the method; the method is that which we propose. Yes; your land is worth fighting for, but when the men who have fought for it return, it is not on to the barren hills of the Highlands we desire to put them. (Cheers.) I hope that we will establish a great principle. We will say, I hope, that the land, all the land of Britain, belongs to the soldiers, and to all the people of Britain; the soldiers immediately to-day, not by right of conquest, but by right of defence and salvation from conquest; that the land is the gift of Providence, intended for the use of all men, and that we shall establish the equal rights of all men to participate in their inheritance. (Cheers.)

#### DEMOCRACY'S CHOICE AFTER THE WAR

Terrible industrial conditions will come about after the war, when we disband our millions from the Colours and



those millions engaged in munitions work and in the secondary operations connected with the war. No palliatives will suffice; old methods will achieve nothing. We must have great and fundamental reforms.

Let me say in conclusion that I believe that this war is the end of the sham democracies of the world. When it is over we shall either have freedom or we shall have absolute despotism enforced by the bayonet at home and by the gallows. I believe that the people will demand freedom and not despotism. (Cheers.) I believe they will set to work to build a true democracy; I believe they will try an experiment which has not yet been tried through the centuries, that they will try the experiment of reconstructing the State on the foundations of justice and liberty—of true liberty which we never yet have had, for you never can have liberty when you leave in possession of the few the source from which existence alone can be maintained—that is, the land. (Cheers.) Whether they think it or not, such a condition of monopoly reduces the people to slavery. Within each nation's borders you have these conditions. They overlap geographical boundaries. When people have justice and liberty, possession of their own soul, you will build up in every nation a happy and contented community and we will then in every State have an opportunity of ending for ever such a tragedy as that which at present afflicts the world. (Loud cheers.)

#### OUR LIBERTIES AND RIGHT TO LIVE

Ex-Bailie PETER BURT, J.P., in seconding the resolution, said: At a conference one likes to hear expressions of opinion on the part of those sitting in the body of the hall. The feeling up to the present has been so unanimous in appreciation of what the speakers have said that one is inclined to take it for granted that we are all in agreement. But when men go outside and get busy with the everyday affairs of life, they are apt to forget a lot of the points raised, and allow things to drift pretty much as in the past. I understand the Secretary sent invitations to this conference to all Scottish members of Parliament. Well, in my judgment such a response falls far behind the interest taken in land values taxation by the voters in the various constituencies. This is not in dispute by our Parliamentary representatives, especially at election times. Frankly, I am disappointed at this exhibition of apathy at a time like this, when there is so much to consider as to the social problems of the immediate future.

We are fighting and suffering just now for what we believe are our liberties, and we are here to declare that the people have even a better right than ever before to a share in the land they have fought and sacrificed so much to defend.

We do not claim that the solution of the land question is the solution of every problem. Well, we don't believe it is, but we believe it will make it possible to begin to solve the other problems. (Cheers.) And before you solve it, you cannot solve the other problems. We say that the easiest way to secure the restoration of the land to the people is by taxing land values. If the people get use of the land and the fruits thereof, it does not matter who calls himself the owner. (Cheers.) To my mind there is only one owner, and that is God Almighty. I do not believe the State should own it nor the nobleman, nor anybody ought to own it. What I believe is that the man who wants to use land to produce wealth ought to get the use of it; all he should be asked to pay for it is his share of the public expenses, and this can best be measured in the value of the land he occupies. Let every man here use his influence and power with his local representatives, with his Imperial representative, and his local Associations to insist on this question being brought forward at the earliest possible moment. (Cheers.)

