

LAND VALUES CONFERENCE

CARDIFF, 10th NOVEMBER, 1917

The Conference convened by the Welsh League for the Taxation of Land Values, held at the Whitehall Rooms, Park Hotel, Cardiff, on Saturday, November 10th, came quite up to the expectations of its promoters. Mr. P. Wilson Raffan (Hon. Secretary of the Land Values Group in the House of Commons) presided. There was an attendance of over 300 delegates, chiefly from Trades Unions, Labour, and Co-operative Societies. The Conference was the outcome of the special propaganda carried out by the League as recorded in recent issues of LAND VALUES. It was a call made by the active supporters of the League, and it was fully justified both by the number of delegates in attendance and by their enthusiasm for the policy advocated. The Resolutions were carried with only a couple of dissentients. Quite a third of the delegates remained to take part in the evening meeting, where difficult points were made plain and doubts cleared away. It was quite an event in the life of the Welsh League, and very much of the success is due to Mr. and Mrs. Davies and to Mr. Skirrow, who had charge of the arrangements.

Those present included: Mr. J. Dundas White, LL.D., M.P.; Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, M.P.; Mr. R. D. Chalke, M.A., LL.D.; Mr. Samuel Fisher, J.P. (Secretary of the Cardiff Coal Trimmers' Union); Councillor E. Charles, J.P., Pontypool (Secretary, on the men's side, Great Western Railway Conciliation Board); Mr. David Davies; Mr. C. H. Smithson, Halifax (President of the Yorkshire Land Values League); Mr. W. R. Lester (Horsted Keynes); Mr. Chapman Wright (Midlands Land Values League); Mr. A. H. Weller (Manchester League); Mr. James Busby (Scottish League); Mr. Fred. Skirrow, and Mr. John Paul.

The Chairman read a number of letters of apology for absence from, among others, Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P.; Mr. H. S. Murray, Galashiels (President of the Edinburgh League); Mr. Eustace Davies (Secretary of the Welsh League); Mr. James Winstone, J.P., and Mr. Thomas Richards, M.P. (President and Secretary respectively of the South Wales Miners' Federation).

Mr. Davies wrote: It is a bitter disappointment to me that I am unable to be present. In spirit I shall be with you and the other good friends assembled at Cardiff for the purpose of pointing out the true way of placing human affairs on a rational and just basis.

I sincerely hope you will have a most successful gathering, and that as a result of it all Progressives in South Wales will determine to put in the front of their programme the Rating and Taxation of Land Values. There will be hope for the economic freedom of the workers when all Progressives are united and in dead earnest on this issue.

The CHAIRMAN said: I would like at the outset to express my delight in finding that we have been able to convene such a representative conference of the leading citizens and reformers in South Wales to discuss the question of the taxation of land values. We have had recently extremely successful conferences dealing with this question in London, Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow, Darlington and Edinburgh, and everywhere we found that there was an increasing volume of opinion demanding that immediate attention should be devoted to the land question upon the lines which had been advocated by the United Committee and the Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values for so many years. I am delighted to find that in South Wales there is a strong and vigorous body of opinion moving in the same direction. There has passed through its Committee stage in the House of Commons this week a great Reform Bill, one of the greatest measures of enfranchisement which have ever been passed in the history of this country; a Bill which at last recognises that votes should be given, not to property in bricks and mortar, but to citizenship, and citizenship that would be open to men and women alike. I am delighted that the vote is to be given, not merely to the young workmen who have hitherto been disenfranchised because their lodgings did not happen to possess the necessary property value; not merely to the women and wives who have too long been prevented from taking their share in the affairs of the country, but that the soldiers in the field will have their share in deciding the nature of the legislation which is to

be passed. (Hear, hear.) That we have moved is true—but the attempt made to secure an opportunity for the men who have been fighting to settle down on the land for the purpose of cultivating it has not met with very great success. That is not to be wondered at. It does, indeed, seem that the scheme which has been submitted to the House of Commons for the purpose of settling soldiers on the land has been allowed by its authors to perish. But what has the returning soldier to look forward to? We have a Corn Production Bill which incidentally sets up a minimum wage of 25s. a week, the equivalent of which is now, and will be after the War, 12s. 6d. per week of pre-war wages. Is it likely that these men will be willing to come back and be mere serfs of the soil, badly housed, badly fed, badly clad, with no opportunity for securing better education for their children, and no outlook for themselves? That is extremely unlikely. From the men in the towns, too, the demand will come for greater and better opportunities than in the past. (Applause.)

