

## SCOTTISH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

To Promote the Taxation of Land Values

EDINBURGH, 6th OCTOBER, 1917

Under the joint auspices of the United Committee and the Edinburgh Taxation of Land Values League, a SCOTTISH NATIONAL 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 Freemasons' Hall, Edinburgh, on Saturday afternoon, October 6th.

Mr. H. S. Murray (Galashiels), President of the Edinburgh League, occupied the Chair, and the Conference was addressed by Messrs. R. L. Outhwaite, M.P., J. Dundas White, LL.D., M.P., Chas. E. Price, M.P., P. Wilson Raffan, M.P., Frank Smith (London), and Ex-Bailie Peter Burt, J.P. (Glasgow).

A representative gathering of some 650 persons filled the Hall, and both by attendance and composition the Conference justified the conveners in naming it a national meeting. Its importance and its success as a demonstration likely to have far-reaching results may be gauged by the fact that delegates came from 85 towns and places in Scotland, from Glasgow and the West, Fife, Perth, Alloa, Dunfermline, Aberdeen, Dundee, the Lothians, and the Borders. A number of delegates had also travelled from England, from places as far away as Newcastle, Leeds, Halifax, Darlington, Birmingham, Manchester, and London. The number of appointed delegates totalled 482, from 170 organisations, including 24 Town and Parish Councils, 85 Trade Unions, 30 Co-operative Societies and Guilds, and 31 political and miscellaneous associations.

In addition to the speakers and to the large number of lady delegates and visitors, there were present: Lord Provost Don and City Treasurer Soutar (Dundee); Councillors John K. Murray and John King (Motherwell); Provost Anderson and Ex-Bailie Coutts (Newburgh); Parish Councillor John Gordon, J.P. (Cathcart); Parish Councillor Thos. Lindsay (Campsie); Councillors John McMichael, J.P., and Wm. J. McLaren (Edinburgh), as visitors; Bailie Archbold (Edinburgh I.L.F.); Messrs. J. D. C. MacDonald, W. J. Young, Wm. Lamont, A. M. N. Wilson, F. Satterthwaite, Alex. Glen, Geo. A. Reid, James Brunton, and T. Thomson (Edinburgh); Messrs. T. Cameron, J. S. Neill, D. McLardy, A. M. Little, M. Fairley, R. McGhee, R. Cassels, G. B. Waddell, and A. S. Munsie (Glasgow); Mr. D. M. Allan (Leven); Mr. I. Mackenzie (Inverness); Mr. Chas. H. Smithson (Halifax); Mr. W. R. Lester (Horsted Keynes); Mr. Walter Coates (London); Mr. J. E. Dugdale (Luddenden); Messrs. S. Smith and C. Newrick (Darlington); Mr. Chapman Wright (Birmingham); Miss C. Davidson (Newcastle); and Messrs. James Busby, A. W. Madsen, and John Paul (Secretary of the United Committee).

Apologies were intimated from Sir Edward Parratt, LL.D., M.P., Sir John McCallum, M.P., Sir James Scott, Rev. John Glasse (Edinburgh), Bailie John Muir (Glasgow), Messrs. J. M. Hogge, M.P., J. W. Gulland, M.P., D. T. Holmes, M.P., L. F. Jacobs (of Melbourne), Fredk. Verinder (London), Henry Brown (Edinburgh), A. W. Metcalfe (Belfast), Mr. Wm. Cassels (Glasgow), Jos. Davidson (Bellaghy), H. B. Douglas (Bucklyvie), and Mrs. Macrae (Glasgow). From local authorities and various organisations letters were also received, regretting that owing to distance and other obstacles it was found impossible to send a delegate in. These letters were accompanied by an expression of approval of the objects of the Conference; and among others came from the Parish Council (Galashiels), the Farm Servants' Union at Cramond and Kilmarnock, the Shop Assistants' Union (Galston), the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (Hurtford), the Carpenters' Society, and the Coachmakers' Society (Dundee).

The CHAIRMAN said: Ladies and Gentlemen, I look upon it as a great privilege and a great honour to preside over this important conference on the Land Question. My first duty is to extend a hearty welcome to all who have come here to-day from the various districts of Scotland and England, representing as they do wide and popular interests in this great question.

We meet at a time when Europe is cursed with the horrors of a dreadful war which has laid waste large tracts and districts of country, and which has plunged huge populations into social misery and social want. The foundations of our social fabric as we are accustomed to view them are being undermined. In some places so much so that social chaos and social anarchy are taking the place of social order. Such an upheaval as we are witnessing has not been produced by small causes. It is said, of course, that

this war is due to the lust for dominion and power by the German nation, led, or, I should say, misled, by these unscrupulous statesmen who rule over the destinies of that country. That is perhaps, no doubt, the immediate and proximate cause of this trouble, but if we wish to find out the real cause of this social upheaval, we must go deeper than that. (Hear, hear.) And, as far as I am concerned, I maintain that we must seek for it in those inequalities of wealth distribution which, unfortunately, are cursing modern society.

#### RECONSTRUCTION AND THE LAND

When this war comes to an end, there will have to come reconstruction; you see in the papers every day what is going to be done. I think our meeting here is very opportune, for we wish to put forward our views as to the direction in which reconstruction ought to take place. I said that

the true cause of this social upheaval is to be found in unjust social conditions—(hear, hear)—and these unjust social conditions we maintain are brought about by a most vicious land system. The land, on which and from which all must live, the land which has been provided by nature as the common storehouse for humanity, has been and is being diverted from its fundamental purposes. Instead of being used as common property of the whole people, it is presumed and assumed to be the property of only a section or a separate class of the people. The laws of nature are thus entirely overturned, and we are living in a society which is an attempt to live in violation of the laws of nature. That is a condition which never can succeed. We are here to urge that this evil land system should be brought to an end, and that the land should be restored to that common purpose for which it was manifestly created. How do we propose to do that? To restore the land to the people does not mean, as some ignorant critics who wish to misrepresent us declare, dividing the land up and giving each person a share of it. That would mean the perpetuation of the present system on a more gigantic scale. What the people want is the value of the land. It is a right that they can obtain by the taxation of land values. That is the true solution of the land question; that is the method by which the whole nation may again enter into its inheritance.

#### LAND VALUES AND IMPROVEMENTS.

I am aware that many people have great difficulty in understanding what we mean by the taxation of land values. There is the question of land in the country used for agriculture, and there is the question of land in the towns, or what is called building or urban land. If we take the land in the country first, I would like by a short illustration to put before you what we mean by the taxation of land values. Suppose a farm to be rented at 30s. per acre. On such a farm there are a great many improvements, namely, buildings, farm steadings, fences, drainage, unexhausted manures, and generally what has been done to increase the productivity and to increase the produce of the land. They are the capital invested in the land, and stand for a large part of the value of the farm. Suppose that they represent half the value, that is to say, 15s. per acre. These improvements should not be taxed at all. To tax improvements, is a certain way to prevent improvements being made at all, and it is in the interests of the nation that the rural land should be improved as much as possible in order to yield the best results. The rest of the value of the farm, namely, 15s. per acre, represents the annual value of the land apart from the improvements. It is that portion of the value which we say belongs to the community as a whole, and which ought to be taxed. The same principle applies to the towns—to the urban land. Look at the enormous values, for instance, of the land on which the City of Edinburgh stands. This value is purely the result of the presence of the community of Edinburgh, and it has nothing whatever to do with individual enterprise or individual effort. Look at Princes Street. I am told that a small piece of ground on which a large establishment has been built there cost the owners no less a sum than £100,000. Well, at 5 per cent. that would mean £5,000 per year. It is that value we say ought to be taxed, and all taxes ought to be taken off the buildings and the improvements.