#### THE HUMANITARIAN STANDPOINT

Mr. FRANK SMITH said: I am not concerned about finances. I am concerned about humanity. Give us free men and you will have all the wealth you need ("Hear, hear.") It is when you get too much wealth and do not know what to do with it that the trouble comes in. (Laughter.) Thirty-three years ago to-day, Sir, I landed in New York, and on the eve of sailing I had presented to me a volume of PROGRESS AND POVERTY. I read it on the voyage over, and in those five stormy days a truth was implanted in my mind that has never died. It taught me this, that free land means free men—(cheers)—and when you have free men, you will have all that any country needs. And that is why I was and am a Socialist and a Labour man to-day. (Cheers.) Because I want free men and you cannot have freedom while the land is held in monopoly. It is impossible.

#### THE CURSE OF PARTY

The fault is that when this meeting is over and we separate ourselves—perhaps here and there a Tory who has strayed from the flock—(laughter)—or here and there Whigs, Liberals, Radicals, Socialists, and Labour men—we cut ourselves off and separate ourselves into our own little knots and want this great reform in our own particular way. Why, we are as bad as theologians—(laughter)—the theologians who say "Come into heaven by my door or stay outside in hell." (Laughter.) Let us get rid of these little pettifogging conventionalities and red tape. I know some will say "There's friend Smith going wrong, he is up among the Liberals and the Radicals." (Laughter.) I don't care a snap for party. If there is anything that has cursed this country and any other country more than another it is the mean petty-minded partisanship that blinds many a good man to the necessity for real reform and fails to give him that spirit and that determination which reform means. My brothers and comrades and friends, I listened to the speeches this afternoon and all I can say is, that if you want more argument than you have had, then God help you. (Laughter.) You won't get it this side or the other side, and when you are on the other side it won't do you any good. (Laughter.)

#### THE BRITISH "HUN"

But depend upon it, there are only three ways in which you can get hold of the land, and, industrial comrades, I appeal to you, as a trade unionist of thirty years' standing—I tell you that free land will remove nine-tenths of those things for which we, as trade unionists, have been suffering and struggling in the past ever since we have known right from wrong. I appeal to you, trade unionists, Socialists, and others, to fall into line.

It is said that you can legislate the landlords out, and we have talked about it for the past thirty years, and there are hundreds of members of Parliament to-day who pledged themselves to it and have failed in their pledges. ("Shame!"). You cannot until you get a new House of Commons. ("Hear, hear.") Get a House of Commons of Dundas Whites, of Raffians, and of Outhwaites, and men like-minded, and you will have no trouble about this and other kinds of fundamental justice. What I want to ask you is to look at it in a practical way, because now some of us have not got much longer to live. We want to see things done. For God's sake let us leave off "jawing" about it. (Laughter.) We want to do things. Shall we get a House of Commons as constituted to-day or any other House similarly minded to legislate landlords out, while the half of them are landlords themselves? (Cries of "No.") No, they won't do it.

Some of my friends say "Buy them out." You don't patronize the highwayman who steps out from the side of the road and challenges you with "Your money or your life." (Laughter.) But the landlords, they meet you from both sides of the road, and it is not "your money or your life"—it is "your money and your life." (Laughter and cheers.)

#### THE PRACTICAL WAY

No, you cannot buy them out. If you could have bought them out before the war, it is out of the question now. It is certain you cannot buy them out since the war because you have not got as much as you had at the start of the war, and you will have a precious sight less when it is over. You cannot buy them out, and we have not been able to legislate them out. As practical men let us get down to business and tax them out. How is it to be done? Well, I have got a special patent—(laughter)—no charge. (Renewed laughter.) I will tell you how. If the Prime Minister to-morrow—no, not to-morrow, that would be Sunday—(laughter)—say Monday—at any rate if the Prime Minister had the will he would call in the Defence of the Realm Act. Oh! there is such a thing. (Laughter.) Have you heard of it up in Scotland here? (Renewed laughter.) Under the power of the Defence of the Realm Act, passed for the benefit and in the interests of the people, let the Prime Minister declare to the landlords of this country that within a month they have got, under powers of the Defence of the Realm Act, to supply him with a list of the value, size, and character of the land they hold in the country, and at the end of the month, if that valuation is not in possession of the Government's representatives, then it will be, under the powers of the Defence of the Realm Act, £100 or two years hard. (Loud laughter.) There it is. (Cheers.) And so, friends, call upon the Government to use the Defence of the Realm Act in the interests of the people to compel the landlords of the nation to do right for the first time in their lives—(laughter)—and when that has been done, put a good stiff tax on it. What result will follow? We will have a free England and free men, because men will cease to be victims of industrialism, and when you have free men you won't be bothered with any of these present social horrors, war included. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN: I have received the name of Mr. Robert G. Yates, representing the Clydebank Co-operative Society, who wishes to propose an amendment.

