

## LAND VALUES CONFERENCE

DARLINGTON, JULY 21st, 1917

As announced in our issue of last month the Conference and the series of meetings in connection with it held at Darlington on Saturday, July 21st, under the auspices of the Yorkshire and Northern Land Values League can be classed among the most fruitful gatherings of its kind yet held. This was the unanimous opinion of members of the United Committee and of the various Leagues in attendance. The local group of Single Taxers, Mr. Charles Newrick and his colleagues, who made the call for the Conference, were warmly congratulated by all concerned on the successful outcome of their enterprise. This was their first big step into the local centres of civic life and industrial organisation, and if there were any doubts before as to their power and influence in the town and district, the Conference removed them beyond dispute. The representative character of the delegates and the interest shown by them in the speeches proved that the taxation of land values and what it means is understood and approved by many, and that there is scope in the district for much more enlightening propaganda. It was altogether a good day's work for the movement in the north of England.

The Conference was held in the Mechanics' Institute, Mr. Charles H. Smithson, President of the League, presiding.

Among others present were Sir C. W. Starmer, J.P. (Deputy Mayor of Darlington); Dr. J. Dundas White, M.P.; Mr. Frank Smith (London), Mr. A. W. Dakers, Mr. Richard Brown, Miss Davidson (Newcastle), Ex-Bailie Burt, J.P., Mr. James Busby (Glasgow); Mr. A. W. Madsen, Mr. W. J. Young, Mr. M. Fairley (Edinburgh), Mr. Chapman Wright (Birmingham), Mr. Ben Dodd (President, Darlington Trades and Labour Council), Councillor John Howe, Mr. H. Maw, Mr. Sam Smith, Mr. Charles Newrick, Mr. David Busby (Darlington), Mr. Fred Skirrow, and Mr. John Paul, Secretary of the United Committee.

About 200 delegates were present, including representatives of the following public bodies: The Jarrow Town Council, the Darlington Town Council, Bishop Auckland District Council of the National Union of Railwaymen, Darlington Rural District Council, Darlington Board of Guardians, Croft Rural Council, Blaydon Urban Council, Hartlepool Trades Council, Carlisle N.U.R., the Westmorland Teachers' Association, the Tyneside Labour Representation Committee, Bishop Auckland Liberal Association, Newham Workmen's Social and Recreation Club, the Ship Constructor and Shipwrights' Association; the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the Chilton Allotment Holders, the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Branches of the I.L.P., Darlington Chamber of Trades, Darlington Co-operative Society, the Co-operative Women's Guilds of Middlesbrough, West Hartlepool, and Darlington, the Barnard Castle Co-operative Society, and many others.

The CHAIRMAN said they felt highly honoured at having Alderman Sir Charles Starmer with them to receive the delegates on behalf of Darlington. (Applause.)

### A CIVIC WELCOME.

Sir CHARLES STARMER said he had to apologise for the absence of his Worship the Mayor, who had been working at great pressure recently, and had gone away for a few days' well-earned rest. They hoped he might be quickly restored to his usual good health. I am here as his deputy (proceeded Sir Charles), to say a few words of welcome to this week-end Conference, which I understand represents Northumberland, Durham and North Yorkshire. You are here on serious business. It shows you are keenly interested in social reform, and I hope your Conference will be blessed with success. You are to discuss the rating and taxing of land values, with special reference to the industrial and economic conditions arising out of the war. It is a big subject, and it seems to me these problems are the greatest this country ever had to face. We shall have to reconstruct on broad lines after the war, and anything which will advance the country will be heartily welcomed by those responsible for the government of this country.

I feel that in that reconstruction land must take its proper place in the balance-sheet of the nation. I do not mean inflated values, but desolate land must be made fruitful, and made available for the growth of the com-

munity, and for the municipality so that it can be used to the best possible advantage. It is for you to discover the best means, and more especially in relation to the taxation of land values as a groundwork. If anyone comes along with a better solution, I expect you will be willing to accept it and to join in getting the good work done. (Applause.)