HARRY S. MURRAY,

*Chairman of the Conference and President of the Edinburgh League.*

#### THE RING OF HIGH-PRICED LAND

There has appeared in the papers this morning the Report of the Royal Commission on Housing, in which it is declared that no less than a quarter of a million houses are necessary for the proper housing of the people. How are these to be provided? There comes the difficulty of the land monopoly, for the housing problem is the outcome of the land being held up for high prices. In order to destroy that monopoly you have got to impose the taxation of land values. If you do this in Edinburgh you would destroy entirely the ring-fence of monopoly which surrounds Edinburgh. The landowners hold to the land for higher prices in the future. You would then get the houses built in any quantity at low rents, and give breathing space for the whole population. Let the City of Edinburgh but spread its wings out in every direction and it would give the population decent accommodation to live in under proper conditions. That is the method by which we propose that the people of Edinburgh, like the people of other cities in Great Britain, should enter into their inheritance of the land. (Applause.)

I have much pleasure in calling on Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, M.P., to move the first resolution. (Applause.)

#### THE FIRST RESOLUTION

**Mr. R. L. OUTHWAITE, M.P.,** moved the following resolution:

This Conference affirms that the land should be treated as the property of the people, and that the economic rent of land (its value apart from the value of improvements) should be devoted to public purposes:

Condemns the Corn Production Act as a measure that will keep up the rents of corn-growing lands, and benefit landowners at the expense of the community rather than increase the production of food;

Recognises that the reason why the Scottish Small Landholders Act, and other measures for settling smallholders on the land have broken down, is that they have failed to grapple with the fundamental problem of land monopoly;

And declares that, as an essential means for destroying land monopoly, Parliament must impose a tax on Land Values, thus promoting freedom of production which, with freedom of trade, is the true basis of national prosperity and international peace.

Mr. OUTHWAITE said: In the discharge of the task which has been allocated to me I am confronted with some exceptional difficulties. I want to refer to the future; but that future—the not-far-distant future—will be so unlike the present in which we are living, that there is some difficulty in readjusting our minds to its consideration. I feel we are like the prophet who was brought to Belshazzar's banqueting hall to interpret the writing on the wall in the terms of doom. For these are the days of festival. These are the days of high carnival when, having mortgaged the national estate almost to the last penny, we are rioting upon the proceeds. The expenditure of seven million pounds per day has brought about a condition of affairs which caused a cynical Australian to write from the trenches lately: "It would be a great pity if the war should come to an end, for it would throw many fellows out of good jobs." (Laughter and applause.) I have been, for instance, speaking down in South Wales where, among the steelworkers, there are men earning £15 per week; and I was in Bradford lately, and my host told me that in the shops of the city luxuries were displayed as never before in the history of the place.

## HARVEST TIME OF "PROFITEER" AND MONOPOLIST

Just at that time, I happened to look in the papers and noticed the annual meeting of the Prince Shipping Line. The chairman was somewhat despondent over the hard treatment being meted out to shipping companies. Nevertheless, they were able to declare a dividend for the year of 30 per cent. and to carry a quarter of a million to the reserve fund, bringing it up to some £700,000. We have contractors who are paid by the vicious system of getting from the Government 20 per cent. on their gross expenditure, and we have these men actually inciting the workers to demand higher wages, so that they may increase the cost of the contract, and may increase what comes to them from the 20 per cent. of the gross cost. We have the Corn Production Bill carried into law, assuring not only plunder for the present, but plunder for the future; not only for the farmers but also for the landowners. Taking the production to be the same as in 1914, they will get in increased prices for 1914, or in subsidy from the State, no less than one hundred millions. But if the production goes up by 50 per cent., as they expect, it will be one hundred and fifty millions. Then we have a State grant or subsidy of about fifty millions a year, in order to keep down the cost of the loaf 3d. below the cost of production. Then we have a section of the community coming forward with a demand for the erection of houses free of interest, which means houses free of the cost of production. We have the moneylender securing, not 3½ per cent. as in the days before the war without State security, but interest rising from 4 to 5 per cent., until now it is at 5½ per cent. War is the harvest time of the moneylender, and over all we have a gigantic bureaucracy established, so that there is to-day in London virtually a job for every man who will come into the swim. Rare and refreshing fruit is being distributed to-day. (Laughter and applause.) And over all presides the Government. It is thus that the orgy proceeds in the presence of death. This great harvest time goes on here, the harvest time of the profiteer and the monopolist, and a hundred miles away, death is reaping its harvest of the young and the brave.

## THE DAY OF LIQUIDATION

But we must realise that this is not going to continue for long. There is another day coming—a day of reparation, a day of retribution, and a day of liquidation. It was just these conditions that marked the eve of the French Revolution a hundred and twenty years ago. All went well with the King upon his throne until his Finance Minister proclaimed that the National Exchequer was bankrupt, as is vividly set forth in Carlyle's FRENCH REVOLUTION, where he says: "Great is bankruptcy; the great bottomless gulf into which all falsehoods public and private do sink disappearing; where from the first origin of them they were all doomed. For nature is true, and not a lie. No word you speak, or act you do, but will come with longer or shorter circulation like a bill drawn on Nature's reality, and be presented there for payment—with the answer 'No effects.' The pity only that it had so long a circulation; that the original forger were so seldom the bearer of the final smart of it. Lies, and the burden that they bring, are passed on; shifted from back to back, and from rank to rank, and so land ultimately on the dumb lowest rank who, with spade and mattock, with sore heart and empty wallet, daily come in contact with reality and can pass the cheat no further."

## THE NATIONAL DEBT AND ITS BURDEN

We are spending to-day at the rate of some seven million pounds. We know not how long the war will continue. If it only lasts to the end of the present financial year, we will be faced by a National Debt of some four or five thousand million pounds. If it goes on as some anticipate for another year, there is high financial authority for saying that the National Debt will be ten thousand millions. And we have Lord Leverhulme saying that we will have to raise one thousand millions in the year from taxation from this country. We will not, because we cannot. The wealth is not here to provide it. (Hear, hear.) If we take the figure of five thousand millions, and allow five per cent. for interest and one per cent. for sinking fund, it means that, in the service of that debt, we shall have to raise three hundred millions per year. Then the Minister of

Pensions has just stated that there are nine hundred thousand pensioners on his books, a number which may be increased. Consequently, we will have to raise from fifty to eighty millions per year for pensions. Therefore, for the cost of the war services, for the debt and the pensions, we will have to raise 350 millions or more for these particular purposes than we raised altogether before the war. We financed the country for 180 millions then, so that we will have to raise, instead of 180 millions, between five and six hundred millions. The MANCHESTER GUARDIAN says we will have to raise six hundred millions, but I put it at the low figure of five hundred millions, if the war ended within the next few months.

## WHO IS TO PAY?

How are we going to raise that sum? Are we going to cast it on the back of the millions who will be reduced, to a very great extent, to poverty conditions? Are we going to say to the six or seven millions of men drawn to the colours, to the men who have been enduring the horrors of this war, who have been doing it for a shilling a day, are we going to say to these millions when they return and strive to get into employment, "Now here is a fresh burden for you to undertake. Whilst you were away making your sacrifices, we have piled up debt to the moneylender amounting to five thousand millions. Now three hundred millions a year are required to pay for that debt. Take off your coat, get back to the loom, and the forge, and into the mine, and render up the produce of your labour so as to pay that money to the moneylenders." Is that the proposition which you propose to put before the men? It is not one they will accept, I am confident of that. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

If you proceed to raise this money, without casting upon industry and upon commodities an extra burden, by way of indirect taxation, there is only one way by which it can be done—you will have to bring in the balance sheet against this vast debt, on the credit side, the national assets of the country. The national assets are the land and the coal and iron that go with the land. (Applause.) And you can bring the value of the national assets into the Exchequer by the simple process of the Taxation of Land Values. You can compel every owner of land to declare to the State, as has been done in Australia and New Zealand, what is the value of the land, and by the simple process of taxation, you can bring that value into the Treasury, and only by absorbing the full value by taxation can you prevent this vast burden of taxation falling upon the shoulders of the people.