Mr. YATES: I have much pleasure in moving as an amendment that the words "Parliament must impose a tax on land values" be deleted from the resolution and in their stead the words "the Government must acquire the land on equitable terms" be inserted. We are of the opinion that as long as you have private ownership in land, so long will you allow the power of these people to exploit the people of the country. ("Hear, hear.") We want to substitute public ownership for private ownership, and as Mr. Smith has said, we have not the money to purchase. Then I will tell him frankly that we might purchase it out of the rents that are now going into the pockets of the private landowner. That is the method we would have adopted. You propose that you should bring the soldiers back and settle them on the land. There can be no land settlement where there is private ownership. You were asking these men who have fought for the land to come back to work on the land and to pay a tribute to the landlord, and he will go on in the future as in the past, waxing fat on the proceeds of the soldiers' and other people's labour. You were asking us for revenue to pay off your war taxes. We propose that the revenue that is now going into the pockets of the private landowner can be utilised by the nation. If we acquire the land we can acquire their profits, their rents, just now, as it has been done by the

Glasgow tramway system, and out of their profits we will pay them so much per year until we have paid them off, and at the same time there will be an available residue in order to pay off some taxation.

Another DELEGATE: I beg to second Mr. Yates' amendment. The hour is getting late, and as Mr. Yates has put the amendment so ably I beg leave simply to second it. We all know the land question and taxation is an old problem, and the acquirement by Government of the land is the only way out of the difficulty in our opinion.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment has been moved and seconded. I think it is only right to ask Mr. Outhwaite, who has moved the resolution, to reply very shortly to the arguments those gentlemen have used.

#### FUTILITY OF LAND PURCHASE

Mr. OUTHWAITE: I do not think it requires much reply, because this amendment is a negation of everything we have been asking you to accept during this conference and which you have been accepting. We have held the view that the value of the land belongs to the people who created it and we propose to take it by way of taxation as ours by right. But this is a proposal to buy the landowner out and pay over to the individual the value that we consider to be our own. The gentleman who moved the amendment said we could pay the bondholder did we agree to purchase the land by way of the rent. That leaves us precisely in the position in which we are to-day. ("Hear, hear" and cheers.) The rent of the land, instead of going directly into the pockets of the landowners, will then go into the pockets of the bondholder who is providing the money in the first place for the purchase of the land. Not one penny piece can we raise in the future by way of land values if this amendment were accepted. I would point out to the mover of the amendment that supposing he did desire to acquire the land for the State, supposing there was an object in doing that, I would point out to him that if you tax the value of the land into the Treasury in the first place it will be so much the easier for the State to acquire the land. ("Hear, hear" and cheers.) I do not think I need say any more.

#### HOW LONG?

A DELEGATE in the body of the hall said: I wish to ask how long under the policy of the taxation of land values would Mr. Outhwaite think it possible to acquire the land? How long would it take, and also in what way the worker who is being exploited by the employing classes will benefit in view of the fact that the big employers do not need such a great quantity of land in order to carry out that exploitation?