Ex-Bailie BURT, of Glasgow, expressed the thanks of the meeting to Sir Charles Starmer for his welcome. He knew the work of those who entered Corporations with high ideals and wanted to do their best, the difficulties, the obstruction, and the opposition there was to fight. This proposal to tax land values had aroused keen interest in municipalities. The question to some extent had been overshadowed by the importance of Imperial affairs. He believed Sir Charles Starmer's welcome was one in spirit as well as in letter. (Applause.)

Letters of apology were sent by several who were unable to attend. Mr. P. Wilson Raffan, M.P., sent cordial good wishes for success, and for the restoration to the people of their rights in the land. Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., sent his cordial greetings, with a reminder that land monopoly was at the root of social evils.

### THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. H. Smithson) said: We meet together to-day at a time when there is a somewhat vague

but very widespread and prevalent feeling that we are on the eve of big changes in the affairs of men and in the condition of labour. We feel it in the air. We hear a great deal about the reconstruction of society after the war and all kinds of elaborate schemes are being prepared. I am quite certain of one thing, that the men who have gone to the Front, prepared to sacrifice everything, even life itself, will not be satisfied to come back to the old, one-sided and unjust state of things. The situation is one calling for serious thought and for the application of wise statesmanship. We cannot safely leave politics to the politicians, the people must think and study, for the people alone can act. As Henry George said: "There come moments in our lives that summon all our powers, when casting away illusions we feel that we must decide and act with our utmost intelligence and energy. So in the lives of nations there come periods especially calling for earnestness and intelligence, and this intelligence must be animated by a deep moral sentiment, and be warm with sympathy for human suffering. It must stretch out beyond self-interest, whether it be the self-interest of the few or the many. It must seek justice, for at the bottom of every social evil we shall find a social wrong." These words are very true to-day, for we seem to have entered one of those critical periods in the history of the world; we have reached a crisis in the evolution of civilisation, upon which much will depend for the happiness of the human race for generations to come.

Whether those who are engaged in the struggle are conscious of it or not, the fact remains that the whole civilised world is convulsed in a mighty struggle for the supremacy of one of two conflicting principles in the government of society—the principle of democracy on one hand and the aristocratic adjustment of society on the other. Signs are not wanting that victory will ultimately rest with democracy. (Applause.) I am not now speaking of the victory associated with the conclusion of the military conflict. I have in mind the non-military conflict that must still be carried on by the forces of democracy against the spirit of Prussianism which exists within our nation, and which will have to be fought when the military struggle has been settled. The success of the Russian Revolution gives promise that the wise and just principle of democracy will be the governing principle in human society in the future. This is the one cheering fact, the ray of sunshine amid the depressing gloom of the great world tragedy. For this reason, wherever men and women imbued with the true democratic spirit are gathered together a feeling of thankfulness and joy will prevail. As the American poet said:

"When a deed is done for freedom,  
Through the broad earth's aching breast  
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic,  
Trembling on from east to west."

#### GREETINGS TO RUSSIA.

I beg therefore to move the following resolution:

"This Conference of Land Reformers held at Darlington, England, July 21st, 1917, under the auspices of the Yorkshire and Northern Land Values League, sends hearty greetings and congratulations to the people of Russia at this epoch-making crisis, and looks to them for an example of true democracy based on the right of the people to the use of the land, without purchase or the payment of rent to any privileged fellow-creature but subject to a rental payable to the State, as taught by Henry George, a fundamental doctrine proclaimed clearly and courageously in the dark days of Russian autocracy by their great compatriot, Leo Tolstoy."

The Russian people have taken a great step forward towards democratic liberty, but it was only a first step. It was not only necessary to remove a despot—it was even more important to remove the institutions and privileges of a big autocratic power. (Hear, hear.) The aim of democracy should be the abolition of the power of man over man. The duty of democracy is to establish the principle of equality of rights, and to maintain equality of opportunity for every man to secure the means of life. (Applause.) We do not require elaborate organisations limiting and restricting freedom, but what is wanted is the removal of the barriers and obstructions to natural opportunities, a measure of liberty which has never been tried in this country.

#### THE POWER OF MAN OVER MAN.

The first obstruction we come across is the power which some men possess of saying to other men in the first stage of production, where a man comes into touch with Nature, that you shall not produce anything without my permission. This power it should be the aim of democracy to abolish. (Applause.) This man has the power to prevent other men from employing themselves, except upon his terms. Those terms are that for the use of that which was provided for the use of all, you shall hand over a certain percentage of the fruits of your labour. Here in this initial stage we have a clear and definite interference with the liberty of the individual, the liberty of equality of opportunity to secure the means of life and the right of every man to retain the fruits of his toil.