## THE INDUSTRIAL FUTURE

Look at the industrial future. There are people who say that there is going to be a good time after the war for labour, and that there will be a great demand for labour to make good the ravages of war. There may be a demand immediately after the war in certain industries. Ship-building is cited. Let us suppose, then, that this is so. What would happen? Into this particularly benefited industry everybody would strive to enter, and the rush into that trade would drive wages down to the lowest, and the wages of all labour goes up or down together. But that is only one side of the picture. What is to happen to the men who return from the war? After the war, owing to taxation and the disturbance of trade, there will be less demand for commodities, less demand for the activities of labour than before the war.

What is the one fact that presents itself to us to-day? That, to-day, we are probably producing more wealth in this country than at any other time in our history. Great captains of industry, such as Lord Glenconner, say that the output of iron, coal and steel is greater than before, and this gigantic output has been brought about by the increase of machinery, and more particularly by the employment of a vast female labour army. That being so, what is there to show that the present labour forces cannot produce all the wealth required? There is nothing to show it, and that being so, what is to become of the six or seven millions of men who are, to-day, taking no part in the production of wealth, but who have been drawn to the Colours? This vast production of wealth is going on without the services of these men. What is to happen when they are dismissed from the Colours, if the present

labour forces can provide for the demands of the community? If they left the present economic factors to have full play, you will have the rush for employment by work-seeking hordes, millions strong.

#### THE MAN AT THE FACTORY GATE

Where you had one at the factory gate before seeking work you will have a hundred in the future; and the few you had at the factory gates before were sufficient to set up a force that drove wages down. The man at the gates is the danger man for the man within the gates. The man within the gates strikes or demands better conditions of employment; there are men without the gates to take their jobs in the day when Trade Unionism fails. And the danger is that, when they are a hundred thousand or a million strong, they by their competition will set up a struggle for existence greater than this country has ever seen, so that the whole of the wages will be driven down to below sustenance level. We had a low wage level before the war. We will under these conditions have a lower one after the war.

#### THROW OPEN THE LAND FOR USE

Were they to make no provision for these conditions in the future? I can see only one way of dealing with these matters, and only one thing to be done. And I challenge any man, either in this audience or any other, to prove that there is another way of giving opportunity for the production of wealth. If you want to increase the opportunity for the production of wealth, so that men may be employed, there is only one way of doing that, and that is to give increased opportunity of access to the soil, the source of all wealth. (Applause.) So that it will be a matter of providing for the maximum production and the maximum employment of labour to see that, if there is an idle acre of land, and an idle man desiring access to it, he shall have it. (Applause.) It is there that the taxation of the land comes in, the taxation of the land at its value, whether it be used or not. By it the owner or occupier of the soil shall produce wealth from it, or shall allow somebody else who will. Have you seen that Report which has just been issued with regard to deer forests? During the operation of the Small Landholders Act, when we could only get 500 acres for small-holdings, deer forests have grown by more than 5,000 acres. But we know that this proposal for the Taxation of Land Values will break up this monopoly system of the land, and compel its utilisation.

#### JUSTICE AND LAND MONOPOLY

It is not a matter of employing a few thousand men or a few million on the land. The employment of the men on the land will give opportunities to men employed in the towns in the industries where they desire to be employed. The full production of the soil will mean a demand for commodities produced in the towns. So that, by the destruction of the land monopoly, we will set up a demand for the employment of labour everywhere. And we arrive at that by what is, to my mind, the grandest feature of all: we arrive at it a long the lines of truth and justice. The other day Mr. Asquith, speaking at Leeds, said that when we came to reconstruct after this war, we shall see that the building set up shall have the corner-stone justice, and the foundation justice. That is what we desire. We land taxers say to the private owners of the soil, that their ownership is the fundamental injustice that we wish to see rectified. (Applause.) We desire that, in place of fundamental injustice, there shall be established justice. And when we know, as we do, that the present economic conditions have resulted in human slavery, the doing of economic justice will come right home. (Loud cheers.)

#### AN ACCEPTED PRINCIPLE

Mr. J. DUNDAS WHITE, in seconding the resolution, said: In seconding this resolution, which has been moved by my friend Mr. Outhwaite, one sees in looking at it, that it contains four parts, and that these four parts stand square on the one great principle, namely, that the land

ought not to be regarded as the heritage of the few, but that it ought to be treated as the heritage of the people as a whole. That is a view which has been expressed in many places, and in many centuries, but we are met to-day to put it forward not merely as a sentiment or as a legal theory, or as a theory from some distant past, or as a dream for some far future, but we put it forward as a working principle to which we desire to give practical application, here and now. (Applause.) When, as practical people, we try to apply it, we find that the best way way of applying it is by the simple principle which lies at the root of the taxation of land values, that those who hold the land of the country ought to be called upon to contribute to the needs of the nation, according to the value of the land they hold, irrespective of whether they are using it or not. That is the principle for which many of us are in Parliament. That is the principle for which a far greater number are publicly contending. That is the principle which will ensure the establishment of a true democracy, which we all hope to see.

#### THE RESULTS OF ITS APPLICATION

Supposing that we are to carry that principle out, note the results. In the first place, ladies and gentlemen, we should give practical effect to the rights of the people to the land, which was never more important than it is to-day. In the second place, we should be able to raise revenue without burdening industry. And in the third place, if we made those who hold the land pay according to its value, whether they used it or not, then we would bring to bear an economic pressure on those who are holding the land without using it, that would compel them to use it. (Applause.) And there, again, we can report an excellent result, because that would tend to increase the available amount of land, would make land cheaper than it is at the present time, and would open up Nature's storehouse to the people as it had never been done before.

Mr. Outhwaite has dwelt upon the financial side, and the financial side is of great importance. But the economic side is no less important, because, while we desire to take the value of the land in the service of the public revenue, we want still more to make that system the basis of economic reforms which will enable the people to use the resources of the country as they have never been used in times gone by. Our Chairman has told us what we mean by the market value of the land, apart from the improvements; and while we have, on the one hand, taxation of land values, we desire to couple with it, on the other hand, no taxation of the houses and improvements, to the greatest extent possible.

#### NO TAXATION OF IMPROVEMENTS

There was a time when we had corn laws, and the food of the people was taxed, and what was the result? The price of food was sent up, and the people could not afford to buy it. Then the importation of corn was checked and you had a corn famine. To-day you have something the same as regards housing. Whoever has put up a house is rated and taxed heavily. The result is that the amount to be paid for a house is higher than people can afford, and we have a house famine, which has got much worse during these years of war. We want to put a stop to that vicious system. The land is withheld from use for the sake of getting a higher price, and on the other hand you find that whenever a house is put up, up goes the valuation, and up go the taxes. The better the house, the heavier the rates and taxes. And that penalty is inflicted not once, but for all time, year after year, with mechanical regularity. And then we wonder that building has been checked for so many years.