Mr. OUTHWAITE: As regards the length of time that it would take, we have shown the method here. It rests with the people how long it would take. They can do it straight away if they like and can levy at once a tax that would bring the whole value of the land into the Treasury of the United Kingdom, if they sent men to Parliament to see that it is done. It rests with the people. As regards the question about the position of the man who is exploited by the employer and whether he would benefit, I am afraid to answer that would take some time. But what is the position? The men go into the labour market and sell themselves in competition with one another, and when you get one job and two men after that job, and each man saying "I had better get it at any wage," then you have competition of man against man which forces wages down until they do not represent in any way the value of the wealth the worker creates. The first way is to stop that competition of man against man in the labour

market, and the way to do so is to increase the opportunities for production and to increase the demand for labour, and the only way to do that is to open up the sources of production, and that is land. It is the driving of the people from the soil, from the Highlands, and from every county in rural England, to go to seek work in the urban labour market, on the railways, at the docks—wherever you find wages driven down to the lowest level you will find that it is due to the competition of the low-paid labourer on the land who has been driven from the soil. Keep him there, and you begin to solve the wages question. (Cheers.)

#### CAN THE TAX BE PASSED ON ?

Another DELEGATE : I should like to ask Mr. Outhwaite a question. Having regard to the fact that all taxes react on the working classes, I should like to ask him to explain this fact. Supposing the taxation of land values is in operation and we have a piece of ground adjacent to a town, and supposing that town must buy that piece of ground, what steps does this committee who promote the taxation of land values intend to take to protect that town council or burgh from being taxed to make up for the taxation on the land values ? For instance, if the landowner had paid £100 of taxation under this taxation of land values scheme, how are you going to keep him from charging that when he sells the land ?

Mr. OUTHWAITE : I think what really is in my friend's mind is, will this tax be passed on to the worker ?

The DELEGATE : Yes, that is the question.

Mr. OUTHWAITE : Well, if it can be passed on, in the first place we would have no opposition from the landowners, because they would simply pass the tax on. But obviously under the tax instead of the land becoming more dear in consequence of it the very purpose of levying the tax is to bring land held out of use into the market and into use. To-day there is an artificial price for land due to the large areas of land, as we have heard to-day, held out of use. The effect of this is to bring land into the market and increase the supply of land, and as you increase the supply of land, instead of making land dearer it must inevitably make it cheaper by the process of increasing the supply. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN : Those in favour of the amendment hold up their right hand. I think there are only six. Those against the amendment.

Following the show of hands against the amendment the CHAIRMAN said : The amendment is lost practically unanimously.

The CHAIRMAN : I put the resolution to the meeting. Those in favour hold up their right hand. (A large number of hands were held up.) Those against. One. (Loud cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN : We are practically unanimous again.

The CHAIRMAN : There is one omission from the resolution and that is, as I take it, that it will be the wish of the meeting that copies of these resolutions be sent to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary for Scotland, and members of Parliament for Scottish constituencies. (Cheers.) I have pleasure in calling on Mr. Blackie,

Mr. BLACKIE : I have come all the way from London to attend this conference. We have learned enough to know that whatever the conditions of the country are we have got the landlord's grip on us everywhere and all the time. I hope we shall go away from this meeting more determined than ever to carry this great reform to a successful issue. My object in rising is to propose a vote of thanks to our excellent Chairman. I am sure he has conducted the

meeting with great tact and to the satisfaction of us all, and I am sure you will all join in giving a vote of thanks which I have much pleasure in moving. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN : I have to thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, and to say what an honour it has been to preside over such a magnificent meeting as we have had to day. (Cheers.)

#### Social Gathering

A pleasing event of the Conference was the usual social gathering held in Reid's Tea Rooms, Gordon Street, Glasgow, on the Friday evening. It was the opening meeting composed of the representative Scottish Single Taxers, and associates, met to celebrate the occasion and to give a Glasgow welcome to the speakers from a distance. Mr. J. Dundas White presided over a gathering of about eighty representative workers.

In his own name no less than on behalf of the League he expressed in suitable terms the pleasure he had in meeting so many friends on the eve of their conference, a demonstration which they were all looking forward to with so much assurance.