This power must be abolished. (Applause.) The power of man over man must be cut out root and branch. It makes labour subordinate to anyone able to offer employment. I was talking about this to an East Yorkshireman, and I said: "Why not allow the men to have small holdings and allotments?" He answered: "The worst of it is that if we give these fellows allotments, we cannot get them to come to work for us when we want them." That is the whole social problem in a nutshell. It is the starting point of dependence—this barrier to natural freedom.

We are not out simply for some reform in taxation; we are out for the principle of the land for the people. The Russian people are alive to the importance of this question, and the close relationship of the land to the labour question. If sound intelligence is brought to bear upon this question in Russia it will light a beacon which will be a guide not only to themselves but to the rest of the world, and it ought to guide us to the realisation of justice upon earth. I trust it will not be long before we follow their example. In conclusion, I appeal for union amongst the progressive forces. I trust every man and woman of democratic ideas, whether Radical, Trade Unionist, Socialist, or otherwise named, will unite and be willing to sacrifice minor differences. (Applause.)

#### TOLSTOY AND HENRY GEORGE.

Mr. A. W. DAKERS, Newcastle, seconded the resolution. He said the Russian nation had thrown off a worse tyranny—if it could be worse—than that which weighed down the souls of the French people before the Bastille was destroyed.

The man who has perhaps had the greatest share in bringing about this Revolution, and unfortunately did not live to see it, is the man from whose teaching the whole world can derive the greatest benefit—Tolstoy. It ought to be a matter of the deepest pride to us that the two great leaders of this world-shaking event came, one from Russia and the other from a collateral branch of the English-speaking race, and when history comes to be written it will inscribe as the foremost leaders of this age Leo Tolstoy and Henry George. (Applause.) From the East and from the furthest West they have alike taught the human race that there are only two principles upon which the freedom of humanity can be based. It is not a small measure of social reform which we are witnessing. The ideal of freedom with the Russian leaders is one which recognises the right of every human being to live on the land in which he was born and to recognise its natural corollary that no person on the land shall say to any other person he shall not use it. (Applause.)

#### AN AMENDMENT.

Councillor CALLAGHAN, of Jarrow, moved an amendment to embody in the resolution a hope that the Russian people would fight on with the rest of the Allies until the victory of democracy over militarism was assured. If that was embodied he would have pleasure in supporting it. He felt it would be unwise to express a distinct lead upon one side and to leave the great battle for democracy to the other nations.

This was seconded, and was supported by three or four members of the audience.

The CHAIRMAN said his only objection was that such an addition seemed to rather reflect upon Russia, after the events of recent weeks, and that it had no direct bearing on the business of the meeting.

Quite a lively discussion centred round this amendment, which eventually was put and defeated by a very large majority. The resolution was then carried by an almost unanimous vote. The two delegates who had been most active in pressing the amendment then rose, exclaimed "Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman," and left the hall.

#### THE MAIN RESOLUTION.

Mr. JAMES DUNDAS WHITE, M.P., then moved the following resolution:—

"This Conference affirms that the land should be treated as the common property of the community, and that the rent of land, apart from the value of improvements due to the expenditure of labour, should be taken in taxation for communal purposes; and further is of opinion that the freedom for the production of wealth which the recognition of this principle insures, together with the freedom to exchange wealth, is the true basis of national prosperity and International Peace."

The fundamental principle upon which this resolution rests is that those born into the world have an equal right to what Nature has provided, to the land and all that naturally belongs to it. This principle lies at the root of almost all practical economics. If you absolutely deny the right of the people to the land and all that arises from it you might as well give them notice to quit the planet. The people have a fundamental right to use the gifts of Nature for making proper provision for themselves and their children and for the development of human life. Failure to give effect to this right is the inherent vice of almost every economic system. On every hand we see competent men and women pressed down with poverty because they have been debarred from their opportunities.