They live there in the mining villages with every opportunity for development in almost every case, and where there is land all round where houses could be built. Yet we find the most terrible overcrowding in the houses that already exist. There is scarcely any attempt to build garden villages with allotments adjoining them. We hear of new schemes of development under which building on new land will be something like ten houses to the acre. Mr. Hayes Fisher, in his speech this week, indicated a great building scheme after the war, in which 300,000

houses would be erected, and the cost of each house, and the land adjoining would be something like £300 per house, and he suggested that of the ninety million pounds this would entail, the State would advance one-third—thirty million pounds, and what he proposed was that this enormous sum, which is to be provided out of the National Revenue, should be handed over to Local Authorities to assist them in building houses. If we take South Wales through and through, we shall find not only in great cities and towns like Cardiff, Newport, and Swansea, but in the mining villages, that the demand for land by the local authorities is increasing its value, and that for land rated at £2 per acre something like £1,000 per acre is demanded when it is required for building purposes. Supposing that this great demand for 300,000 new houses puts up the value of land everywhere to £1,000 an acre—which is no exaggerated estimate—where do they find themselves? They build ten houses to an acre of land, they pay £1,000 for the land—£200 for the building of each house and £100 for the land—£100 to the owner who has done nothing—exactly the amount of the State subsidy. The State subsidy would go into the pocket of the landowner, and neither the local authority nor the person who inhabited the house would be a penny better off. Three hundred thousand new houses is a large estimate, but to meet the position adequately we cannot be satisfied with 300,000. I venture to assert that one-third of the people of this country are inadequately housed. What does that mean? It means that fifteen millions of people are inadequately housed, and that means not 300,000 houses, but three million. And now they are going to hand over the State subsidy of £100 per house to the landowners for the mere privilege of building houses for the soldiers who have defended this land, and the workers who supplied the munitions of war.

Within the last fortnight an attempt has been made to create a new vested interest by giving something to the landowners which they had not secured before. The Government proposes to incur a large expenditure in boring for petroleum which they think would be most valuable for the purposes of the Navy. They came to Parliament and asked for a grant to carry on the work. They proposed to pay to the owner of the surface of the land on which petroleum was found a royalty of 9d. per ton on all the petroleum that was got. That was too much, even for the present House of Commons, and they were defeated in the division on it. It was announced that the Government had not yet made up its mind as to what further action they were going to take on the Petroleum Bill. I ask those present to send the Government a message that if they are going to put a royalty on petroleum the workmen of this country are not going to allow it. (Applause.)

I believe that when the men come back from the battlefield and settle down to the work of citizenship once more they will not be content to suffer new impositions. We are here on a work of great issue. We say that the land of this country was not made by a common Father for a few children; that He made it for children having equal rights, and that we reassert our claim for the inalienable rights of the common people. (Loud applause.)

Dr. DUNDAS WHITE, M.P., moved the following resolution:—

"This Conference affirms the inalienable right of the people to the land, and declares that under a just legal system all ground rents, mining royalties, wayleaves, and such like tributes, and all other values attaching to land by reason of communal enterprise, and not attributable to the labour and expenditure of any particular individual, the bulk of which are now appropriated or are capable of appropriation by private individuals, should be collected by the Government for the upkeep and development of national and local public services;

"that because of such inalienable right, and on account of the pressing demands for additional revenue necessitated by the war, the Government would be justified in taking the drastic step of appropriating all land values for public purposes; failing such procedure the Conference urges the Government to move in this direction by levying a tax on land values in the next Budget, and for this purpose to call upon the owners to furnish a declaration of the present value and character of their holdings;

"affirms that such a tax could be made to yield a large revenue, could not be passed on to the shoulders of the workers, would promote access to land on more favourable terms than those hitherto

obtainable, would stimulate production and open up additional opportunities for employment, thereby reducing prices and increasing wages at one and the same time, which, together with Free Trade, would prevent the unemployment that threatens at the close of the war."

Dr. DUNDAS WHITE: In many parts of the country increasing interest is being taken in this important question, and it is the sincere desire of everyone associated with the movement that the Principality should take a leading part, and that Cardiff should rally to the front. The proposition is a very simple one. It is that all those who are born into the world have equal rights to what Nature has provided. They have equal rights to the land. When I say the land I mean the land itself and all that naturally pertains, to it. The land was here before man came on earth, and will be here after he has left it.