Nor is it only a matter of housing. It will be very important, after the war, to do what we can to give better opportunities to our industries, and we want factories and workshops to be large and wholesome, so that the people who work there may be healthy. And it will be important from the health point of view, as well as for the encouragement of production, to have the best factories possible. But in the present circumstances the higher you carry that idea, and the higher you urge it, and the

more effective machinery you install, the higher you will be rated, and the heavier will be the taxes. There could not be a more vicious system. The more you improve, the heavier the penalty. But let the improvements go down. The system at once favours the owner. If a man takes land from productive use, and turns it into game-preserving ground or grazing ranches, at once his valuation is reduced and his taxes and rates are reduced too. And if the land is kept absolutely idle, then he has practically nothing to pay at all. I hold that every facility is given for keeping the land lying idle by this method and by making improvements bear the burden, those who do anything are placed under penalty.

#### ENCOURAGE PRODUCTION AND CULTIVATION

We desire to reverse that process. We want to say to those who own the land, "whether you use it or not, you shall have to contribute to the needs of the people, according to its market value." (Applause.) And we would further say, "Build as good housing as can be built; put up wholesome factories and workshops, and use it agriculturally as well as you can." We want to encourage agriculture. This submarine menace may be a blessing in disguise if it shows the true way. At present, any farm building, hay-shed, any byre, any house that may be erected, results in the rates and taxes being at once raised, while there is great difficulty in getting land for small-holdings—look at the compensation which had to be paid in the Lindean case! while the Smallholders Act is practically a dead letter to-day. And any small holders' scheme will be nothing else than a failure, until you go to the root of the matter, and lay the axe at the root of land monopoly by the taxation of land values. On that basis, whether people are using the land or not, they will bring land into the market for the people, and nothing else will.

#### THE REDUCTION OF LAND PRICES

There is no fear that this will send up the price of land. It will bring it down. Houses and other things are the result of human industry. The land is not. You cannot add to the size of the planet. There is a public demand for land, of which there is a limited quantity, and that quantity is far more limited than it ought to be by reason of an artificial scarcity which ought never to be allowed. I remember a committee on which I sat some years ago. We had evidence from Edinburgh, and we were told that there was a reserve price on the feuing land round the city, but as soon as there was a demand for land this reserve feuing price was raised. Far be it from me to suggest that that reserve feuing price was too high. I have no doubt that that was the value of the land, but that is the value on which I would tax those who are holding the land. (Applause.) If you do that, you will break down the artificial scarcity, and you get sites to begin building upon in a way you cannot otherwise do.

This land question lies at the root of not only national prosperity, but of our national existence. It lies at the root of the housing question, the industrial question, and the wages question, because every acre of land that is being kept back from use deprives labour of the natural means of support, and the whole condition of labour is depressed.

#### LEADING THE WAY

In this matter we want our country to lead the way, but already our Colonies have done so. Some people think that the taxation of land values is a theory which has never been tried. It has been tried to-day on a large scale. It has been in operation in New Zealand for many years. There is taxation of land values by the Commonwealth of Australia and by every one of the Australian States. In the City of Sydney, with a population of 700,000, they have placed all their rates on the land values and all buildings and improvements are rate free. (Applause.) Why should not Scotland do likewise, and the cities of Scotland? Our country may lead the way. The principle can only be applied by each nation within its own territory, but in proportion as other nations do so they will increase their prosperity still further.

#### FREE TRADE AND LAND REFORM

The resolution has something to say about freedom of trade. That is also bound up with our ideals. Great as land reform would be in itself, there are other things. The markets of all nations should be common and open altogether to the free interchange of what they produce. Freedom of trade is a great positive principle. There ought to be a free interchange all over the world, no matter what the countries are, or where they may be. Considerations of that sort may seem far off, but they are true considerations, and if we are to move in that direction we must keep them steadily in view. We meet to-day to proclaim a great reform, which will prepare the way for other reforms, and it is important that, whatever the conditions may be, that we should still keep these ideals steadily in view, for they lead us along the road of both national and international prosperity and goodwill. (Applause.)

**Mr. FRANK SMITH**, in supporting the resolution, said: In these days when we begin to talk seriously, we are told "Hush, do not say anything, there is a war on." (Laughter.) Don't argue. Don't criticise. Don't find fault. Be brothers all. Love one another. Don't find fault with anybody. Get on with the war." (Laughter.) Well, the war has done more than disintegrate countries outside this one. It has disintegrated things pretty badly here. Parties have been split in all directions. Thank God for that. (Laughter and Applause.) May it be a case of Humpty-Dumpty with everyone of them, sat on the wall and could not be put together at all. (Laughter.)

#### MORE CRUEL THAN PRUSSIANISM

All the time that parties are splitting up, certain sections are piling up things on their own account. (Hear, hear.) There is only one class and party that really gains right along the line. Tax your matches, tax your tobacco, tax everything, tax anything, but don't tax the landlord! (Laughter.) Yes, that is the only section of the community which is free to-day. Of all things they are reaping the benefit. Here is a power that, before life or liberty can be gained, must be smashed. A power more lustful and more cruel than Prussianism. (Hear, hear.) Because we do know what Prussianism is, naked and unshamed; but these are a cunning, hypocritical crew, while they profess to be patriots—are mere parasites battenning upon the blood of the real patriots. (Applause.) And if you smash Prussianism, and leave the land monopoly alone, the end will be worse than the beginning. (Hear, hear.)

#### PARTY DIFFERENCES

What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do? Landlordism, great as it is, is not half so powerful as you. And when I say "you," I mean the great mass of the population, those who are driven like dumb sheep to the slaughter, and dare not say "boo" to a goose. Oh, what a courageous crowd we are. They say "On the knee," and we don't even wait to get down on one. We get down on two. (Laughter.) You are more powerful than any influence there is, if it were not for your miserable sectional differences, the little petty jealousies. (Hear, hear.) "My party," "Your party," "Any party." What does it all amount to but dust on the balance all the time, allowing the enemy to get off with the swag.

#### DAVID AND GOLIATH

One thing I like about Scottish audiences is that they understand Biblical illustrations. (Laughter and applause.) I was thinking a while ago about the great influence of the land monopoly, and there came into my mind the story of David and Goliath. You know how Goliath strutted before the armies and dared them to come on. And Landlordism is, to-day, an impudent monopoly. It has not got the decency to be civil. It does not even say "By your leave," but says "You must." There is to-day a Goliath in this country, and he is the landlord interest.

There was one thing that David knew, and that was the giant's soft spot. He got it. (Laughter.) David knew the soft spot, and knew how to get there. Now I don't ask you to throw stones at the landlord. But he has a

softer spot than his brain box. He has a bank account. The Goliaths of to-day are the landlord monopolists, and they have their soft spot. It is their pocket, and that is where you have to hit the giant of land monopoly. Why, if you even talk about it, it is enough. (Laughter.) Only fancy, when you had a halfpenny per £ they were all going to the workhouse immediately. (Laughter.) That is the place to hit them. How can you hit them? By the simple process of the taxation of land values. (Applause.)

#### THE FOUR WAYS

My five minutes are nearly up, and I will finish with an illustration I am fond of, and I put it to my Socialist and Labour friends. Of course, don't throw me off the platform. I am a Socialist and Labour lover and worker. (Applause.) And I am all these things because I love humanity, and because I don't care that for politicians. British law is a powerful instrument, but there is a greater authority than British law, and that is Divine law. And that law has declared clearly that the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. The earth has a heritage He gave to the children of men, and we say that land monopoly or privilege has stolen that heritage of humanity.