Enlivening and informing speeches were maintained until a late hour. The conversations ranged from the position of the movement at home to distant places across the seas, where legislative victories of no mean order for land values taxation were won, even during the course of this devastating European War.

The work accomplished here at home during the past two years came under review, and the call for greater effort was fully recognised. The shadow of the great conflict was about the room all night. "Auld Lang Syne" was not sung, but the tone and temper of those present bore all the outward signs of courage and determination to do everything possible to further and direct the growing demand for radical land reform.

#### Informal Meeting

On Saturday evening a number of the members came together in an informal way in the smoking room of the North British Station Hotel. Present : Messrs. J. Dundas White, M.P., R. L. Outhwaite, M.P., William Cassels, M. Fairlie, Alex. Little, Walter Coates, Frank Smith, Robert Blackie, James Davison, Isaac McKenzie, Chapman Wright, J. S. Neil, W. J. Young, A. B. McKay, Collier, Munsey, A. W. Madsen and John Paul. The President of the Scottish League was voted into the chair. On the motion of Mr. Paul, seconded by Mr. William Cassels, a cordial vote of thanks was given the Secretary, Mr. Busby, for his zeal and success in organising the Conference. This was also spoken to by Messrs. Burt, Outhwaite and McKay. Mr. Busby replied in his usual modest way. Thanks were due, he said, to quite a host of good friends, who had joined him willingly because like himself they had only one desire, and that was to make for a Conference that would do full justice to the movement in Scotland. Thereafter conversations ensued as to special and particular features of the Conference and to the feasibility of similar meetings at this juncture in other centres. A most enjoyable evening, where good fellowship prevailed with all the old time pre-war spirit and determination that the case for land values taxation must be maintained, and the propaganda carried into other fields in every conceivable legitimate way.

#### The Closing Meeting

The closing formal meeting of the Conference took place on the afternoon of the 5th. Mrs. Raffan occupied the chair, and Mr. Madsen opened a discussion on "War Loans, Increased Prices, and the Land Question." There was a



good attendance of members and associates, who listened with appreciation to the lecturer's able presentation of his case. A number of pertinent questions were asked and answered, and short speeches were made by those who had convictions on the various points raised. In another column we publish a letter on the subject by Mr. William Cassels. Mr. Madsen or others may have something to say either in reply or by raising some new view.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Madsen closed the proceedings.

### IMPRESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

An Edinburgh correspondent writes:—

A movement that can summon such a representative and sympathetic gathering as that held in Glasgow under our auspices on 4th November has proved it is no longer in the mere propaganda stage. No doubt there is still much need for education before we can get enough power in Parliament to remove all the abuses of landlordism and make the people the undisputed owners of all the wealth they produce. But propaganda must be backed up repeatedly and energetically by the organisation of the public sentiment we have succeeded in recruiting in our favour. That, I take it, is the chief function of a public conference. It shows where we stand in politics; it shows where are the forces that are ready to assist in carrying our reform, and what is their strength; if it is a success, it is at once a demonstration to outsiders that our propaganda has not been in vain, and a powerful incentive to ourselves to educate and to organise with redoubled vigour.

Before the meeting took place, one had heard the Glasgow Conference spoken of as an "experiment." The assumption was that the mind of the nation was too much distracted by the circumstances of the war to listen to any proposals touching domestic reforms of any kind. Glasgow has proved that that idea must be set aside as far as we are concerned. The enthusiasm of the audience and the response given to the statement of our case have made us recognise the fact that, in the midst of the greatest catastrophe that could have afflicted the community, a very large section of the people are looking to this movement to urge its policy without hesitation and without any false fear that we are out to obstruct the advice to "look after the war and after-the-war will take care of itself." The problems associated with the cost of the war, its effect on labour and industry as the costs are piled up, its possible results in exaggerating tremendously the tribute poverty must pay to wealth, and the pre-war demand now more than ever imperative for a sane and swift solution of the land question, are not to be forgotten, even while the war calls for the most supreme military effort and distributes its frightful reminders in both public and private life. Such is the lesson and the experience we have gained, and it should make us the more confident in advocating our reform with no less insistence now than at any time. We have been encouraged to go on, knowing the important part we must play in the coming reconstruction and in establishing the conditions that, through a just distribution of wealth, can alone make future wars impossible.

