

As announced in previous "Welsh Notes," various organisations had been circularised as to Mr. Skirrow's intended visit, and, taking into consideration the numerous matters with which the different Societies find themselves engaged in these times, a good response to our offer of Mr. Skirrow's services resulted. The following is a list of the meetings addressed:—

- Feb. 7.—Ystradgynlais: Rural District Council.  
 " 8.—Cathays, Cardiff: No. 7 Branch N.U.R.  
 " 10.—Llanbradach: South Wales Miners' Federation.  
 " 11.—Abersychan: Pontypool and District Trades and Labour Council.  
 " 19.—Pontypridd: Pontypridd and Rhondda Great Western Lodge (S.M.M.F.).  
 " 20.—Aberdare: Women's N.U.R. and two Co-operative Guilds.  
 " 21.—Roath, Cardiff: Women's Co-operative Guild.  
 " 22.—Cardiff: Workers' Union.  
 " 24.—Canton, Cardiff: Society of Loco. Engineers and Firemen.  
 " 25.—Nelson: Horticultural Society.  
 " 27.—Pentre: Women's Co-operative Guild.  
 Mar. 3.—Brecon: N.U.R.  
 " 4.—Cathays, Cardiff: No. 7 Branch N.U.R.  
 " 5.—Pontypridd: Women's Co-operative Guild.  
 " 8.—Brecon: Women's Co-operative Guild.

The meetings were most successful, and everywhere Mr. Skirrow met with a warm welcome. The sale of literature amounted to over £10—a very encouraging sign of the deep interest taken in the meetings. We are particularly pleased to note the interest taken by the Women's Co-operative Guilds in the Movement, and would welcome their co-operation in the Welsh League. The Hon. Secretary has heard through the Secretary, Mrs. Bamford, that the Canton Women's Co-operative Guild have decided to become affiliated to the League. We are glad to learn this, and shall also be glad to hear that other Guilds have decided to do likewise.

The Hon. Secretary will at all times be pleased to answer inquiries and to supply literature, etc., and we would gladly make arrangements for a speaker if they would like to be addressed at any time on our Question.

## ENGLISH LEAGUE

376 and 377, Strand, London, W.C.2.

FREDK. VERINDER, General Secretary.

The Spring Quarterly Meeting and Discussion will be held on Thursday, April 11th, in the Conference Hall, Central Hall, Westminster. The Central Hall is at the corner of Tothill Street, close to the Abbey and Westminster Hospital. Nearest stations (District Railway)—Westminster and St. James's Park. Trams to Westminster Bridge; omnibuses to the Abbey.

The chair will be taken at 7.30 p.m. by Alderman P. Wilson Raffan, M.P., C.C., President, and a Discussion on "Labour and the Land Question" will be opened by Mr. Frank Smith (a Vice-President of the League; prospective Labour candidate for the Balham and Tooting Division of Wandsworth).

A reprint of a special circular now being issued by the Executive appears in this issue of LAND VALUES.

The General Secretary will be much obliged if readers of LAND VALUES will furnish him with the names and addresses of any candidates who are selected for the new constituencies.

An officer serving in India writes: "I have been for six weeks at ——. There I made the acquaintance of the Nonconformist Padre, and I got him very interested. As a missionary out here, he has long recognised the connection between the land system in vogue and the condition of the people. I gave an address on the Bible and the Land Question at one of his Brotherhood meetings, and have been asked to return when I can to give them another. We

had a good gathering of men of the R.F.A. and a —shire Regiment there; and all seemed very interested, and discussed the matter among themselves afterwards. I should be glad if you would forward LAND VALUES for a year, at my cost, to the Rev. —."

Mr. J. W. Graham Peace addressed the Islington Branch of the Comrades of the Great War' on March 17th, and the Richmond Branch of the National Association for Discharged Soldiers and Sailors on "The Pensioned Soldier and the Labour Market," on March 18th.

Mr. John E. Grant has organised a series of "Non-Party Meetings" in Battersea, in concert with the League Executive. Two of these meetings were held last month, viz., on "Food Supply and Withholding of Land" (Mr. J. W. Graham Peace, March 5th) and on "The Original Profiteer" (Dr. Paul Tyner, March 15th). Particulars of these meetings would have appeared last month, but for the miscarriage of a corrected proof of these monthly notes in the post. The meetings are being continued. For particulars see the list below. At the first meeting, in spite of the "moonless raid," on the preceding evening, about 60 persons were present. At the second meeting there was an attendance of 120, and, as one who was present writes, "the enthusiasm was not to be denied." The meetings are being reported in the SOUTH-WESTERN STAR.