We have to get it back. How? There are four ways. We could kick them out. Well, that was tried in Russia recently. (Laughter.) Perhaps we shall, but I don't know. While I am prepared to have a revolution, if everybody else is agreed, mind you, I am not going to have a revolution on my own. (Laughter.) But if everybody is agreed on a revolution, all right, I am in with it. But everybody is not ready, and we are not ripe enough for that.

Then you will say, "If you cannot kick them out, why not legislate them out?" Well, you have three members of Parliament on the platform. Ask them, if they introduce a Bill in the House of Commons to nationalise the land, if Members will fall over one another to rise and support it. I do not think they will. There is no hope of legislation.

There is certainly no chance of buying them out. So, if you cannot turn them out, or legislate them out, or buy them out, what can you do? It is as easy as falling off a log, tax them out. That is the revolutionary proposal. Everybody here knows there are such things as taxes. Are we going to bear them ourselves, or are we going to ask the landlords to share them with us?

Never mind the petty differences. Stand up for the principle, the great, grand and glorious principle, that the earth belongs to men. By taxation, we can secure possession of it, and whenever the first opportunity comes, take your sling and your stone, and put it for the taxation of land values, and hit the monopolist in his pocket. He will then go down as quickly as Goliath did before David. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN said: There is an amendment which has been sent up to this resolution, but before we take it, I will call on those who wish to put any questions. I have one here, which I will read. It is as follows. "What is the attitude of the Single Taxers towards trusts and present-day monopolists? Will these monopolies still exist after the Single Tax has done its work in bringing the land back to the State, and what are we to do to prevent the consumer still being the victim of the monopolist who will control the produce of the land." Mr. Outhwaite will perhaps answer that question.

Mr. OUTHWAITE: I really think we ought to concentrate upon doing first things first. If there is a monopoly in regard to coal and iron, the first thing to do is to secure, through the taxation of land values possession of that monopoly of the land. There may be other things to be done afterwards, but let us do first things first. We say that by the abolition of taxation and by the abolition of private ownership in land, we shall raise wages. We say that the workers will then be able to secure, if they desire it and they cannot do it to-day, their own machinery, and their own factories. We wish to give them true freedom, when they can emancipate themselves from the domination of capital, which to-day is a monopoly.

A DELEGATE: How is it possible to get any reforms so long as you have an unreformed House of Lords? In

regard to the Scottish Smallholders Act, certain amendments were incorporated in the measure by the Lord Advocate, on the demand of the people of Scotland, but these were thrown out by the House of Lords.

The CHAIRMAN: I will take upon myself to answer that question. In a few years, if the people show absolute determination, and back up the House of Commons on this question, we will soon find means of compelling the House of Lords to pass it. None of us Single Taxers but agree with our friend's suggestions as to the necessity of destroying the legislative power of the House of Lords, and I think the taxation of land values is the best method of doing it.

A DELEGATE: Mr. Outhwaite said that those who desired to build houses with interest-free money were seeking to build the houses by refusing to pay their cost. I would like to know on what grounds does he make that assertion, and also if he does not think that the housing question is a national question, which ought to be taken up by the State as a whole.

Mr. OUTHWAITE: I was referring to the proposal that the municipalities should borrow money and build houses, and should let those houses free of the interest on the debt contracted as regards their building. My reply to that is this. In the first place, I am only replying in this matter for myself. I protest that, at a time when we can probably get great things done, the workers should divert their energies in attempts to get something which, at the best, can benefit only a section of the people. The housing problem in the main is a poverty problem, so why should we not bring up all our forces, and attack the stronghold of privilege?

A DELEGATE: Is it not the case that it is only the interest on the money that is being lent, that we want to abolish? Does Mr. Outhwaite want to defend the payment of this interest on the loan of money?

Mr. OUTHWAITE: I must not divert attention from the main issue. I would only say that whenever a municipality embarks on the building of houses, they must go into the money market to borrow for the purpose. It is the ratepayers who have to pay the interest, and therefore some of the ratepayers will have to pay for the houses for the others.

A DELEGATE: In those countries where there is Taxation of Land Values, will social problems not be just as acute, as they will be in this country, after the war?

Mr. OUTHWAITE: I do not think so. In those countries, so far as the Taxation of Land Values is bringing land into use, they will have greater opportunity. Although Australia has Taxation of Land Values, they have a tariff system which enables a few men to plunder the great mass of the wealth producers.

A DELEGATE: What effect would the Taxation of Land Values have on a superior's right to land changing hands? I am speaking of the superior's value.

Mr. DUNDAS WHITE: That is a very important question. The general principle on which we are going is this—that each piece of land should be taxed on the basis of its market value. Who is to pay the tax where there are superior and tenant? The answer is that each should share the land-value tax corresponding to the share of the land value which he enjoys. Suppose, for instance, a party feued a piece of land for £100, and which was feued to someone else, and for which the superior gets a feu duty of £60. The superior would then pay 60/100ths, or 6/10ths, or 3/5ths, and the other interests would pay the other 2/5ths, on the simple basis of proportionate contributions.

A DELEGATE: What amount would you suggest as a possible tax for a beginning?

The CHAIRMAN: I would put on 10s. per £. It depends on how much you get the House of Commons to pass.

A DELEGATE: You suggest 10s. Can you tell me how, if a 80 per cent. tax has not stopped profiteering in commodities, a 50 per cent. tax will stop profiteering in land?

Mr. J. DUNDAS WHITE: I think the gentleman is comparing two things which have very little in common. ("No, no.") I say frankly that I would take the whole of the value, but I would support, at first, the figure which has been given. If you have a 50 per cent. tax, you would take 50 per cent. of the land value, and would leave 50 per cent. If you had 100 per cent. you would take the whole value. The tax upon profits is only collected when the profit is made. The profiteer adds the tax to the price. The tax upon land values is to be assessed whether the land is used or not. If the landlords could add the tax to the price of the land, I suppose they would have no objection to the Taxation of Land Values.

Mr. OUTHWAITE: The difference is that the tax is going to those who produced the value instead of going to the individual.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment to this resolution, which I have, is in these terms: "Add to the last paragraph, 'And further, that this Conference believes that the socialisation of the land is the only cure for the land question.'"

A DELEGATE: I rise as representing the Independent Labour Party to move this amendment. It has always been the contention of the I.L.P. that the Taxation of Land Values was merely an effort to shirk the issue. We maintain that there is only one solution of the land question, and that is what is contained in our amendment. Arguments have been put forward to show that the Taxation of Land Values would solve the problem so far as the workers were concerned, but, in Australia, where the policy was in operation, there had been, during the last few weeks, one of the biggest strikes that had ever taken place in that country. Mr. Outhwaite says that by the Taxation of Land Values there will be given increased opportunities for the production of wealth. The I.L.P. has always contended that it is not the production of wealth alone that matters. The distribution and exchange are as important. There were problems just as grave and acute in branches of activity where there was no land question. I refer to the sea. You have exploitation carried on by the merchant shipping to-day, and there is no land problem there. If the land is the fundamental problem why tax it? Why not take it? Why not socialise it?

A DELEGATE: My reason for seconding the amendment is that, if the people have a right to the land, I cannot see how the Taxation of Land Values is going to give effect to it.

ANOTHER DELEGATE, in supporting the amendment, said: I am not satisfied from what has been said, that the owner of the land will not find ways and means of passing the tax on to the workers in the way that they do in other directions. You cannot pay a tax unless it comes from labour. Labour must be applied to natural resources before a tax can be raised. In that case the tax would be passed on to labour.

ANOTHER DELEGATE said: Taxation has always been the burden of the worker. No wealth or taxation could be produced without the worker. It is not the doctor, lawyer, or clergyman that produces wealth. It is the worker, and when you put a tax on the worker you certainly put a tax on his earnings. Who is getting the benefit just now? Is it the landlord? No. Is it not the banker and the shipowner? Do not be misled. Nationalisation is the real weapon for crushing monopoly in land.