We desire to open out those opportunities to them. Only a few days ago we had what is known as "Baby Week," when we considered the welfare of children and taking better care of them in the homes. We have had health visitors and clinics and health lectures—and more strength to them and Goodspeed to the people carrying them out—but it is no use having health lectures and all the rest of it if you deny the people the right to use the opportunities of Nature. Why is there so great a mortality amongst infants? Is it amongst the children of the poor or the rich? It is amongst the children of the poor. As Solomon said long ago, "The destruction of the poor is their poverty." We are up against the poverty problem every time. Able-bodied men and women try to form homes for themselves and their families, and too often have to sink in the hopeless bog that has engulfed so many others. It is no good trying to make a little firm ground here and there. We are out to drain the morass and make the country suitable for people to dwell in. I have spoken of the equal rights of the people to the land; but how are we to enforce them? We cannot divide the land equally amongst the people, or keep it equally divided.

#### TO ENFORCE EQUAL RIGHTS.

These equal rights must be treated as the common rights of the people as a whole to the land as a whole. (Hear, hear.) This principle can easily be carried out. We maintain the right of the people to the land, and recognise that the land requires private industry to develop it. The people can use it in public parks and roads, and in other ways, and there is no reason why it should not be carried further, and why Government departments which have been doing so much in other ways lately should not arrange for the cultivation of allotments. But that is a little like using a steam hammer to crack a nut. It can be cracked in a much simpler way, and recently our eyes have been opened a good deal to what takes place in Government departments. A witty Frenchman said that the more he knew of men the more he admired dogs. (Laughter.) The more I have seen of Government Departments the more I have come to believe in private enterprise. We seek to

give free scope for enterprise to get the land developed in every way, whether by the community as a whole or by individuals, but we must get right conditions to secure this development. We recognise that the products of private industry ought to belong to those who produce them, and that land must be in private possession; but possession is not ownership, and our proposition is that the right of the people shall be recognised by the possessor paying them a fair rent for the land he holds, and paying it whether he uses it or not. Call that nationalisation of the land or call it taxation of land values—any name you like—but it is our fundamental principle.

#### RESULTS OF REFORM.

Three important consequences that would flow from the recognition of that principle. In the first place we would assert the rights of the people to the land in a simple and effective way. In the second place get revenue without burdening industry by tapping the communal value which attaches to the land because of the presence and enterprise and demand of the community. There would be another effect if we make the people who hold the land contribute to the needs of the nation according to its value, whether they use it or not. At the present we see the land kept back from use. Do you think people would keep it back if they had to pay for it on its true value whether they used it or not? It would make them either use it or pass it on to other people who would use it, and would thus bring more land into the market and break down land monopoly. The increased supply of land would reduce rents to what they ought to be, and would open up its natural opportunities to the nation. (Applause.)

#### THE RELIEF OF IMPROVEMENTS.

That is one side of the reform. We also desire to untax houses and improvements. On the one hand we would say to those holding the land, "You shall contribute according to the value of the land you hold whether you use it or not. If you do not use it you will not contribute less, and if you use it well you will not contribute more. You can build houses or farm it well and we shall not rate you or tax you upon the development. You can make improvements and we shall not fine you for the excellent work you are doing." (Hear, hear.) On the one hand we would open up the natural opportunities, and on the other we would promote their development.

Contrast this plan with the present system by which people with land contribute but little to the needs of the community, however valuable that land may be, if it is not being used. It may be wanted by the municipality for the needs of the people in the town, but it remains idle land and it is rated and taxed upon the value of its use as it stands. Landowners are enabled to hold land up against the community because we do not make them pay according to its market value. Suppose a man does improve his property in the way of agricultural improvements, housing, new buildings, healthy factories, and workshops, up go his rates and taxes. The same if a house is wanted. Vacant land may be taken to build upon, and when a suitable house is built up go the rates and taxes: the better a man builds the heavier is he penalised.

There is a lot of talk about getting money for housing, and you want not only municipal enterprise but plenty of private enterprise devoted to that. If you want money to go into housing and for building to be developed, the first thing is to stop the taxation of houses. If a man comes to Darlington and gets drunk he is fined, and then the law has no further hold upon him. But if he builds a house up go his taxes, and they remain high because he has committed what the lawyers call a continuing offence—(laughter)—and he is taxed upon his improvements year after year. Let him level the house down to the ground and down drops his assessment. If you contrast the two systems you will see that under the present system you facilitate the withholding of land and penalise people improving the land. We ought to penalise them for withholding the land and give every possible encouragement

for them to use it. I have spoken in relation to housing, but it would have precisely the same effect as regards factories and workshops or farm buildings.