The community should assert its rights to the land in the same way as a landlord, by calling upon those who hold the land to contribute to the needs of the community in proportion to the value of the land they hold, whether they use it or not. (Hear, hear.) Those who claim to have a right to the land, those who profess to have a title to the land for the Crown—for in legal theory all land is held for the Crown—we should say to them: "You will pay us according to the value of that land whether you use it or not." We want to impose a tax on the value of land, that is, on land value. What do we mean by the phrase, "land value"? Take this building where we are. Suppose you remove the roof, take away the walls, and carry away everything that human industry has put on and under the soil, what would you have left? You would have left a certain space of land in the centre of Cardiff. If that space were in some remote part where nobody wanted it, it might be worth very little indeed, but here it is in the centre of Cardiff—that active community in which there is an active demand for land to carry on its life and work. Who put the land there? The land was put there by the Creator. It is not the result of human industry, and all have equal rights to it. How came the land to have that great value which is attached to it? Because of the business and the activity and the demand of the community. That, in the truest sense, is communal value, and should be the source of communal revenue. We therefore propose to tax land values.

Supposing we succeed in carrying out that project, what would some of the effects be? In the first place we would assert the rights of the people to the land in a most simple and effective way. In the second place we would be taking for public needs the value of a natural object which has been created by the presence and the demand of the community, and there never was a time when it was so necessary to take this value as now. We have an unprecedented national debt. We have a Budget of 500 million pounds, and income tax at a standard rate of 5s. in the pound. Surely, the present is a time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer should take for the public that which belonged to the public, assert the rights of the people to the land, and call upon those who hold the land to pay for its defence. (Applause.)

Great as the financial importance of this project is, the economic results would be far greater still, because when we tax land values we shall be laying the axe at the root of land monopoly, and will open up the land to the people. We have round the towns and villages land which might be used for building houses for the overcrowded population. At present that land is being used for agricultural purposes and rated on its agricultural value, and anyone who tries to get that land for building will find that, instead of having to pay 30s. or 40s. an acre a year for it, he would have to pay a price which represented a rent of £20 or £30. That is the universal experience all over the country. How do we propose to deal with it? We do not say that these gentlemen are asking too high a price for the land, but we would tax the landowners on the basis of what they say the land is worth. If the people who hold up the land were compelled to contribute to the taxes of the country on the assessment of what they said was the value of the land, they would soon cease holding it up. (Applause.) If they did that, instead of people seeking for land we would have the landowners seeking for tenants. The landlords would have to use it themselves or bring it into the market for the people. We would have landlords competing with

one another. with the result that the price of land would come down. This would also stop artificial scarcity of land, which means high rent.

Some people might ask: "How can the taxation of land values lower the price of land when taxes on clothes and houses cause them to be more expensive?" The answer is that in the case of houses and clothes and other things you are dealing with the products of industry, and when those who produce these things know their products will be taxed, and that it does not pay to produce them, supplies go short and prices go up. In the case of land you are dealing with something different. Land is not the product of human industry. You cannot increase the area of the country or the district. Land is a limited quantity. You cannot increase the supply; all you can do is to put a stop to the holding-up of land and the artificial scarcity that results from it. That is the root of our housing question, which is so pressing in every town and country district.

The same evil which hinders building also hinders manufacture. If land is developed in the service of the nation, whether by intensive cultivation or otherwise, the improvements are taxed. The great problem to-day is to make the land produce more than it ever did before. The use of the land is the first line of defence, and the key to the first line of defence is the taxation of land values. Look at the present system of rating and taxation. The more one improves the heavier he is taxed. The man who makes improvements is steadily fined for them every year, or every half-year, as the case may be. If he wants his assessment and rates lowered, what he has to do is to abolish his improvements. If he changes a fruitful field into a grazing ranch or a game preserve, down comes his assessment.

We have been recently fighting the Corn Production Bill. Of all the things that have been done in this world to throw dust into the eyes of the people there is nothing worse than the sham solutions offered from day to day. I look upon the Corn Production Bill as the greatest of recent shams. (Hear, hear.) It does not go to the root of the difficulty. (Hear, hear.) It proposes to guarantee to the farmer a high price which, if his corn does not fetch it, must be made up from the pockets of the taxpayers. If Nature is bountiful and gives good harvests in Argentina and other parts of the world, and wheat becomes cheap and plentiful, we are to give compensation to the farmer, and ultimately to the landlord. The key to the fallacy of the Corn Production Bill is that by guaranteeing prices we guarantee rents and those who brought in the Bill knew it. The price of land has already been sent up. Agricultural land is higher now than it has been for many years.