Mr. OUTHWAITE, in replying to the discussion, said: It is extraordinarily difficult to reply to this amendment, because the mover has given no indication whatever of the means by which the socialisation of the land should be brought about—what he means by the socialisation of the land. It may mean exactly what we mean, and what the resolution means. If it means socialisation by taxation, then we are with him. If it means, as was suggested by the supporter of the amendment, buying out the landlord, then we are absolutely against him. I do wish the I.L.P. would come to a decision on this matter. I was at Bradford two nights ago, and at a meeting called by the I.L.P. this subject was discussed. It was most enthusiastic, and every member of the I.L.P. denied that they had been opponents of the Taxation of Land Values. They said they were most enthusiastically in favour of it, and had always supported it, and always would. At the Labour Con-

ference at Manchester, you have Mr. Philip Snowden himself moving the financial resolution, which, amongst other things, supported the Taxation of Land Values. What authority had the mover of the amendment to represent the Labour Party in opposing the Taxation of Land Values?

The CHAIRMAN put the Amendment, which was defeated. On the Resolution being put it was declared carried by an overwhelming majority, about twenty voting against. (Cheers.)

#### THE SECOND RESOLUTION

Mr. CHARLES E. PRICE, M.P., moved the following resolution:—

This Conference views with grave apprehension the financial and industrial prospects of the country after the War;

Affirms its conviction that the scarcity of housing accommodation, the overcrowding, and the conditions of poverty prevailing in both town and country are directly traceable to land monopoly;

Declares that the present system of raising public revenues aggravates these evils by penalising building, improvements, and the results of industry, at the same time exempting valuable land from taxation and enabling landowners to force up rents and prices;

Demands, as an immediate reform, a tax upon the value of land, whether it is used or not, and the relief of improvements from taxation;

And calls on the Government to complete without delay the valuation of the land now in progress, for this purpose requiring owners to furnish a declaration of the present value and character of their holdings.

Mr. PRICE said: The first part of the resolution, as you will see, refers to the financial condition of the country after the war. We do not know, no one can say definitely, how long the war will last, and no one can say at the present moment what will be the financial position of the country after the war. But, ladies and gentlemen, we at least know enough about our indebtedness at the present moment to cause many of us to look to the future with the gravest possible concern.

#### THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER AND THE U.S.A.

Apart even from that there was the statement which was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the following effect: "I think had it not been that the United States came to our financial aid this country would have been in a disastrous condition." I suppose, he was justified, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and occupying the position he did, to make that statement. I confess it filled me with profound concern to think that we had now arrived at the stage and condition that if it had not been for the help given by the United States we should have been in a disastrous condition. I felt that position all the more keenly when I bore in mind that the greatest source of revenue in this country has still remained untaxed practically up to the present time. Further, I think it was scarcely fair of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to say that we were in a disastrous condition while the source I have referred to practically remained untouched.

#### A SOURCE OF REVENUE UNTOUCHED

During my illness I was in the country, and at that time I was reading of the desolation in France, in Belgium, and other countries affected by the war, and when I looked around on this land of ours I felt that every person in it ought to thank God that we had all been so mercifully preserved. The question I asked myself was this: What use was the title deeds to the men who held the land in France, Belgium or anywhere else when the enemy was in the country? Their titles were not worth the paper they were written on. On the contrary, what was the value of the title deeds to our people here in this country?

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The value remained intact because of the enormous amount of money we are spending day by day in defending those who possess the land. Yet we were in this disastrous position, that while we had imposed enormous taxation upon the people in order to give this security to ourselves, and more particularly to the landlords, not one single penny in taxation has been imposed upon those people deriving the great benefit from this enormous expenditure. That to me is one of the most appalling things I know of at the present time. Apart from that the legislation which we have passed has actually increased the value of the land which the landlords possess and incidentally I may say that the war has contributed to the wealth of the farmers—(Hear, hear)—so that both the proprietors and those who are using the land are at this moment deriving greater benefits from the taxation which has been imposed than any other body in the community.

#### PROFITS FROM LAND SALES

As an illustration of the benefit which the legislation which has recently been passed has afforded may I give you the case of a friend of mine? I may tell you at once that that friend is from the West Country. He bought a small country farm in England five years ago, paying a sum of £1,800 for it, and he has now sold it for £2,650. That is to say, he has made a profit not of 5 per cent. but of 47 per cent. on his investment. I say that that is an appalling thing. (Cheers.) It is to me simply staggering that you should see, as we have seen, as the result of recent legislation—which we contend is as contentious as any Bill ever passed through or presented to Parliament—a demand for land at actually 50 years' purchase. I say, therefore, that this is a fruitful source from which we can ask the people interested to make their contribution towards the finance of the country.

We ought to revert to the old system of levying taxes upon land, because if you read some of the old Scottish Acts of Parliament you will find that land was a constant source of taxation. But we should be false to our aims if we declared and demanded a national tax upon land simply because the Chancellor of the Exchequer needed money. The moral as well as the economic significance of a tax upon land appeals to us infinitely more than do the financial needs of the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself.

#### THE APPALLING HOUSING CONDITIONS

This brings me to the subject matter of my resolution, and I proceed to say that if there is one thing more than another the war has revealed to us it is the appalling condition of the housing of our people. Those of you who read the Report of the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland—that report appeared in the various newspapers—would see the deplorable condition of things existing in Scotland. Of course some of us were quite familiar with the state of matters prior to the publication of the report, because similar inquiries have been made in Ayrshire, Fifeshire and other parts of Scotland. Now that we have this report before us I shall not trouble you with the figures. I trust, however, you will all read that report very carefully because I look upon it as the most informative document that has been published in Scotland for, I have no hesitation in saying, the last fifty years.

In Edinburgh the shortage of houses is estimated at 15,700, so that in that figure alone you have a little revelation given of the condition of things in Scotland. I do not know whether you saw a report of the condition of the housing in Barrow-in-Furness, which has been made by the *MANCHESTER GUARDIAN*. To be quite frank about it, a more dreadful condition of things one could hardly read about. When, however, I read that report in the *MANCHESTER GUARDIAN* I asked myself what the *MANCHESTER GUARDIAN* had done to prevent such a condition of things. That journal, with its big influence, has done so very little to assist us in advancing this big question we are interested in.

#### THE RATEABLE VALUE AND PRICE OF LAND

We go on to say that the first thing that will help us in this housing problem of ours is that there should not be one price for rating and another price for selling. That

is at the root of no end of trouble. Fundamentally that is what we are out for, namely, that the State should not discriminate between the two as to how a man is to be rated, as to the price he is to be rated at, and then again in the tax to be imposed. Therefore until you have every man making a return of the capital value of his land it will not be possible to make any effective progress. When you have such a return from every man as to the value of his land you will then have something which will stand between two individuals, the willing seller and the willing buyer. It will force the man who holds the land either to decide whether the price is too low or, on the other hand, whether it is too high.

#### THE VALUATION MISHANDLED

I think we have been making the profoundest mistake in the way we have tried to secure our reform. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, as he then was, made so many concessions when that Bill was going through Parliament, and because of those concessions and also the decisions which had been made in the courts of law, the whole benefit of the great Budget of 1909-10 was practically destroyed. No one at the present moment knows the value of the land, and that, to my mind, is an appalling condition of things. The shortest cut in securing our reform would be to compel every owner within the next twelve months to make a return of the value of his land just as he made a return of his income for Income Tax purposes. It might be argued that some owners might possibly make a false return, but if there were ultimately published a list of such returns so that the general public could see them the drawback in regard to the likelihood of false returns would speedily rectify itself. (Hear, hear.) If, then, we compelled owners within the next twelve months to make such a return as I have indicated you would at once have made the biggest step forward that you possibly could with a view to securing the object we have in view.