Forthcoming meetings:—

- Wed. 3.—Kingston Branch, Fife Hall, Fife Road, Kingston-on-Thames: F. W. G. Foat, M.A., D.Litt. (Lond.), "The Historical Aspect of the Land Question." 8 p.m.  
 Fri. 5.—Latchmere Baths (Small Hall), Latchmere Road, Battersea: Fredk. Verinder, "London and its Land Values." Chairman: Alderman White. 7.45 p.m.  
 Mon. 8.—Executive. 7 p.m.  
 Wed. 10.—Kingston Branch (as above): Dr. R. E. Pearson, "The History of Poverty in England." 8 p.m.  
 Th. 11.—Spring Quarterly Meeting, Central Hall, Westminster. (See special notice above).  
 Mon. 15.—Latchmere Baths (as above): E. Payne, "Liberty and Co-operation." 7.45 p.m.  
 Wed. 17.—Kingston Branch (as above): J. Z. M. Hamilton, "Land and Capital." 8 p.m.  
 Wed. 24.—Kingston Branch: Dr. Stanton Coit, "Henry George's PROGRESS AND POVERTY." 8 p.m.  
 May 6.—West Norwood Sisterhood, F. Verinder; and Latchmere Baths, A. H. Weller; 13, Latchmere Baths, J. McCulloch.

## THE LAND QUESTION AND THE COMING GENERAL ELECTION

*To the Members of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values and to all who are interested in the Land Question.*

During the whole period of the war, the English League has, with the willing help of its members, maintained its organisation and much more of its educational work than at first appeared possible. Many of its activities have been of a sort that does not lend itself to newspaper publicity. Owing to war conditions, its meetings have seldom been reported in the press. But the monthly paper of the movement, LAND VALUES, in spite of the paper shortage and many other difficulties, has kept the Executive in touch with the members, and has been the means of furnishing inquirers with information as to the principles and the doings of our own and other Leagues. Some new publications have been issued; many members have been lost through the war, but many new ones have been enrolled; and although the opportunities for public meetings have been much restricted, owing to air-raids and war conditions, a very vigorous postal propaganda has been maintained. In spite of all difficulties, some new Branches have been formed and are doing good work.

The League is therefore in a position to avail itself of the increased opportunities to which we look forward in a more peaceful future, which we hope is not far distant. The Executive has always believed that no great opportunity of getting anything done in Parliament would come till after the Peace.

No Government during the war has done anything, or attempted to do anything, in the direction of taxing land values, although, historically and morally, the first charge for defending a country against a foreign foe should fall upon those who possess that country and claim its land as their "property." Landlords have, instead, been subsidised out of public funds, by the Corn Production Act; the Government has been defeated, at the instance of the Land Values Parliamentary Group, on a proposal to set up, under the Petroleum Bill, new "royalties" for landlords; while all forms of taxation that burden the worker and his industry, his food, and even his amusements, have been increased; but there has been no tax upon land-values. The so-called "Political Truce" has hamstrung every progressive policy, and the Government is now in the hands of the most violently reactionary forces in the country. Parliament has long lost touch with the People it is supposed to represent, although public opinion on many urgent questions has greatly changed since December, 1910.

#### THE NEW ELECTORATE

The passing into law of the "Representation of the People Act," with its greatly widened franchise and its redistribution of seats, almost certainly portends a General Election at no distant date—probably between hay-harvest and wheat-harvest of this year, or, a little later, in the Autumn. Political Parties are reorganising and reshaping their programmes. An opportunity is coming of which the League desires, and should be enabled, to make the utmost possible use. The League is, of course, not a political party, but an educational association. The enfranchisement of some millions of new voters is a clear call to renewed and increased educational work. The Parliament soon to be elected will almost certainly have the task of laying down the lines for the Reconstruction after the War.

#### LIBERAL POLICY

Mr. Asquith, addressing a meeting of London Liberals on January 15th last, foreshadowed the policy of the Liberal Leaders on our question. He arbitrarily divided the land question into "rural" and "urban." As to agricultural land, he made a series of proposals in which the taxation of land values had no place at all. As to "urban" land values, he said:—

"The power of the community to determine in the common interest—of course with an equitable regard to the conditions which the community itself has created or allowed—the tenure and (adequate) taxation of town sites has become not only, as it always was, a right, but a duty."