I had the honour of acting as one of the tellers in a recent division against the Government. We have given them something to think about. Where is the landlord's right to royalty in a time of national need? The nation's interest is being made the landlord's opportunity. Is this the time to demand payment of petroleum royalties? That Bill, called the "Petroleum Production Bill," ought to be called the "Petroleum Profiteering Bill." We are here to stop profiteering. (Applause.) The Government may say, "If you don't like our proposals, what are your proposals?" They are contained in this Memorandum presented to the House:—

"PETROLEUM.—That in the opinion of this House all petroleum under the soil of the United Kingdom should be treated as belonging to the Crown. That the Crown should have the exclusive right of boring for and getting it, and should have the power to enter on and use any land for that purpose. That full compensation should be paid for any resulting loss or damage to property, but that no payment should be made in respect to petroleum." (Applause.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, you are, many of you, citizens of a great city in the distinguished Principality. A great man from the Principality is now Prime Minister, and I venture to suggest that you could not do better at the present moment than send him a resolution along these lines. (Applause.)

Every nation in the world is suffering in the same way. Ambassador Gerard, in his book *FOUR YEARS IN GERMANY*, spoke of the German workman as being unduly exploited, compelled to work long hours on low wages in the interests

of the Prussian Junker. That was the position of the German working-man before the War, and it was his position to-day. We were right up against Junkerism everywhere. So long as a nation is in that condition that nation is a standing menace to the prosperity of its neighbours and to international peace; and we shall never get international peace until we have economic justice in every part of the world. A nation does not live for itself alone; nations must also have the benefit of international free trade, and it is because I take that view that I welcome the mention of Free Trade in the resolution. All these things have to be considered as part of a larger scheme of reform which is based on economic justice and economic freedom. It is based on the rights of the people to the land and the common brotherhood and common interests of mankind. (Applause.)

Councillor E. CHARLES, Pontypool, in seconding the resolution, said he would like to say that in a Welsh gathering of that description the fine assertion of the people's rights to access to the land, both in the terms of the resolution, and in the two speeches that had been made, were sure of finding a hearty welcome there. (Hear, hear.) That was the fundamental ground of the proposal put to them that afternoon. The second point was that there should be made a demand upon the Government that they should, in the next Budget, bring in a proposal to tax land values; that for this purpose the landlord should be called upon to declare the value of his land, both for taxation and rating purposes. At the present time they knew the land had two values, one for rating and the other for selling. They had examples of that all over Wales. In Monmouthshire, land which was rated very low had gone up to £500 an acre when required for building purposes. They knew that in places like Cardiff and other big towns it went up to more than £500 an acre. Let them take the example that Mr. Lloyd George used when he visited Cardiff and was dealing with the proposal in his Budget. The Marquis of Bute's Estate and Castle of 500,000 square yards was rated less than a little shop in the street across the road that only extended to 470 square yards. That glaring example standing by itself was sufficient to show the anomaly and injustice of the present system of dealing with the question, and how it had crippled all their efforts in the direction of reform. In the resolution they had the Labour Party and the great trade Union organisations at one with them. At the last Trades Union Congress which he attended a resolution was passed exactly on similar lines to the one now before them. But something more would be required than mere resolutions if they were going to get the Government to pay attention to them and give them practical relief from the injustice they were suffering from. What was necessary in order that the resolution might take practical effect? There should be more concentration on the question, more of these conferences to awaken interest in the question must be held, and after they were held, representatives should go home and do their share in awakening the interest of the people and see that they got the right man elected to represent them in the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.) We must turn the landlords and those who live on the landlord's interests out of the House of Commons, and if we get the House of Commons pledged to see that the landlords were properly tackled, we should see, then, this resolution properly carried out. (Applause.)

Replying to a question as to how the taxation of land values would increase wages while reducing the price of land, Dr. White said that the price of land was decreased by making it more available. The question of the land was at the root of the wages question. What was Nature's minimum wage? It was that which they could get by employing themselves on the land, either on the land they got for nothing, or on better land subject to paying its rent. Everything that decreased the amount of land to which they had access forced down the rate of wages; on the other hand that which gave the fullest access to the land tended to raise wages.

Mr. HOPKINS (Quakers Yard): At present we are not touching the landlords. We are still upholding the system of private ownership. Would it not be better if we had national ownership of land if we are to have the fullest

benefit from the land? If we are so upset in our minds in regard to the disadvantages of landlordism, surely we should not continue the system of perpetuating it by taxing it.

Dr. DUNDAS WHITE: I do not exactly know, and I have never been able to find out, what nationalisation of land means. Let me remind you that in theory of law there are no private owners of land. In theory, land belongs to the Crown. You have various landlords who hold the land for the Crown, and the best way to nationalise the land is to make these gentlemen pay to the community for it. That is the most effective nationalisation of land you can have. My friend may suggest that an increment tax should be put upon it. I don't stand up for the Budget taxes. The Budget taxes were not land value taxes at all. Two of them had nothing to do with land values; two others merely dealt with increment duty; and one dealt with something else. What we are out for is to tax the value of all land throughout the country. You will find that the man who has the land will have to pay the tax, and competition between landlords will bring the price of land down instead of sending it up. That was recognised by John Stuart Mill 50 years ago when he wrote that a tax on land falls wholly on the landlord because there is no one else to whom he can transfer it.