#### THE ROOT OF THE WAGES PROBLEM.

This question is at the root of the wage problem. These economic problems appear in every country, and affect the white races and the black races. Do you remember not long before the South African War there was a great cry about the difficulty of obtaining native labour in South Africa. There were plenty of natives, but they were not willing to work on the mineowners' terms, because they had the land to fall back upon. The Kaffir would not work for the mineowner unless the mineowner was willing to give him a better wage than he could earn for himself from the land. Nature's minimum wage is what a man can get from the land, and the holding back of land from the use of men and women operates to depress wages everywhere. (Applause.) The only way to raise the minimum wage is to open up the natural opportunities, and this will open up industrial possibilities too. The present system prevents us putting up factories and workshops, and narrows the field of employment, and depresses labour. It is the old story that when two men are after one job wages fall, and when there are two jobs for one man wages rise.

I will suggest to you in Darlington and everywhere else that inquiry should be made in the cases of vacant land which is open to purchase. Find its reserve price, and what it is being rated at, and nothing will open people's eyes so much as to study the facts in their own neighbourhood. (Hear, hear.)

Millions of soldiers will be coming back when the war is ended, and millions of munition workers who are now engaged on matters connected with the war. You will have these gallant men coming back, some injured in various ways, a fact that will aggravate the economic conditions they have to face. To them above all it is our duty to make sure that when they come back to their native land they shall have brighter opportunities than they had before. We do not want them to come back to the old conditions, but unless we deal with this question now the old conditions will be worse than before. Trade is bound to languish for a long time, as many of our best customers have been impoverished by the war, and will not be able to buy goods to the same extent. We have to find heavy pensions for those who have suffered, and we ought indeed to make far more generous allowance for them. We shall also be burdened by tremendous taxation for the colossal war debt, and all this will make industrial conditions more difficult. It used to be said long ago that in times of peace we should prepare for war, but the message I give to-day is that in times of war we should prepare for peace. We should look about us and be prepared to settle in a worthy way these great economic problems in front of us. (Applause.)

#### FREEDOM OF TRADE.

In this resolution I see some mention is made of freedom of trade, and I am glad of that, because we stand for freedom to exchange as well as for freedom to produce. The want of freedom leads to unrest. Reform begins at home, and the same principles are applicable universally. Until each nation has settled its own economic problems, bad conditions within its own borders will cause discontent which may be turned against its neighbours and may result in wars such as we are seeing to-day. There is yet another consideration. The rights of nations and the welfare of peoples are bound up together. No nation can be well off unless other nations share its prosperity. We have a direct interest in the welfare of other nations for the reason that their prosperity is bound up with our own. Our proposition is that people shall not only be free to produce, but free to exchange their produce wherever they choose. Trade brings material advantage, and it brings other advantages also, for it binds the different peoples together by mutual interests and mutual sympathies. If you interfere with the free play of trade, you lessen the material advantage and check those useful processes, and you find that the tariffs themselves are a constant source of discontent and discord between the nations that ought to be at one.

#### ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY.

We are familiar with political democracy as a form of government. The opening up of the land to the people lies at the root of true democracy in every country. We hear of an economic interpretation of history, and we see how economic development is the key to history. We know that economics play a large part in political action, and we want an economic democracy. I am putting forward this afternoon a plea to deal with first things first and to found our social edifice upon the fundamental rights of the people, by recognising that the great cause of inequality in the distribution of wealth is the unequal distribution of those natural elements from which wealth is derived, and by recognising that at Nature's table there are places for all her children. (Applause.)

#### WHAT OF THE LABOUR FORCES ?

Mr. FRANK SMITH (London) seconded. The trouble with the Labour forces to-day is that they are so much sub-divided, and hardly any section of the forward movement is without goodness knows how many pieces. And all the time the other fellow is going off with the swag. (Applause.) It is a part of the monopolist game to keep us separated. If we differ about some things surely there are other things upon which we can and ought to agree. Unity is not necessarily uniformity. We do not want uniformity of a brigade moving like so many pendulum clocks. We want life and freedom. Lovers of humanity want to see a fuller life, with leisure to more fully discuss the things on which we differ, but surely here is a point upon which we can agree.

