

BLOEMFONTEIN GOES AHEAD

THE LONDON agents of the Bloemfontein Municipality have sent, along with recognition to the United Committee, official notification that at a Town's Meeting in February last the decision of the Town Council to levy rates on land values as from April 1 this year was emphatically endorsed. The resolution was adopted by 252 votes to five.

This Town's Meeting was reported in the *Friend* of February 7, 1945, for copy of which we are indebted to the Town Clerk. We give the following extract:

Bloemfontein ratepayers decided last night, by 252 votes to five, to accept the Town Council's proposals to change from the present composite system of municipal rating to a system of site rating in six steps over a period of five years.

In his introductory speech the Mayor, Councillor J. Stuart Franklin, referred to the fact that site rating was no new thing in Bloemfontein. In the years from 1925 to 1927 there had been a persistent demand for it, and in 1926 it had been a burning issue at the municipal election.

Reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of a site-rating system the Mayor emphasised that site-rating was

calculated to encourage the establishment of industries in Bloemfontein, as industries were usually established in areas outside the central business area of the town and therefore high rates on sites were avoided.

Details of the proposed change were dealt with by the chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Colonel L. W. Deane.

After a few questions, in the course of which Dr. M. de Villiers supported the introduction of site rating, Mr. A. R. Dewberry, a candidate for election to the Town Council at the forthcoming elections, moved the adoption of the Town Council's proposals. The proposals were adopted by 252 votes to five

Our readers will recall that on November 26, 1943, the Bloemfontein Town Council unanimously resolved to adopt in principle the system of site-rating to take effect from April 1, 1945, to make representations for a Local Government Ordinance to enable the adoption of a scheme allowing for the gradual change-over to site-rating spread over three years, and for an amendment permitting local

authorities to apply site-rating either in full or in part to the sanitary rate. This decision was arrived at after considering the recommendation (the debate was fully reported in our issue of August, 1944) of the Finance Committee to adopt site value rating, but to delay the change-over until one year after the cessation of hostilities. Now, however, by the resolution of the Council, since approved by popular vote of the ratepayers, the first step takes effect at once. The system will apply to all rates save the sanitary rate since, apparently, the amendment enabling it to apply to the sanitary rate has not yet been secured. That, it may be hoped, will come later.

Bloemfontein has given a new lead to the reform of local taxation in South Africa which will surely have an influence throughout the Dominion. Transvaal has already made much progress in that direction, with land value rating in operation in Johannesburg, Pretoria and many towns. In the Orange Free State, of which Bloemfontein is the capital, six other towns rate land values. The Cape Province and Natal lag behind, with only East London and Durban to set the example there.

INDIAN POTENTATES AND THE HOME SCENE

THE FOLLOWING paragraphs from the *London Star*, of April 5, throw a fierce light on the poverty of workers and peasants in India, the famines that afflict the country and the blind allegations of over-population as the cause. Why these frightful contrasts and who dare say that Providence is responsible?

"Sixteen Indian princes, who include some of the richest men in the world, have, I hear, booked sea passages to Britain. They want to be here for the peace celebrations.

"Some have not been here for ten years or more. In previous visits they brought large retinues with them, but this time, I am told, they will travel in small parties, as there will not be sufficient shipping space.

"Among the two richest are the Maharajah of Jaipur, who is said to be worth £100,000,000, and the Maharajah of Mysore, who at home has 65 motor-cars, but often travels on his own elephant with trappings studded with diamonds.

"Another impending visitor is the Nawab of Rampur, who has one of the world's greatest collections of pearls. He once bought a mansion in Surrey, but sold it at a big loss after he had spent a considerable sum on it. His wife complained after one night there, that it was too cold.

"The Nawab of Bhopal, who has given away thousands of pounds for Spitfires during the war, has also booked a passage. In the past, when coming to Europe he has chartered his own steamers, and brought his private string

of polo ponies with him. He has hundreds of suits of clothes, but this time he will have to bring a modest wardrobe with him.

"When the Nawab of Bahawalpur came to London in 1932 he went round the West End buying grand pianos, gold-plated wireless sets and on one shopping expedition spent £750 on two toys for his children."

To whomsoever the soil at any time belongs, to him belong the fruits of it. White parasols and elephants mad with pride are the flowers of a grant of land.

—Sir William Jones, Translation of an Indian grant of land, found at Tanna.

In a paper read to the East India Association at Caxton Hall, London (reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, April 12), Mr. A. K. Pillai, representative of the Indian Radical Democratic Party, declared that history should not have to record that Britain's long and progressive association with India was deliberately ended in a sordid deal with India's exploiting classes and that the people were betrayed in the bargain. The responsibility of British democracy towards India must be realised and the Cripps' offer reviewed. The Government must resume the initiative and take a big step towards the solution of the Indian problem. To leave it to the Indians to form their future constitution while the bulk of the people will remain disfranchised and at the mercy of the landlords and moneylenders is virtually to hand them over with their fetters intact to the small

privileged class, who will thus have been enabled to assume absolute power over India's destiny. The new India emerging out of the war years would, indeed, prefer to be linked up with the liberating influences of the British Commonwealth and accelerate its further progressive evolution as a free association of free peoples.

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