The word "adequate," which he is definitely reported to have used in his speech, was omitted from the report officially supplied to the Press.

Such an utterance cannot possibly be accepted as a fulfilment of the hopes raised by the agitation, in which our Leagues took a leading part, which carried the Finance Act, 1909-10, through the House of Lords. It lamentably fails to take account of the patent fact that the People are prepared for drastic measures, and that the circumstances of the time are calling loudly for them.

#### THE POLICY OF THE LABOUR PARTY

The active and growing Labour Party has passed admirable Resolutions in favour of the taxation of land values, just as the Liberal Party has done, but when it comes to a practical programme for Reconstruction, it becomes as feeble as Mr. Asquith. In "Labour and the New Social Order: A Report on Reconstruction," it indeed recognises that there is some land, of great value, which is not properly described either as "urban" or "agricultural."

"So long as mining Royalties exist, the Mineral Rights Duty ought to be increased. The steadily rising Unearned Increment of urban and mineral land ought, by an appropriate direct taxation of land values, to be wholly brought into the Public Exchequer." (p. 17).

What the Labour Party does not see is that the Mineral Rights Duty (falling only on mining lands *in use*) and an Unearned Increment Tax, are a very poor substitute for taxation of all land values, and cannot possibly bring the same economic benefits.

#### ALL LAND VALUES SHOULD BE TAXED AND RATED

There is undoubtedly more money to be obtained for the Treasury by urban than by agricultural land value taxation; and the raising of more money, without adding to the burdens of industry, will be, for a long time to come, a question of very great importance. But, important as we know this to be, the taxation of land values has never been urged by us as a *merely* fiscal reform. We have always laid the chief stress upon its economic effects. These economic effects will be of supreme importance if the "Reconstruction" is to be well and truly laid on a sure and lasting foundation. The food question will still be urgent after the war. There will be a lamentable shortage of houses for the people. If our industries are to find useful employment for the returned soldiers and the disbanded munition workers, and if we are to take our share in supplying the pressing needs of the devastated countries of our Allies, every kind of land—agricultural, mining, quarrying, and building—must be brought as speedily as possible into the fullest possible use. There is no sound reason for hoping that this can be done promptly and effectively by administrative order and a costly Bureaucracy. The taxation of *all* land values will do it, easily and effectively, for food, building materials, the raw material of the clothing industries, the coal and iron upon which our engineering works depend, all come from land, and can only be obtained by access to land.

Moreover, if taxation of land values is confined to urban areas, the towns will not only fail to reap the expected economic benefits, but will almost certainly find their condition in some respects even worsened. For the taxation of urban sites will compel the "owners" of town lands to put them to use, and that will mean, mainly, to a building use. But the non-taxation of land values outside the towns will enable "agricultural" land in adjacent districts to be held up. A "ring fence" will impede the spread of population outwards, and overcrowding in towns, with consequent high rents, will not be checked, and will most probably be intensified. The only way to lessen overcrowding and to lower rents in the towns is to tax all land, "rural" as well as "urban," on its true value, and thus to enable the people to live where they will.

The success of the methods adopted for "Reconstruction" after the war will therefore depend, not upon the activities of a costly and multitudinous Bureaucracy but

upon the way in which Parliament deals with the Land Question. No Minister of Reconstruction and no Food Controller can provide employment, houses, or food for the worker unless access to land for the growing of food or the winning of the raw materials of the building and other industries, and the releasing of countless new sites for industrial and commercial purposes, is established by a general tax on land-values.

#### EDUCATE! AGITATE! ORGANISE!

It is, therefore, clear that a large amount of educational work has to be done before the coming General Election. The Executive and Staff of the League are doing, and will continue to do, all they can. They appeal to every member and friend of the League to take his or her part in the work that has to be done within the next few months. The future of the movement depends upon the use which is made of the present opportunity.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS

There are many ways in which valuable help can be given. Some of these are:

1. To add to the membership of the League.
2. To promote the circulation of LAND-VALUES. It should be obtainable through any newsagent or bookstall, or can be sent direct by post from the League Office. It is a monthly tonic for all workers in our cause.
3. To send to the General Secretary the names and addresses of persons likely to be interested, in order that a copy of this circular and some of our literature may be sent, and the names and addresses registered for future use. Names of soldiers and of women voters will be specially welcomed. Many soldiers on active service are already on our "free list" for LAND-VALUES, and are glad to get it.
4. To advise the General Secretary of any Club or Association holding Lectures and Discussions on Social Questions, in order that a speaker may be offered to them. (Co-operative Societies, Allotment Societies, Adult Schools, P.S.A.s, Trades Unions and other Labour Organisations, Political Clubs, Debating Societies, etc., etc.).
5. To circulate suitable literature in every possible way. There is a large selection on sale at the League Offices, and supplies of some publications are available for free distribution at local meetings, or through the post.
6. To take part in discussion at local meetings, organised by other societies, on social questions.
7. To send marked copies of newspapers containing articles or letters or reports of speeches on the Land Question.
8. To contribute pamphlets and books on the Land Question to the League's library. All pamphlets are bound in volumes and carefully indexed.
9. To keep the question of the Taxation of Land-Values before the local Members of Parliament and the candidates for every Election, Parliamentary or Municipal. They should be specially asked as to their attitude towards the "Memorial Policy" of the Land-Values Parliamentary Group.
10. To support the work of the central office by contributions to the League funds.

#### READING CIRCLES AND BRANCHES

There is one special way in which experience has shown that valuable help can be given just now. It is much to be desired that a centre of propaganda should be established in as many as possible of the new constituencies. In the new Surrey Boroughs of Kingston and Richmond local members have secured halls and are holding weekly lectures and discussions with much success. Another

member is holding similar meetings in Battersea. In each case it is hoped that an active Branch will be formed. It is hoped that other members will be able to help in the same way.

Where this is not immediately possible, a good beginning may be made at little or no expense by forming a Reading Circle, out of which a Branch may ultimately grow. The Circle might meet at the houses of its members in turn and take for its text-book one of Henry George's works (for theory) or LAND INDUSTRY AND TAXATION (for practice), or one of several other works which can be recommended by the General Secretary. The necessary books can be supplied at trade rates from the League's offices. They are none of them costly.

The General Secretary will be glad to hear as soon as possible from any member of the League, or any friend of the movement, who is prepared to help the work in any of the ways mentioned above, or in any other way. A draft scheme for such a Reading Circle will be supplied on application. In many cases direct help can be given, e.g., by supplying lists of local names from our office lists, or in other ways.

For the Executive, FREDK. VERINDER.  
Gen. Sec.

March, 1918.

### WEST AUSTRALIA

#### HOW THE LAND TAX ABSORBS "SURPLUS VALUE."

The Annual General Meeting of the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia was held in London yesterday.

Mr. Andrew Williamson, who presided and moved the adoption of the report and accounts, said that the results of the past year's working were so meagre that they left practically no credit for interest on the First Debenture stock and nothing whatever for the Second Debenture stock or the shareholders, nor for any provision for a contingency fund, which was so necessary to the well-being of such enterprise. These disappointing results were partly attributable to the adverse seasons, but mainly to the hostile action of a former Government of the State of Western Australia in the construction of the competing Wongan Hills-Mullewa line of railway and to the heavy taxation cast upon the company's landholding, which was given as a subsidy as an inducement to build the Midland Railway. In a single year after the opening of the Government's competing line the whole improvement in traffics of the preceding seven years was more than swept away, but notwithstanding this the Government had decided not to admit any right on the company's part to compensation. The result was to leave a continued sense of unfair treatment and a regrettable cause of resentment on the part of British investors towards those who were responsible for this harsh treatment of British capital in a British Dominion.

Having deprived the company of some £40,000 to £50,000 of gross traffic, the State levied a State tax on their lands of £1,476 per annum, while in Road Board rates and assessments they had to pay a further £1,489 per annum. Since the passing of the Federal Land Tax Act in 1910 down to June 30, 1917, the company had been assessed for Federal Land Tax alone to the extent of £64,320 and for State Land Tax £12,486, or £76,806 in all. During the same period the whole income these lands had produced had been only £7,081. Was ever a land grant railway so victimised in a civilised country?

Sir George A. Touche, M.P., in seconding the motion, maintained that the policy which the Governments concerned had pursued was injurious alike to the company and to the State.

The motion was unanimously adopted.—*Glasgow Herald*, March 14th.