Every man calling himself a Socialist, a Labour man or a Liberal, ninety-five per cent. of the workers of this country, will agree that land monopoly is a wrong, not only against the interests of humanity but against divine law. One man has no more right to own the earth and shut out his fellows than he has to own the air and forbid his fellows to breathe. How can land monopoly be stopped: how can landlordism be broken? There are four ways:— (1) Russianise them out, and although we are getting on we cannot do that yet. (2) Legislate them out, a proposition which depends on the House of Commons, and "as at present constituted" there is not much hope of that. (3) Buy them out, but some of us do not believe in compounding a felony. (Laughter.) I do not believe in a man buying from another man that which he has no right to sell. I do not feel that mother-earth ever had or ought to have a purchase price between man and man. No, you may pay too much for your loaf, as some of us are doing just now. (Laughter.) (4) And it is as easy as falling off a log—tax them out. There is nothing revolutionary in taxation, and you must have taxation. Land is the only thing which by taxation gets cheaper. If you want a bit of land to build a house you have to beg a landlord to sell some, but if you put a tax on the land you will have the landlords anxious to know if anyone wants to build a house. (Laughter.) I beg my Socialist and Labour friends not to mind so much the details upon which some of us may disagree, and not to squabble so much upon the things which do not matter, for a great world tragedy is going on, and while there are things to put right some are asleep. I came up through Yorkshire last night with eleven men, and nine of them were in khaki, and one of them said, "Wait till I am out of khaki and God help some of you." That spirit is in the air, and a good job too. (Hear, hear.) Let us unite to make the world better than it is and give a chance to the beneficent influence working for peace and prosperity amongst the nations. Work for this great reform which, when it is carried, and it must be, because right must prevail, will open up opportunities which hitherto have been closed. This one reform will make it easier for a hundred others you want to see brought about. (Cheers.)

#### THE DISCUSSION.

A Lady Delegate said she was not sure she could support the second part of the resolution, but she would like to vote for the first part.

Mr. WHITE replied that he would regard the resolution as one whole, standing for freedom of production and exchange on a national and international basis. (Applause.)

Another Lady Delegate spoke in favour of a policy stronger than taxation.

Mr. WHITE: I do not know if the lady agrees with me that the land belongs to the community, and the improvements to the people who made them. If you mean put the landlord out, how will you deal with the improvement? Will you pay him for it? The simple thing is to leave him the improvement and tax the land.

The LADY: You are still going to be saddled with wage slavery, you are going to do it all under the capitalist system.

Mr. WHITE: I am glad the lady has touched the wage question. What is it keeps wages down? The worker is not up against the employer nearly so much as against the unemployed man who will take the job if he gets out of it. The sane course is to find work for the man out of work by opening up natural opportunities. The workers' difficulties are not so much with their employers as with their unemployed competitors, who are ready to take their jobs. The true solution is to open up the natural opportunities for all.

Question: What is the land values tax you propose, because there is one on now. Haven't we a twenty per cent. land values tax now?

Mr. WHITE: To some extent land values are taxed, but the point is the tax is not a fair tax, because the value of the land is not properly used, and the building is taxed as well. We want to get an equal, fair and just tax upon land values as such, and we haven't one of that character to-day. As regards the amount of the tax, I am prepared to start with an annual tax of twopence or threepence in the pound upon the full capital value of the land. We want to get public opinion and Parliament ready to act upon the principle. The figure is a secondary question. With reference to the so-called land value duties, my friends will know there is sometimes a difference between a name and a thing. We have a reversion duty; we have an increment value duty and we have a duty upon mineral royalties and rights. None of these are land values duties, and we have also an undeveloped land duty so hampered about by limits that for practical purposes it is worth nothing, and it has not been working at all for more than two years.

Question: Shouldn't the country have gone further even than land taxation, and put on a bounty for the farmers, who are the producers, so that they could not exploit the workers who are upon the land?

