

The General Election was precipitated by the events that followed the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. The British Government found in the obligations of the League of Nations Covenant a concern that the military security of this country was in doubt, and exploited the fears it evoked. The League of Nations has imposed sanctions on the Italian people by way of inducing the Italian dictatorship to call off its murderous assault. The two-edged weapon of a commercial blockade is being employed to bring loss or ruin to the Italian trading community; but as trade always benefits both parties, its stoppage will injure the merchants outside Italy as well as those upon whom this punishment is supposed to be inflicted. It is a course of action that will in the long run contribute to embitterment, giving the Italian Government a still greater hold over its people, and exciting the national and individual resentment of which war is the inevitable outcome. But that is the case with all the economic sanctions that have been meant to strangle trade. The League of Nations is employing Satan to cast out sin. International strife has been fostered by trade barriers, which are the sanctions that the nations have imposed upon one another. The protectionist poison has worked to establish the thought that trade is aggression and imports a disaster. At Ottawa it turned the British Empire into a League for imposing sanctions against the rest of the world. Its mission is to spread more terror if foreign produce were dropped from the sky than if bombs were falling as in Abyssinia. It has invented the quotas to stop this barrage and bombardment. And at home we have the sanctions of a similar order in the marketing schemes for punishing those who produce or deliver things for consumption. No one may put new land under hops, produce more than a certain quantity of bacon, or sell potatoes grown on tabooed land or open an unlicensed dairy shop for the sale of milk, save at the risk of fine and possible imprisonment. But these are the least of the infringements of liberty and obstructions to industry in the monopoly-ridden world the present Government has been called to administer for another term. Tariffs, quotas, restrictions and taxation direct and indirect that takes toll of the producer's earnings are all part of the edifice which the land monopoly, a law unto itself, has erected. The harshest of all the sanctions is that which prohibits the use of the natural resources unless rent be paid to the owner. These then are the issues that should have been foremost in this late appeal to the nation, and in the name of peace and security. But the votes have been cast and a new Parliament sits dominated by the forces of reaction. It is a matter to deplore but not to despair of. Far better get busy at once on renewed endeavour to educate the public opinion that alone will elect a different House of Commons.

A. W. M.

The *Manchester Guardian*, 6th November, reports:—

An important scheme for the widening of the Rhyl-Prestatyn Coast road has been abandoned owing to the prices for land demanded by landowners. The scheme provided for the extensive widening of the road from Prestatyn to Rhyl and was considered to be the first part of an even bigger scheme for the construction of a ring road around Rhyl which would by-pass all the traffic-congested streets of the town. When the negotiations for the necessary land came to be considered by the Flintshire County Council (who were undertaking the scheme) it was decided "that as the offers of the owners concerned were prohibitive, they be informed forthwith that no further action would be taken."

## POPULATION & WATER SUPPLIES

At the Public Works Roads and Transport Congress held on 21st November, a paper was presented by Dr S. Vere Pearson, "The Distribution of Population with Special Reference to Water Supplies." The subjects dealt with included not only water supplies, but water and sewage disposal and the reasons for uneconomical concentration or dispersal of population and consequent undue expense in handling these matters. Space permits us to quote only a small part of this valuable paper:—

"The causes which lead to greater centralization and overcrowding are essentially economic. People congregate where money is to be made, or where they think money can be most easily made and where life is relatively hectic. Economic causes draw people from rural surroundings and occupations to the cities. The lower standard of living, the low wages, and the poorer amenities and excitements of rural districts are constantly drawing people to the towns. The attraction is progressive, for more and more persons are needed to move people about in the large towns, to govern and control society in these days of socialism, and to cater for the town-dwellers' recreations. People leave the food producer miles away from cities in thinly inhabited regions. Such internal migrations of population are not voluntary, though sometimes they appear to be. They are primarily dependent upon the economic consequences of adherence to the present-day practice of governments. These consider it their duty to 'keep the ring' for the landlords to collect the rent of land. Instead they should reverse that practice and collect such dues as attach to sites as can be shown to arise from the needs, growth and public expenditure of the community, basing their practice always upon a distinction between an 'improvement' value and one which belongs to the community. It is only the latter which should be collected to finance the public services. If that were done all that a man produced by his own effort could be left intact and taxes could be abolished. The present methods of collecting funds for the public services are not conducive to the best interests of the community. As long ago as 1885, Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, as a member of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, pronounced against our plan of raising rates and pointed out that it was unfair in its incidence and hampered progress, besides permitting public values to accrue to private individuals.

"When people can obtain good public services they will be willing to pay more to occupy a site for their habitation or their place of work. Therefore, a site value, or what the economists call the economic rent of land is the just measure of the benefits to be received from living in society, and this value should be that which is collected into the common pool instead of taxes and should not be allowed to flow into private pockets. The best plan is to include all public services in the site rent paid, so that even water, sewerage and drainage rates should be assessed on the basis of unimproved values. Then water would be supplied to water users and its payment included in his local land rent levy just as the use of a lift is included in the house rent of a flat paid to a house-lord. But in England we are far from such ideal arrangements as yet. The first step must be to transfer local rates to site-value assessments."

## FORM OF BEQUEST

*I bequeath (free of duty) to the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, Limited, the sum of £.....*