Believe me, if we are to go on as we have been doing during the past few years, if those vital amendments to Acts of Parliament, which judges themselves as destroying, as they have been doing in the case of the 1909-10 Budget, if such things as these are to be permitted to continue, then we shall be sitting here until doomsday before we get any practical results. I sincerely trust, therefore, that the people will bring pressure to bear on their members of Parliament in order to make sure that owners are compelled to make a return of the value of their land within the next twelve months and that the Government shall at once proceed to impose a tax on the capital value. (Cheers.)

**Mr. P. WILSON RAFFAN, M.P.**, seconding the resolution, said: Will you allow me before proceeding to second this resolution and to speak in support of it to say how delighted I am, as I am sure you all are, to find that our friend Mr. Price is able to be with us to-day and to move the resolution now before the meeting? (Cheers.) He and I have been closely associated in the House of Commons now for nearly seven years—he as Chairman of the Land Values Group and I as its Honorary Secretary. I can say this, and I am sure it is not necessary for anyone to come to Edinburgh to say it, that no man in the House of Commons is more devoted to his work and to his duties, and no one attends more faithfully to the interests of his constituents, and no one is more wholeheartedly in the forefront of any reform movement than our friend Mr. Price. (Cheers.) I am sure his breakdown in health was entirely owing to the assiduity with which he performs his public duties. We are glad to find him again with us, and we hope he will be long spared to help the cause of the taxation of land values and to help his constituents in the city of Edinburgh in all that pertains to the welfare of that city.

#### THE SCOTTISH ROYAL COMMISSION ON HOUSING

I think no one can say in coming here to-day to discuss the great question of housing, whatever conclusion we may ultimately arrive at, we are engaged in anything but a patriotic duty. As Mr. Price has told you, we have had presented to us this morning the report of the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland. I have been resident in Wales for many years and I am the member of Parliament for an English constituency, but despite that I am a Scotsman, and I am intensely proud of the fact that I



am a Scotsman. We who are now meeting in this city of Edinburgh have indeed every reason to be proud of our country, proud of our nationality. In days gone by you here in this city have made your contribution to the growth of civilisation, your contribution to the Arts, the sciences, literature and the development of medicine. No one can read this Report by the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland without feeling that Scotland cannot do its duty in the years that are to come unless we dig out from the foundation the root causes of those abominable conditions which will not give the people of the coming generation a fair chance to live. I do not desire to emphasise unduly the most terrible things told in this Report. I do not desire to throw too strong an emphasis on what after all may be a small percentage of cases, as where, for example, the Report talks of clotted masses of slums in our great cities.

#### THE "COFFIN CLOSE"

It is, however, sad and deplorable that at this time of day you can find from this Blue Book that in the city of Glasgow, which, I think, was to flourish by the preaching of the Word, there are slums so terrible that in the sunk flats the passages are pitch dark on the brightest day. The conditions are so awful that it is only by feeling along the walls that you can find the doors. It is surely sad enough that in one of these Glasgow areas the place is known as the "Coffin Close." That is the terrible designation that is applied to it, the "Coffin Close." There is no light there and absolutely no air. Is it any wonder, then, that it should be known as the "Coffin Close"? How can you expect the little children who are born there to have a chance? How can you expect to raise up there a race of men and women to be worthy, in the great days to come, of that Scotland of which we are all proud? It is not merely the conditions in the slums that are alone terrible. Whole townships, according to the Report, in agricultural areas consist of houses which are really uninhabitable in the true sense of the word. Then, too, in mining communities the housing is a disgrace to Scotland and a disgrace to civilisation.

#### HOUSING IN EDINBURGH

Here in Edinburgh I find that you have also got a housing problem of your own. I find, looking at the Report of your Medical Officer for the past year, and I am going now to compare the Morningside Ward and the St. Leonard's Ward, that in one case the density of population is 17 to the acre while in the other there are 500 people crowded together on to an acre. What is the result of that? The infantile mortality is just exactly twice, or rather more than twice, in the St. Leonard's Ward what it is in the Morningside Ward. That is to say, that out of any given number of children there are twice as many die in St. Leonard's as compared with Morningside. Don't you think the mothers down in St. Leonard's love their children just as well as the mothers do in Morningside? I think they do, but they have to submit to conditions where the little children slip away as the result of the slightest illness. They cannot get in that congested area what is the first right of every human being, good fresh air and sunshine.

Even now I say you have your "Coffin Closes" in Edinburgh as well as in Glasgow. How, then, are you going to deal with that problem in Edinburgh? I am aware that you want to be able to deal with it effectively and usefully. On the basis of following out a policy that has been called slum clearances the Corporation acquired slum property and sought to erect new buildings in its place. You have tried that in Edinburgh, and it stands in your records that after you had acquired your site in the centre of this city you discovered that the value of the land was £14,000 an acre. Well, if you are going to be charged prices like that for your sites you will never be able to solve your housing problem in Edinburgh. We hear suggestions of a new system of housing whereby we are to have ten houses to the acre. Imagine, then, what it will mean to have to pay £14,000, for the site of these houses!

#### THE IMPOSITION OF LAND MONOPOLY

I really don't care on what terms you get your money, the people of Edinburgh will never be able to stand such an imposition as that in order to carry out a scheme for

erecting houses. Further, it is not right that they should. Mark you, ladies and gentlemen, that is not the only land in Edinburgh. You have in the city of Edinburgh something like over 11,000 acres. You have all your buildings, houses, churches, all your private gardens and things of that kind covering five thousand acres. You have over two thousand acres which are devoted to streets, parks, and so on. With all that you have over three thousand acres which are described in the rate book as "agricultural land." What are these acres of agricultural land valued at? Something like £5 per acre per annum. That is a fairly high value for agricultural land, but no doubt the vicinity of the land to the city of Edinburgh gives it that value as agricultural land. Yes, if you are going to spread out Edinburgh is there any reason why it would not be much more useful to utilise these three thousand acres I have referred to so as to provide housing accommodation for the people, where everyone would have his own house and his own garden? Would it not be possible if such an arrangement as that were carried out to draw your agricultural supplies from further afield? Surely the value of that land need not stand in your way? If you cannot afford £14,000 an acre to re-erect buildings in the city where your slums are surely you can afford to pay for the agricultural land? It stands to-day valued at £5 per acre per annum—or £100 per acre at capital value. But do you think if the demand were to arise, and you were prepared to house half the people of Edinburgh on that agricultural land I have been speaking of, you would get the land at that price?

#### THE WARRENDER ESTATE

Immediately the demand for land comes to be apparent up goes the value of that land. You have had an experience of that already in Edinburgh. You know the case of the Warrender Estate, where, just about 100 years ago, the land was valued by the then Corporation at less than £1 an acre per year. Quite likely it was the value of that land then, and it would not be worth more than £25 an acre at capital value. But could you get an acre on that estate for less than £1,000 to-day? You know you could not. What is it that has tended to raise the value from £25 to £1,000 an acre and over? It has been the demand of the people of Edinburgh for housing accommodation that has enabled the owners of the land to place this increased value upon it. My contention is that we ought to say to these owners of the land: "You have put a value on this land of £1,000 an acre. Very well then, we will put the value down in the rate book at £1,000 an acre and you will have to pay rates on that amount." We could also say to the owners: "If, on the other hand, you value your land at £100 an acre that is the sum you will be rated upon. Further, if the Corporation of Edinburgh is desirous of acquiring the land for the purpose of building houses upon it that is the sum they will pay you for it, £100 an acre and not a penny more."

