

## LIBERALS AND LAND VALUE TAXATION

## Mr. Asquith at Bournemouth

Speaking at a Liberal and Radical meeting in Bournemouth on 4th May, Mr. Asquith, M.P., said:

"I have received this week a resolution from a Liberal gathering in Gloucester, obviously dominated by a sincere desire for future unity, which expresses a not unnatural wish that Liberals in the House of Commons should be brought to vote together in the same Lobby. Certainly. In that I entirely agree, but are they doing so? What are the actual facts? I will take only two illustrations out of a great many. I am not going back to what is called ancient history. 21st February, 1923—Colonel Wedgwood's Bill to enable local authorities to levy rates upon land values, and, *pro tanto*, reduce rates on houses and improvements, embodies in the mildest possible form a principle upon which all Liberals were supposed to be agreed. All Independent Liberals present—43—together with all the Labour Party, voted for; all Unionists present, against; National Liberals, 12 present, 6 for and 6 against. 1st May, 1923—New naval base, Singapore, £9,000,000—National Liberals, none voted with us, 20 voted with the Government.

"We should give the fullest possible scope to the old Liberal principle that public advantage precedes and is entitled to override private interests and private profits. In this connection the immediately urgent reforms are the control of trusts and combines and the appropriation in the case of the land monopoly of that part of its value which has been publicly created to public uses by the method so long advocated by Liberals of the taxation and rating of land values."

## Sir John Simon at Buxton

The agenda of the Annual Meeting of the National Liberal Federation, held at Buxton on 30th and 31st May, included a resolution reaffirming the Liberal industrial policy, of which item (D) is the Taxation and Rating of Land Values.

The resolution was moved by Sir Harry Verney, seconded by Sir John Simon, M.P., and carried unanimously. Alluding to the Taxation of Land Values, Sir John Simon said he believed that this crusade was at the moment almost the only one great cause which the Liberal Party had taken up and not ultimately carried to triumph. Liberals of his own way of thinking did not intend to abandon the Taxation of Land Values because the duties of 1909 and 1910 were found to be ill-advised and unsuccessful.

## Mr. Pringle at East Ham

The North and South Liberal Associations of East Ham held a combined rally in the East Ham Town Hall on 16th May. The chief speaker, Mr. W. M. R. Pringle, M.P., in the course of his remarks, said (EAST HAM RECORDER, 18th May) in the matter of housing:

"The cardinal feature of all the proposals put forward up to the present time had been the subsidy payment. He suggested that it was not a sound basis upon which any service could be run. Houses had been taxed both in respect of national taxation, and in regard to local rates, and it was because of this burden of taxation that the housing difficulty had very largely arisen.

"It had been found necessary to untax bread, and he suggested that houses should also be untaxed. The rating was the difficulty, and a considerable amount was paid for houses which went in rates, which proved the greatest handicap to building enterprise, hampered, penalized and discouraged improvements, and set a limit upon accommodation.

"Land value had been created by the growth and enterprise of the people, and land could now be held out of use and making no contribution to rates or taxes. The same applied to agricultural land which was put out of use, but

the man who used his land for the public benefit was penalized. The Liberal policy was that such land should be called upon to make its contribution, and so give stimulus to the industries of the country."

## Home Counties Liberal Conference

The Annual Conference of Liberals in the Home Counties was held in Eastbourne on 7th May.

Mr. H. White, on behalf of the Eastbourne Liberal Association, moved a resolution relating to the rating of land values, seconded by Mr. Milner Gray and supported by Mr. Reginald Smith. It was eventually amended and in the form in which the Conference passed it read as follows:—

That in view of the grave national problems of unemployment and housing, this meeting urges the leaders of the Liberal Party to make the rating of land values and the freeing of buildings and other improvements from rating a first duty when the Liberal Party is returned to power.

Mr. Reginald Smith said the land question was the beginning and the end of all their trouble. In Eastbourne the acreage was 6,833 in 1913. Of that, 4,075 was rated as agricultural land and paid £677 in rates, while the remainder—2,758—which was occupied by buildings, paid £117,345. If they put a proper rate on the whole of the land they would be able, with one rate, to pay all their indebtedness. He mentioned that the cemetery authorities wanted two acres of land, and the late Duke of Devonshire sold them land at £700 an acre, while the present Duke wanted £2,000 per acre for land which was paying under 6s. in the £ in rates.

## National League of Young Liberals

At the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the National League of Young Liberals, held in Southport on 5th May, the Central Branch had placed the following resolution on agriculture on the agenda:—

This Conference views with grave concern the present state of agriculture as evidenced by the lamentable condition of that industry, and deplores the indifference and admitted inability of the present Government to deal with the matter; and further calls upon the Liberal Party to outline such an agricultural policy as shall be just both to the producers and the community at large.

In behalf of the Upton Branch, Mr. Chas. Bevan moved an amendment to omit all the words after Liberal Party, and to substitute the words

to advocate their agricultural policy, which was just to both producers and the community, a policy preventing the withholding of land from its best use, promoting security of tenure, and giving free course to production by removing the rate and tax burdens now thrown on industry and improvements.

Mr. R. Fairhurst said that it was the amendment of a townsman who did not understand agriculture.

Sir Harry Verney replied that as far as land was concerned the rural problem and the urban problem was one problem. He supported the amendment.

The resolution, as amended, was carried.

## Women's National Liberal Federation

At the Fifth Council Meeting of the Women's National Liberal Federation, held in the Holborn Hall, London, 8th and 9th May, the following rider to a resolution on housing was adopted:—

This Council further advocates such a reform of the rating system as will reduce rates on houses and make the true market value of land the basis of assessment.

The rider was moved by Miss Jessie Wilson on behalf of the East Ham North W.L.A. and seconded by Mrs. Gardiner, of Hull.