Mr. WOODMAN (Boilermakers'): Assuming that the single tax would be the panacea for the ills of the working classes; we see that the sea is open and free to everyone, but so far it is the shipowners who are making enormous profits out of it. How can you harmonise that with the conditions of seafarers and those dependent on the sea?

Dr. WHITE: In the first place let me point out that no one has claimed that taxation of land values is a panacea for human ills. Henry George himself declined that suggestion. What we say is that it is the first and most important step towards economic reform. As regards the sea we take the same view of the sea as of the land—that the sea should be available for all men. As regards the wages of sailors, they are only regulated by the wages of the men on the land. Therefore, the same conditions which keep down wages on the land extend to the sailors on the sea, and the sailors on the sea have the same interest in breaking up the land monopoly as the workers on the land. The wages of industry are governed by the state of the labour market, and what determines the state of the labour market is the fact that natural opportunities are denied to the people. (Applause.)

Another questioner asked what had been the result in those places where land values had been taxed.

Dr. WHITE replied that land values were at present taxed in Australia, New Zealand, and various other places, including Johannesburg in the Transvaal, and wherever they had a system of land values taxation it had worked well. (Applause.)

Mr. A. J. WILLIAMS (N.U.R. Organiser, South Wales) said he agreed in principle with the taxation of land values but he was of opinion they would have to go much further than that in order to have the fullest access to the land. With regard to wages, it would only touch the fringe of the question, and unless they had strong and powerful trades unions, taxation of land values would scarcely make any difference as far as wages were concerned; whilst with regard to employment it did not follow that it would materially reduce the number of unemployed unless they obtained other measures, and the main line for the workers was to demand an all-round reduction in the hours of labour.

Another speaker said that the resolution did not go far enough. It only taxed one class of capitalist, and before they could hope to get any good result from the land they would have to abolish him. They (the Single Taxers) were prepared to allow the land to remain in the hands of private individuals and were also prepared to allow the industrial capitalist to remain in his present position. If the single tax was carried next week it would only allow the industrial capitalist to bid for the land brought into the market and buy it from the workers. He asked what had the land question to do with the price of onions, for instance. Onions were bought in Spain at 7s. 6d., and

on reaching Liverpool 36s. 6d. were asked for them. What had the land question to do with that? (Laughter.) It was the shipowners who were responsible for sucking the blood dry from the workers and their children, and not so much the landlords, as the Single Taxers would say.

Another speaker said he failed to see how the taxation of land values would benefit the working classes, and he questioned whether there was any solution of the trouble other than the State ownership of land. If they taxed land up to 100 per cent. he was with them.

Mr. JOHN PAUL: The taxation of land values will cut into the monopoly of land which is now recognised as a fundamental obstacle to all housing schemes. In Cardiff or in any other town or country district there is overcrowding because of land monopoly. We would make it a costly business for those who stand in the way of the building trade. As to the wider labour question, it is clear that the more that is paid in rent the less there is for the wages of labour. Wages must come from production, and so must capital. Landlordism does not spring from capitalism; it is the other way about. We Single Taxers are out to make it impossible for land speculators to keep desired land out of use convinced that that is an indispensable first step to raising wages and to emancipation of labour.

The resolution was then put and carried with only three dissentients.

Mr. R. L. OUTHWAITE, M.P., moved the second resolution, which was as follows:—

"This Conference affirms that the heavy exactions of ground landlords, the burden of rates and taxes upon houses and other forms of building enterprise are directly responsible for the existence of an impoverished people, with the resulting problems of bad housing and infantile mortality; is of the opinion that those two fatal obstacles to social progress cannot be overcome until, by a straightforward measure of rating and taxing land values, the power of landlordism to impose onerous conditions, to exact high ground rents, and to withhold building sites at monopoly prices, is broken: and until house builders and occupiers feel the stimulation that would come by the removal of the existing system of raising National and Local Revenue."