The holding of the Glasgow Conference has been more than justified. Its success, I was assured, surpassed all the expectations of its promoters, and for that we who came from a distance are all the more grateful to the Scottish League and its devoted Secretary, James Busby. A great meeting, filled to overflowing and with many scarcely able to find even standing room, had come to discuss, and on persuasion to vote for, our resolutions—to forward them to the Government and to Scottish Members of Parliament as a decision and an instruction. The majority had not been whipped up as reliable supporters, but were strangers sent as delegates from local rating bodies, trades unions, co-operative societies, labour associations, I.L.P.

branches, &c., to hear what we had to say, and to report. Seldom have I heard speeches carrying greater conviction than the addresses delivered on this occasion from the platform. Mr. Dundas White, Mr. Raffan, Mr. Outhwaite, and the other speakers took magnificent advantage of this exceptional opportunity, this experiment of a Land Values Conference in war time, and fully deserved the great reception they were accorded. The resolutions were passed with acclamation, and there will be no mistake about the message the numerous delegates will take back to those whom they represented.

We may have to submit to the difficulties of conducting public propaganda at present by the holding of outdoor and indoor meetings, the distribution of literature, and all the other familiar means of reaching the elector; but that is no reason for idleness. Another fertile channel is open to us and it demands our unabated activity, namely, to organise, in all centres where propaganda has been conducted, the public sentiment in our favour. I was happy to learn at the business meetings held in connection with the Conference that steps were contemplated in that direction. I hope the Committee in London may see its way to promote similar demonstrations all over the country, and, as one stationed in Edinburgh, I am certain that such a meeting here would give results that could not be bettered anywhere. Here as, elsewhere, the latent forces only require a lead, if the known radical nature of the community and the appalling house famine, the discussion of which with the increased cost of living gets as much prominence in our Press as the war itself, are any criterion of our desire to express ourselves as Glasgow has done.

The Conference held in Glasgow was a great success first as to numbers, which is always an important thing, but more particularly in spirit, a much more important thing.

A great audience of conflicting elements politically was held together through the power of a great idea, and through the skill and sincerity of those who expressed that great idea, gave it thought eloquent and logical embodiment. It was mainly a trades-union and labour audience, ready to quarrel on the slightest provocation, but at the same time an audience of honest-minded, sincere men, somewhat dogmatic, perhaps, as is generally the case with those who possess ideas, an audience of men who at the same time felt and deplored the wrongs in existing society. It was a critical audience of somewhat flammable material captured by the straightforward logic of the Chairman and by the convincing eloquence of Mr. Raffan, the determined spirit of Mr. Outhwaite, and the humour and fire of Mr. Frank Smith.

It was, in a word, an audience which had come to scoff, but remained to pray.

It became distinctly more of a public meeting than a conference, because in the face of the war calamity, individuals did not incline to the details, and, it may be, hair-splitting that might have been induced in happier times. It was an audience that said Godspeed to the work whose fruition will end this and all similar calamities.

Let those in authority beware; let them not think that democracy is dead. Meetings like this indicate patience, suffering patience, but the possibility of determinate action. The slumbering giant may awake and bring the whole edifice of horror and wrong about the ears of those who gain by it.

WILLIAM CASSELS.

I was glad to be at the Conference at Glasgow on the 4th. I got safely back to London on Monday afternoon, and, as I know you need all the encouragement you can get to help you in this great work of yours, I want to tell you what my impression of the meeting was.

I frankly confess I was greatly and pleasurably surprised at the unanimity of feeling in favour of the taxation of