Mr. WHITE: A bounty is the means of exploiting the workers in order to enrich the farmers and ultimately the landlords. What we need is to remove penalising taxation so as to give the farmer a chance, and to deal with the rent question. If only the people get a fair chance at the land, food production would increase enormously. The present arrangement in what is called the Corn Production Bill will make matters worse. That is why I am trying to fight it in the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.)

A LADY: How will you assess the land?

Mr. WHITE:—That goes to the root of the question. We propose to tax land upon the basis of its market value, the price at which it would sell in the open market, whether it was used or not.

Question: How can you put a rateable value upon the land if there were no buyers for it?

Mr. WHITE:—If land is to be disposed of you would start valuation at the reserve price. There is no difficulty when it comes to practice. It is actually working in Australia and New Zealand.

Question: Would it not be as well to allow everybody owning land to fix their own selling value and have it rated and taxed upon the price fixed by themselves? If the Government then wanted land for the use of the country they could take it at that value.

Mr. WHITE: I was one of those who wanted the land-owners to value their own land under the Budget, but they didn't want to do it. (Laughter.)

Question: I think the taxation of land values may be beneficial for the time being, but we are profoundly convinced that nothing short of nationalisation of the land is going to give people the freedom they demand.

Question: How would it apply to leasehold land?

Mr. WHITE: In the case of leasehold land the people holding interest in it, like the lessee and the lessor, should contribute to the land value tax in proportion as they share the land value, and we have a scheme for working that out. As regards the nationalisation of the land, the method that we are advocating seems the best and the only practicable plan.

The resolution was then carried with one dissentient.

Mr. BEN DODD of the I.L.P. and President of Darlington Trades Council, moving a vote of thanks, said they were out for land reform by giving back to the people that which really belonged to them.

Mr. MOORE, seconding, said he had been delighted to be there to see the broad catholicity of view. It was one of the most important subjects in the whole universe. It was an abominable shame that farmers and landlords should be able to demand 63s. a quarter for English wheat, which never brought more than 30s. or 35s. in times of peace. It was a cardinal necessity of life, and these people were to wax fat out of the dire necessity of the poorest for a term of years. The resolution was unanimously carried.

#### SATURDAY EVENING CONFERENCE

At the close of the Conference members of the Local League and Visitors met by special arrangement for a business talk. Mr. Smithson occupied the chair. The case for future effort in the town and district was reviewed at length. The Conference gave every encouragement to the Darlington Single Taxers to continue. Members of the United Committee were impressed with the ability and the courage of their Darlington colleagues and promised on behalf of the Committee all the support necessary to enable them to maintain and extend the propaganda. It was agreed that the group should be recognised as a separate League to be named the Darlington Taxation of Land Values League; Mr. Chas. Newrick, Hon. Secretary. A hearty vote of thanks was accorded Mr. Skirrow for his services as organiser of the Conference.

Since, the League has been reformed with rooms at Post Office Chambers, Northgate, Darlington. Mr. Newrick writes: "The Executive met on August 9th and passed a cordial vote of thanks to the United Committee and to the Yorkshire League friends and all who came and helped to make the Darlington week-end such a success. To us at Darlington the week-end came as a reward for past effort, and an inspiration for the future. The League will be represented at the Blackpool Housing Conference.

To-day Parliament enacts, at the very moment of giving a handsome subsidy to farmer and landlord, that the wage of the labourer is not to fall below the worst standard in existence before the war. Twenty-five shillings now is the equivalent of fourteen shillings and sixpence in 1913. In the old days of the Poor Law subsidy to wages, magistrates used to talk of the "Northamptonshire scale" or the "Berkshire scale." Mr. Lloyd George will go down to history as the Prime Minister who adopted the "Oxfordshire scale" for the labourer. If he had explained four years ago that this was all he meant in his speeches at Limehouse and elsewhere, the country would have been spared a good deal of temper and strong language. Certain interesting rhetorical passages in which Mr. Prothero told us what the Duke of Bedford thought of Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Lloyd George replied by calling Mr. Prothero a flunkey, would have been lost to the literature of party politics. It would not have taken two years, but two weeks, for the Marconi incident to go to sleep. Even the landlords would have thought the Land Inquiry an innocent diversion, and both parties might have agreed upon a modest and sensible revolution. Nobody need tremble about hitching his waggon to so reasonable a star.—*The Nation (London), July 28th.*