Mr. OUTHWAITE: I am rather interested in a statement made by one of the previous speakers that resolutions of this kind were not sufficient, and that what is wanted is a revolution. What is not understood by many of our critics is that the reform we propose is the greatest possible economic revolution, and to suggest that landlords would not be affected and that capitalists would not be affected is to show an absolute ignorance of the importance of this reform. (Hear, hear.) You touched capitalists by an increment tax, but it went through the House of Commons because they knew they could pass the tax on. It was the land tax they feared because the land tax would do more than take revenue from them. It would take away power from them, the power to enslave the poor. What is happening in Russia to-day? The Russian Revolution is a land revolution. Eighty-seven per cent. of the Russian people are peasants, and they overthrew Czarism to obtain land. When Techernoff, who drafted the provisions for the Constituent Assembly, brought forward a Bill to abolish private ownership in land, there was a counter-revolution. The landlord and the capitalist parties united to overthrow the Government by means of the Cossack General Korniloff, and every reactionary newspaper, the TIMES, and the MORNING POST, hailed Korniloff, the man who was going to overthrow the Revolution, as "The Saviour of Russia." According to the MORNING POST, the Kerensky Government was a "Government of gaoil-birds," and the TIMES correspondent in Petrograd supported the counter-revolution. Then it was that they found the Russian people thinking that the Government had turned away from the Revolution; every effort made by Kerensky was thwarted and destroyed, and at length, Kerensky having lost the control of the people, there was a new Maximalist revolution, the first plank in whose programme, after peace, is the distribution of land amongst the people. Land is the fundamental thing. (Applause.)

One or two speakers suggested that this reform is not connected with the labour question at all. If it is not, God help Labour in the days that are to come after the War! God help Labour if all that Labour has to look

forward to are the other proposals mentioned! What is the outstanding feature of conditions to-day? It is this: that we are able to produce as much wealth in this country as before the war. We have great iron-masters like Lord Aberconway saying that we are now producing as much wealth as before the war. What does that mean? It means that the demands of the community after the war can be met as before the war. It means that the present labour forces can supply the demands of the community, leaving economic conditions as they are, because of the greater use of labour-saving machinery and the employment of women. What are we going to do when the five or six million men who have been withdrawn from the labour market return after the war? What hope is there of making these millions producers of wealth if we leave untouched the source from which wealth alone can be produced? And that source is the land. How can we give men an opportunity of producing the equipment of their life except from the land? It cannot be produced from anywhere else. Surely, then, every reasonable man will say that every limitation of the use of land is a limitation of the possibilities of the employment of labour and the production of wealth. What does that mean? What is the wages question? Wages are not fixed by the value of what a man produces. They ought to be, but they are not. Wages are fixed by the competition of man against man for a job in the labour market. Men offer to sell themselves, their flesh and blood, in the labour market; and if there are two men for one job, each man, forced by hunger, will say, "I will get that job for any rate of wage rather than starve." That competition between men brings wages down to the subsistence level, and there are millions of men outside trades unions subjected to that force. We shall never raise wages unless they are raised from below; it is what is happening below that will affect the men on the top in the long run.

What is the cause of the competition for jobs in the labour market? Labour men have asked the question themselves. Have they forgotten their own history or the history of their fathers? I have known the history of thousands of railway employees in this country. I am not talking from experience alone; I have sought the truth from personal investigation. I will give you the story of one or two railway systems in this country. Take the Great Eastern Railway. I went to a by-election down in West Ham. They told me it was no use talking on the land question there. I went down to the great works at Stratford and spoke to thousands and thousands of railwaymen and told them how the land question affected them. They saw it. Go down to Norfolk and Suffolk, go to Thetford, where you will see an estate extending to thousands of acres, changed to a preserve for pheasants. Villages have been depopulated. If you look at the census return of the previous decade you will see that from the rural population of one county alone 30,000 have left the rural villages of that county in 10 years. When you look again you will see that the normal wages rate is 13s. a week, and that the sturdy young men, who form the bulk of those who left the villages in those 10 years, have left them to look for better-paid work. And where is the first place they go to? It is the railway system. (Hear, hear.) When such a man sees another getting a pound a week on the railway he regards it as a fortune, and when he sees a man getting 25s. a week he offers to do it for a pound. That influx of village workers to the railways is driving down wages to the subsistence level, and it is plain that if you want to raise the wages of permanent-way men the first thing you should see to is that those who live by the land should have an opportunity of doing so.

I once went to a meeting of agricultural workers: I went to the gates of the great engine works of the Great Western Railway at Swindon. (Laughter.) That same ten years when 30,000 people left the rural villages of Suffolk over 20,000 left the rural villages of Wiltshire. Do you think that if you raised the wages of your permanent-way men you would stop this constant influx of village workers whose normal wage is 12s. 6d. a week? It is clear that the first thing to do is to cut off the source of supply that furnishes these slaves for the labour market. And it is the land monopoly that supplies the slaves. (Applause.) To get to the beginning of capitalism we must go back further than the commencement of the last century, when men flocked to the mills of Lancashire, and when parents carried their children

to stand at the looms. We must go back to the time when the landlord stole close upon ten million acres of land that once were the common lands of the people. That was the beginning of the capitalist system and the slave system of to-day. Some people think that the reform we advocate is not going to bring about any very great alteration of these conditions, but that is largely because the trade unions and the workers generally have no conception of the opportunities for the employment of labour upon the land. We shall not get any opportunity for labour on the land by any other methods of reform.