#### THE ROYAL COMMISSION AND THE LAND QUESTION

The Royal Commission say that the land question is a fundamental question intimately associated with all progress in regard to housing, and they say that land which has to be acquired ought to be acquired on the basis of valuation. So far I agree with the Royal Commission on Housing, but I think we ought to go further. I am not opposed to municipal buildings at all, and as a matter of fact I have always been willing to approve of any well-considered scheme of housing. Unquestionably you are making a great mistake if you discourage house building of a good type by any public body or any organisation whatever willing to undertake it. What we want are houses, good houses, and more houses, and thus it is that I say, let the Corporation build houses if they care by all means. But, after all, the very best experiments in the direction of house building have not been carried out by corporations at all. Look at the garden city at Letchworth, look at Port Sunlight, and look at Bournville. These are not municipal or corporation experiments. I say, then, that we ought to encourage the public utility companies, every society and every individual who may be willing to lend a helping hand in making good this deficiency in housing. The best way we can secure that is to see that corporations and others can acquire the land at the fixed valuation, and that a land values tax shall be placed upon all land, whether it is used or not. In that

way you will be able to provide the revenue which permits of an undertaking of this kind being carried out without too heavy a burden falling on one section of the community, and on the other hand it will ensure free access to all who desire to build and permit of them getting the land at its real value. Believe me in that way more than any other we shall help to solve this great housing question, and in solving that problem you will do much to solve all the other problems which will be to the interest of Scottish men and Scottish women in the years that lie immediately ahead of us. (Loud cheers.)

#### WEALTH FROM THE RENT OF LAND

**Ex-Bailie BURT:** I do not want exactly to enter into an economic discussion of the questions we have listened to to-day, because I feel that if the men and women present are not convinced after the arguments they have heard of the justice of the things we are contending for nothing I can possibly say will bring them to that much-to-be-desired state of mind.

We are met here as men and women with a view to discussing and, if possible, solving this rent problem. We believe that taxing the land is the easiest way of getting rid of the anomalies that we know exist. We may abolish the landlords by taxing them. If we get rid of them by taxation, how does the means of getting rid of them matter after all, so long as they are abolished? (Hear, hear.) That is the main point. It is not because we do not believe the land question could not be settled in some other way than the one we are proposing. We quite well believe that it could, but we are convinced that the method we suggest is the easiest and best way out of the difficulty.

In the course of the speeches to-day someone said—I think it was Mr. Price—that in days gone past five-sixths of the taxation of this country was derived from the land, while just now the land only contributed one-fifth of that taxation. How has that come about? Simply because the landlords have shifted the burden from themselves on to the people. Now we here are proposing to shift the burden from the people back on to the landlords.

#### HOW THE BURDEN HAS BEEN SHIFTED

We are in the midst of a great war just now and it is interesting in that connection to recall what we are told in history. We are told in history that the people of England fought the French for 100 years. The entire cost of that long war was found out of the land revenues. Since then things have changed, and latterly we have been refusing to tax the landlords but have placed the burden on the people. We are here to reverse that order of things. We are here to say that the taxation of land values is the simplest, easiest and most direct method of getting at what is wanted.

#### DISCUSSION

**A DELEGATE:** Will the speaker mention what tax was imposed upon the land in those early times? Were there not many other things that the people ought to have had? Did not the taxation of the land mean that the working classes got smaller wages? (**A VOICE:** "Come away, Bailie!" and laughter.)

**Ex-Bailie BURT:** So far, Mr. Chairman, as I have read the history of those early times I don't think the people were badly off. Professor Thorold Rogers records that in the days of Henry VIII. people were earning 14s. a day as wages. I don't think the working classes in general are earning that to-day. I do not know where all those fine historical buildings came from if the people in those times had nothing and were heavily taxed. They appear to me to have lived better in those days than they do now.

**A DELEGATE:** You are referring to the agricultural industry, but it is misleading to the people who are here to represent to us that agriculture is the staple industry of this country to-day.

**Ex-Bailie BURT:** The staple industry of this country is food. The first thing the people want is food. The thing we want most is food. (Cheers.) All the other industries are merely industries for the purpose of increasing the production of food and providing us with clothing and housing.

**A DELEGATE:** There are houses valued in Edinburgh at £350. These houses are rented at £30. The assessor taxes the houses on £30, and as I say, the occupier pays £30 per annum to the owner of the house. How much of that goes to the landlord and how much to the owner of the house? Which of these two—the capitalist who owns the house or the landlord who owns the land—gets the bigger percentage?

**Ex-Bailie BURT:** A friend of mine in Glasgow calculated that out of a building costing £100,000, not less than £90,000 went to the landlord. He showed where the landlord's interest came in first with the stone, then with the nails and timber for the windows, doors and floors, and slate that covered the roof and so on. The man who owns the land—the raw material, as it were—controls the whole industry.

**A DELEGATE:** Since it is acknowledged that the landlords have no right whatever to the land, why should we not impose a tax of 100 per cent. and root them out?

**The CHAIRMAN:** If the country could induce the House of Commons to pass a Bill placing a tax of 100 per cent. on land values no Single Taxer would object to that. The difficulty is to persuade the House of Commons to do it. (Hear, hear.) If you will help us to do so we will be very glad of your support.

**A DELEGATE:** I can see no difference, Mr. Chairman, in the amendment which was proposed against the last resolution and your proposal. To my mind it was simply a different way of arriving at the same thing. Socialists and the Single Taxers are aiming at the same thing. The Socialistic aim is to have nationalisation of the land directly.

**Mr. P. WILSON RAFFAN:** Mr. Chairman, just a word by way of answer to the remark that has been made. I am personally what may be considered a plain and blunt-spoken man, and I am extremely anxious that we should drop dialectics and try to understand each other in regard to this question. Nationalisation of the land as it is advocated in this country means as a rule the buying out of the landlord class. I am not sure whether my friend who made the remarks means that or not. I get no reply. (Loud cries of "No.") "No" is the answer from more than one corner, and I can certainly say that we are opposed to that form of nationalisation. (Cheers.)

**A DELEGATE:** There is no difference whatever between nationalising and socialising the land.

**Mr. P. WILSON RAFFAN:** I am not trying to score any advantageous point at all. I am only trying to explain the matter in such phraseology as will make it understood by all present. The particular point I suggest is that nationalising means buying, while socialising, on the other hand, means taking without purchase. When you talk in this country about the nationalisation of the land or the nationalisation of the railways that means the buying out of the land and the railways. If, on the other hand, what our friends mean is that the whole of the revenue values from the land, instead of going into the pockets of the landlords, ought to go into the pockets of the community as a whole, then we and they are in entire agreement. There are a great many people who will not go the whole way with our Socialist friends in any big agitation to socialise the land, but these same people may go a long way with us in what we are demanding in respect of the taxation of land values, and they might be disposed to assist us in giving such a scheme legislative effect to begin with. If, then, you agree with us in substance, however much we may differ in details so far as this land question is concerned, do let us try to work harmoniously together in order to try and bring about the reform aimed at.

**The CHAIRMAN** put the resolution, and it was declared carried with only one dissident.

**Councillor JOHN M'MICHAEL** moved a vote of thanks to the speakers, which was carried with acclamation, and **Mr. CHAS. E. PRICE** responded.

The Conference was brought to a close at this stage, and the delegates adjourned for tea.