

ADDITIONAL BRITISH NEWS NOTES.

The National Conference convened by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values was a great success. Nearly 500 delegates from Liberal Associations, Trades Unions, and other bodies were in attendance. Mr. Josiah Wedgewood M. P., presided. Mr. Jos. Fels on his way to London from the United States arrived half an hour too late to take part in the proceedings.

Speeches were made by the chairman and by E. G. Hemmerde, M. P., Alderman Raffan, R. L. Outhwaite and others.

In the same month there were conferences at Wrexham, Dumfries, Scotland, and Cardiff, Wales. At Cardiff over 700 delegates were in attendance.

In calling the Cardiff meeting to order Mr. H. G. C. Allgood reported that circulars convening the Conference had been sent out to 300 governing bodies, trades organizations and political associations in Wales, and in addition to the miners lodges. Although differences of opinion had developed he had not received an unfavorable reply to the circular, in even one instance.

A communication from Lord St. David, a member of the House of Lords, was read in which the writer declared himself in favor of the taxation of Land Values. Our old friend, Edward McHugh, was in evidence at this meeting and it was he who seconded the nomination of Alderman Raffan for the chairmanship of the conference. The Chairman's speech was a pronounced declaration in favor of going further than the government seemed willing. There would be no need for the Chancellor, he said, to go on an expedition robbing hen roosts. All he had to do was to take some part of the national estate which belonged to the people. If a choice had to be made he thought the people would refuse to say that the crust of the widow and the orphan should be taxed while the great landowners who ruled the country through the House of Lords got off scott free.

"I hope the Welsh David who desires to destroy the power of this monster," he declared, amid loud applause, "will go out with his little sling, and when he comes to the brook select the right pebble—the

taxation of land values. With that sling the mighty twentieth century Goliath would go down before him."

Mr. McHugh also spoke. He pointed out that land had no value in itself. It only became of value when a man appeared on it. If all the people disappeared from London the land there would have no value, yet recently a square inch of land in London was sold for £32, 10s—£32, 10s for as much land as would cover the tip of an umbrella. The owner did not give the land this value. People living in London gave it this value. In Cardiff they had in the Queen's Hotel a place which used to be let at a ground rent of £30 a year, but as soon as the lease expired the ground rent was put up to £600. He did not blame the landlord for putting up the ground rent if he could get it; his contention was that some of the £600 should go to the relief of Imperial and local expenditure.

A letter from Robert Donald, editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, to Mr. Jos. Fels, which we are permitted to see, gives strong indication of his interest in the work. Mr. Donald says: "We have been growing strong with the land agitation since you left, and have awakened a good deal of interest in it."

It may be said that the *Chronicle* has been running a series of admirable articles, including cartoons, which have attracted much attention.

WEST AUSTRALIA.

BACKWARD IRELAND—AWAKENING SENTIMENT IN WEST AUSTRALIA—THE EXAMPLE OF NEW SOUTH WALES HELPING THE AGITATION HERE.

As a brother Single Taxer and expatriated Irishman I was much interested in Mr. John J. Murphy's impressions of Ireland as outlined in *Land Values*. About eighteen months ago I had the pleasure of revisiting my native land and found that Dublin is still the Dublin of our boyhood. The principles of Single Tax seem to have made no headway with our countrymen at home; the true solution of the land question seems for the time being to be lost in the

glamour of peasant proprietorship. The failure of the latter system however, is already becoming apparent, as in some of those districts where purchase was effected in the eighties, wealthy capitalists are gradually buying up farm after farm at enhanced prices, thus laying the foundations of future large estates once more. The same expedient has been tried in Australia, and I believe also in New Zealand, with similar unsatisfactory results. I think it is a great pity that some able Single Taxer does not endeavor to convert the leaders of the Sinn Fein movement to our philosophy, as during my brief visit the Sinn Feiners impressed me as having all the youth, all the enthusiasm and all the determination which go to make real reformers. The Irish Parliamentary party seem to have their rapt gaze so fixed on the distant prospect of Home Rule as to be unable to see anything else, consequently I don't consider we have the slightest grounds to hope from that quarter. Single Taxers cannot be said to be a very numerous body in Western Australia though our principles are beginning to receive rather wide acceptance on those goldfields, thanks to the able and persistent propaganda work of our local Single Tax League. So far, however, we have failed to move our state parliament to give the option of rating on the unimproved values to all local governing bodies. As you are already aware, this reform has been carried recently in New South Wales and has been in force for many years in Queensland. We feel somewhat confident that before the present parliament expires we shall have the necessary permit on the statute book. The political party which has swept to the front with amazing rapidity in Australia is the labor party, which is now in charge of our national government. Its policy generally is a kind of mongrel Socialism combined with the most hopeless conservatism. The party, as a party, profess no particular fiscal faith, but at the same time are strongly protectionist. They profess to believe in the nationalization of the land, and at the same time hold to the old lunacy that the nationalization of machinery is equally essential. They believe in arbitration courts for the

settlement of industrial disputes, provided the minimum wage fixed by the court is favorable to the workers, otherwise they ignore the arbitration court, and resort to the old method of the strike. Whilst all our political parties profess to have a wholesome dread of the swarming millions of Asia none of them will make any serious attempt to strengthen Australia's position by destroying the rampant land monopoly that now obtains throughout the commonwealth, and so give the white European a chance to come and fill up our vast unused and vacant places. The success of the new rating system in our most important mother state of New South Wales has done much to draw the attention of the other state governing bodies to the many advantages of this method of exempting improvements. In addition, the present prosperous condition of the mother state and its large annual surplus compares more than favorably with the annual deficits and general stagnation of most of the other states. The land tax imposed by the W. A. state government has got so many exemptions because of improvements, and because of deductions from the income tax, that its efficacy in forcing idle lands into use has been almost entirely nullified. We have not got the vast monopolies and vested interests in Australia to fight against that you have in the United States, so I think our progress should be more rapid, but so far I don't think we have been able to give you much of a lead.

GERALD HARTREY.

BOULDER CITY, W. Aus.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

THE OPPOSITION BUSY WEAKENING THE MEASURE—SYDNEY TO BE ALLOWED TO RATE ON LAND VALUES ONLY—LABOR TROUBLES AT BROKEN HILL.

Students of public affairs are well aware of the tendency of public feeling to swing from one extreme to another. Your readers, generally, may be so convinced of the justice of Single Tax principles as to think that a tax reform on right lines provides