No Small Holdings Act is going to affect it. That has been tried already, and we know the result—nothing. But the taxation of land values would compel every owner of land in the United Kingdom to utilise to the full every acre of his land, and eventually the owners of land would have to come to the labour market to seek for workers. There would be a demand for labour such as had never been before in this country. Take the case of butter. It was sent down by road and rail in Australia a hundred miles to the coast and shipped thousands of miles overseas to this country, while the land here, where the butter could be produced, is locked up. The land would employ millions of men, and one effect of its utilisation would be that workers in the town would receive the wage which justly represented the value which their labour created. When we have done away with the competition in the labour market which forces the wages of labour down; when there is a scarcity of labour instead of a surplus; when there is another sort of competition with all the employers seeking for workers; when employers are competing against one another, then wages will begin to rise, and a tendency will be created for wages to rise until the just wage is reached that represents the value a man creates by his labour. (Applause.)

When wages are raised what is the first thing that will happen? Men will purchase those requirements which they cannot purchase to-day because they cannot get a just wage. The first things they will purchase are butter, milk and eggs, which should be got on British soil. When wages begin to rise a great demand will be set up for these commodities, and an opportunity given for men to produce from the soil of Britain. As soon as opportunities are given to create wealth from the land of Britain the workers will not go from the rural districts to seek for jobs in the town. What is the main thing that Trade Unionists always forget? I hear Trades Union Leaders say: But you don't want the boilermakers and engine-drivers to grow turnips? No, but let the man who wants to grow turnips do so, and instead of coming to the town for your job he will come to the town for the commodities that you trade unionists produce. (Applause.) We hold that if the 20,000 men driven from Wiltshire villages and the 30,000 from Suffolk villages had been enabled to settle on the land they would send their produce over the railway systems; the railway companies would want more engines and rolling-stock, and more engine-drivers, firemen and railwaymen, and that would send up the wages of railwaymen. The question of wages is interlocked with the land. I would say to the man who is advocating reduction of hours and those other things: don't for one moment disregard the fact that is fundamental. What determines wages and social conditions is the private monopoly of land which the taxation of land values is going to overthrow. (Loud Applause.)

Dr. R. D. CHALKE, in seconding the resolution, said there was no part of the United Kingdom which had proved a more fruitful vineyard for the operation of land taxes than South Wales. At Cardiff they were at the base of a great industrial hinterland, a region possessing deposits of the richest Admiralty coal in the world, a region which was geologically a dissected plateau, with narrow valleys running down to the seaboard like the fingers of one's hand. In these valleys great communities had grown up since the discovery of coal, and these communities, growing in enormous numbers, had created new land values. When the coal was discovered there was a tremendous influx of people from the countryside, who lived in those early days of industrial revolution in conditions that were appalling, and it was an open question how far the great white scourge of consumption was not a direct heritage of the conditions under which their fore-

fathers lived in the early period of that industrial revolution. The present system was utterly illogical and untenable. Mr. Fisher, the Education Minister, had promised a sweeping measure of educational reform. He had been up and down the country on a great educational mission, telling the local authorities that, with the promise of the Treasury, when his Bill found a place on the Statute Book, it would be liberally financed by public money voted in the House of Commons. But what was going to happen to this money? It would go into the hands of the land-owners unless they were extremely careful. Mr. Fisher's scheme would mean that new schools would have to be provided, and they would have to go out beyond the present fringe of occupation and get agricultural land, rated at 30s. to £2 an acre, for their schools. It might happen that the land would go up to £800 or £900 per acre, and so the bulk of the money voted by the public would not go to the people at all unless some other system was devised. There never was a time when there was such a demand for scientific products. In the mining valleys they had huge masses of shale and waste material brought up from the pits. Somebody might come along one of these days and these great, ugly heaps of waste material would be required for some scientific purposes; land which was now idle or rated at a couple of pounds per acre would be wanted for some scientific developments, and the landlord would stand to gain every time. The only fault against the advocates of taxation of land values was the modesty of their demands. Each generation had its allotted work in the great plan of amelioration and reform. In the Middle Ages the great Civil War laid the feudal system in ruins, but on the ruins there grew up another system worse than before. It had locked up the land, the reservoir of all their wants, and if their friends would come into the movement they would see that they had a great vision, charged with hope, with the spirit of Henry George in the background, hovering. It was up to them to see that something was done to break down this vicious system. (Applause.)

