

LEAGUE NOTES

SCOTTISH LEAGUE: James Busby, Secretary, 67, West Nile Street, Glasgow.

The Annual Meeting of the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values was held on the evening of Friday, April 11th, at Reid's Tea Rooms, Gordon Street, Glasgow. Mr. Thomas Cameron in the chair. The Annual Report and Treasurer's Statement were adopted on the motion of ex-Bailie Burt, J.P., seconded by Mr. John Gordon, J.P.

Mr. James Dundas White, LL.D., was unanimously elected President for the ensuing year. Mr. Thomas Cameron was similarly elected Chairman of the General Committee and Mr. David Cassels, Hon. Treasurer.

In thanking the League for the honour which they had done him by re-electing him unanimously to the office of President, Dr. Dundas White said that he appreciated it the more as he was no longer in the House of Commons. But, whatever might happen to individuals, a just cause has in it the essential elements of success. Our policy is to treat the gifts of nature as common property, and to leave to individuals the results of their industry. We would tax those who hold the land according to the market value of the land that they hold, and would untax houses and other improvements. These principles are essential to the revival of cultivation, to the extension of manufactures, and, above all, to better housing. If the political leaders who promised us the Taxation of Land Values had been true to their pledges, we would now be well on our way to the solution of the housing problem, instead of being confronted by it in an aggravated form. There is still the difficulty of obtaining the land to build upon on fair terms. Both around our towns and in many country districts, land that is being rated and taxed at a very low valuation is held back for ransom prices when it is wanted for building. Then as soon as houses are built and inhabited, they are included in the valuations, and are rated and taxed; and the better and healthier they are, the heavier are the burdens placed upon them. All this is wholly wrong. Houses ought to be both rate-free and tax-free, and the rates and taxes ought to be levied on the market value of the land alone, whether it is being used or not. This has been done so far as rating is concerned in Sydney and other places in the British Dominions overseas, with the best results. We want to have it done throughout Scotland. What has been done in the largest city of Australia can be done, and ought to be done, in the largest city of Scotland, and many of us still hope to see Glasgow lead the way in this great reform.

I would like to say a few words about the Land Values Movement, the Liberal Party, and my own position. The Taxation of Land Values has been a watchword of Liberalism long before I entered the field of politics, and I have always advocated it as the first step towards economic justice. Our movement lost a powerful friend when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman died in 1908, and the land taxes of 1910 have proved unsatisfactory substitutes for the real reform which he advocated. Even before the war the record of the Liberal Party was far from what it ought to have been, and during the war the needs of the nation were exploited by making the taxpayers give guarantees to the landed interest under the Corn Production Act, and by the attempt to set up petroleum royalties for landlords. These reactionary measures were brought in by Mr. Lloyd George's Government; but the other wing of the Liberal Party is also responsible for an acquiescence that amounted to consent. What opposition there was—and it burst the petroleum royalties—came from a few independent-minded men, who were either Liberals like myself or Labour members. Disappointed as I was with official Liberalism, I remained with the party, stood once more at the General Election as a Liberal, and went down with the ship. I have come up again, clear of party ties, and it is as a land-values man that I advocate our cause to-night.

Mr. Burt and Mr. Gordon contributed short speeches, and thereafter tea and coffee were served.

Mr. John Paul opened the second half of the meeting in a speech in which he dealt, among other things, with the affairs and prospects of the movement. He explained what had been done at the Ilkley Conference and since by the United Committee. Referring to the immediate future, he urged the importance of getting together in view of the coming November Municipal Elections. The Rating of Land Values, he said, was still a question that could appeal to the Scottish people, even though for the moment it had been astutely turned down and hidden from sight by the politicians out for land purchase. It was agreed that the League should take full advantage of this opportunity, and at a further meeting of the Committee the question of holding a housing and rating conference at Glasgow

some time in the fall under the auspices of the United Committee and the League met with enthusiastic approval.

The Annual Meeting of the Scottish Liberal Federation was held in the North British Hotel on Wednesday, April 16th. Sir William Robertson proposed the re-election of Mr. Asquith as honorary president of the Federation.

Ex-Bailie Burt, Glasgow, moved an amendment that they do not appoint Mr. Asquith. To-day the Liberal Party was humiliated and discredited. Mr. Asquith had been the leader of the Liberal Party since Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. He received a magnificent heritage. To-day the party was gone, only a handful of members left, with no policy and no encouragement. What chance was there of fighting the country on the programme laid down by Mr. Asquith? They got rid of Lord Rosebery because he would not lead. It was not the coupon that lost the Liberals the election. It was because Mr. Asquith and his friends had no alternative policy. The people of Fife were not sorry for what they did in rejecting Mr. Asquith. They did it deliberately. The amendment was not seconded, and Mr. Asquith was declared elected.

Mr. P. Pyfe, Chief Sanitary Inspector of Glasgow, delivered a lecture on "The Housing of the Working Classes," at a meeting of the Social Service League in Perth, on April 9th. In the course of his address, says the GLASGOW HERALD of the following day, he pointed out that the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland considered that 121,430 houses were immediately necessary.

Discussing the question of the economic rent of the working man's three-apartment house, Mr. Pyfe said they found, on reading the report of the Royal Commission, that they estimated at £350 would be its average cost for some years to come. The rent of such a house at 5 per cent., plus the costs to cover repairs, insurance, taxes, management and sinking fund, would be £25 2s. per annum. If £2 17s. for one-twelfth of an acre were added they had £27 19s. as the rent he had to pay if no State subsidy was to be given. He was not of opinion that the working man could afford to pay such a rent. Seven shillings per week, or about £18 per annum, was, in his judgment, the maximum he could afford, which would leave a yearly deficiency to be made up by the State and the ratepayer of £10 per house. Consequently, on the 121,430 dwellings estimated by the Royal Commission as being immediately necessary in Scotland they were faced with an annual deficiency of £1,214,300, only twelve houses were to be erected on each acre of land costing 10d. per square yard. He need not tell them that no suitable land in or in the immediate vicinity of a town could be purchased at such a low rate, but he had purposely taken that price in order to show that, even at that minimum, a serious problem faced the nation.

THE ENGLISH LEAGUE: Fredk. Verinder, Gen. Sec., 376 and 377, Strand, London, W.C.2.

Members of the League, and readers of LAND VALUES, in the London district are asked to advise any demobilised soldiers they know of the Spring Quarterly Meeting of the League, when Dr. J. Dundas White is to open a discussion on "Demobilised Soldiers and the Land Question." The meeting is to be held in the Conference Hall of Central Hall, Westminster (corner of Tothill Street) on Wednesday, May 7th, at 7.30 p.m., Mr. H. G. Chancellor, Vice-President, in the chair.

A circular was recently sent to all the members of the League containing a large variety of suggestions for individual activities. A number of members have already found these suggestions useful. But the following letter makes yet another suggestion upon which a member here and there may be able to act. The writer says: "I am the Principal of several advanced shorthand classes, and every week I read extracts from LAND VALUES. An idea has struck me of how I can still further support you. Will you kindly send me a few of your printed addresses (one of each will do) which I could read to the students. The pupils not only 'take down,' but transcribe at home, and I believe my idea would still further aid you in your fight."

A member of the League, who uses the pen-name of "Landval," is carrying on a most useful correspondence in the columns of local papers at Burnley.

A special circular, addressed to Co-operative Societies, is in the Press.

Councillor Marshall, a member of the Executive, carried a Resolution on the Land Acquisition Bill at the local Co-operative Society (Kingston-on-Thames). The Resolution is being sent forward to a larger Conference.