Mr. SAMUEL FISHER, J.P., supported the resolution. He said he was brought up on the land and was a living example of what the previous speakers had been talking about. He maintained that if they erected good houses on the land and made it worth while for the labourers in the country to remain on the land they would do so. They must make the work attractive.

His father and mother lived in a house that a gentleman would not keep his pig in. He was sick of it all and did exactly what Mr. Outhwaite told them—went to work on the railway, and that was his first start in life. Perhaps he helped to keep wages down. (Laughter.) They know how they had been hampered in Cardiff on account of the land laws, and how factories and works generally had been driven away because of the iniquitous exactions that were placed upon the people who wanted to erect a factory. They wanted the landlord to say, "This is the price of the land, and I am prepared to sell it at that price?" and tax him on that. (Applause.)

Mr. OUTHWAITE dealt with a number of questions at the close, and the resolution was carried, two only voting against it.

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the Chairman for presiding, on the motion of Dr. Dundas White.

EVENING MEETING

At the close of the Conference close upon one hundred delegates remained to tea, and afterwards to an informing discussion lasting fully three hours. Mr. Raffan again occupied the chair. The following resolution, moved by W. J. Thomas (Sailors' and Firemen's Union), seconded by J. Jones (Cardiff Trades and Labour Council), was unanimously adopted:—

That this meeting, composed largely of Trades Unionists of Cardiff and South Wales, protests against any attempt being made to pay royalties to landowners for petroleum as proposed in the "Petroleum Bill," and demands that the Government abide by the decision of the House of Commons, as shown when the Bill came before it.

Thereafter the questions and speeches turned wholly on to housing, unemployment, wages, and to the merits of a tax on land values as the first essential step to the solution of these and other labour problems. The interest of all present was sustained to the end and, even when the more formal proceedings were over, sundry conversations for long enough were carried on in numerous corners of the room and throughout the hotel.

On Sunday afternoon a special meeting was held in one of the large public rooms of the hotel to consider the position of the movement for the Taxation of Land Values in relation to politics and political parties. Mr. J. Dundas White, M.P., presided over a good attendance, quite a number coming from outside districts. Mr. John Paul opened the discussion, which was maintained for over two hours.

A vote of thanks was accorded Mr. Skirrow for the success of his organisation of the Conference, coupled with the names of Mr. and Mrs. Eustace Davies. Mr. Skirrow, in reply, said this campaign had brought the movement and himself very many new friends who were eager to keep going on. He had been asked to return, and he would, gladly, but this rather lay with the United Committee and his own Yorkshire League. Mrs. Davies on her own behalf, and on behalf of her husband, urged the United Committee to concentrate on South Wales. In reply, Mr. Paul said they had very many similar appeals from different parts of the country, all very pressing, and what they could do depended largely, if not wholly, on the measure of financial support they could command at this time. The Committee were keenly alive to the opportunity there was in this field for sustained effort, and would do their best to stand with the League in all its undertakings.

The usual vote of thanks brought this friendly and enthusiastic meeting to a close.

We have to record with deep regret the death of Corporal Matthew Wilson Paul, who died of wounds on 9th November at the Canadian Hospital, Taplow, aged 29, third son of Mrs. Paul, Deanfield Road, Bo'ness. A graduate of Glasgow University, a school teacher by profession, he was an able and a devoted single taxer, whose chief purpose in life was to make known to others the truth he saw and acknowledged. The movement for the taxation of land values is much the poorer for his untimely death. He had a profound knowledge of Henry George's philosophy and an intimate acquaintance with economics as it is taught at universities. His capacity as a teacher was quickly recognised when he applied himself to any lecture or class work. Five years ago he conducted a successful Political Economy Class at the rooms of the Scottish League. His appearance at the League from the first marked him out as one who had come to add strength and dignity to the movement. His pen was equally fluent and convincing. We recall in particular a fragment of one of his lectures, published in LAND VALUES (1912-13, page 59), and a series of articles which appeared in the BO'NESS JOURNAL. Personally he had a pleasing and attractive manner, and could, without seeming to make any effort, win the attention of friend and foe for any talk on social problems. He was a student, at home with a book or a friendly argument on some involved point in economics, yet ready at any moment to take his stand at some street corner to plead for the liberation of the land by taxing land values. We join with all who knew and loved our good comrade in offering our deepest sympathy to his sorrowing mother in her irreparable loss.