

was nonsense. A definite "no" to any tax or rate on land values or to any amendment of the Local Government Act was given by Mr. C. Billson, Islington, E. Others, ignorant of the subject, avoided any answer. Mr. A. Lomax, Farnworth, said that "Other financial claims are more urgent," and he wanted to know what Land Value Taxation had to do with repealing tariffs or abolishing purchase tax. Six of the candidates were against abolition of the Exchange Control, that which is the keystone of all controls and restrictions. Eight, including some of the last-named, would let the Derating Act stay or would allow only careful amendment "bearing in mind the necessity for more food production" as Mr. G. Francis, Dorking, said; or more forthrightly by Mr. K. Alhuwalia, Willesden W., "agriculture must be protected."

We have been able to review the standpoints of more than a third of the Liberal candidates by the replies received and by such knowledge as we otherwise have of them. How many of the remainder can be classified with those 63 who have thus demonstrated their doubts, reservations, ignorance of or even hostility to long established liberal principles? It is a serious question for the partisans who are now regarding their stricken field with consternation. In our findings, if we may take part in the post mortem, here among the protagonists were defenders of the purchase tax and other indirect taxes because they produced revenue or halted inflation or were rightly imposable on luxuries or with other specious reasons given, oblivious altogether to the ethics of the matter or the economic consequences. Two candidates, Mr. L. M. Hurd, Hastings, and Mr. Digby Vane, Abingdon (and from the "Liberal" camp!) went as far as to give a positive "no" to the repeal of protective tariffs and the establishment of Free Trade; and

from the candidates in Arundel, Bristol N.W., Epsom, Govan, Merton and Morden, New Forest, Paddington S., Richmond, Sowerby, Willesden W., came replies virtually repudiating the freedom of trade—the stoppage of the robbery *at our own ports*—with such deceptive captions as that "reductions of tariffs must come by way of international agreements" or "only gradually" or "as far as possible" or "with certain safeguards." Thus are principles betrayed but God is not mocked nor are the electors fools; at least they hate and despise tomfoolery. The list of the recusants and of their declarations, as have come to our notice is rather long for tabulation here but it is at the service of any who, believing in the liberal philosophy, can yet see an instrument in the Liberal Party if it is pulled into better shape and with better expositions.

UNDER GOOD HOME RULE

Among replies from Independent candidates, Labour Independent Mr. H. Hutchinson, Walthamstow W., and Mr. D. Carradice, Independent Labour Party, Burnley, said "yes" to most questions but both opposed the removal of the Exchange Control, and Mr. Carradice said of Free Trade that "sweated goods should be barred." The best Independent was Provost Robert Curran, Stirling and Falkirk Burghs, who wrote: "I am interested in the question of Taxation of Land Values and as a Scottish Nationalist I would recommend my Party to go into all the ideas of Henry George. A self-governing Scotland would be in a much better position than she is at present to tax land values. I have not answered the Questionnaire as it mainly concerns the English controlled political parties." We earnestly hope that Provost Curran will succeed in having his views embodied in the Deed of Convention, the demand for Home Rule, which has so aroused Scotland with its million and more signatures.

POVERTY IMPERILS PERSIA

The Shah of Iran, on return from U.S.A., is demanding taxation and land reforms (*New York Times*, February 6, 1950). He said, "Eight years ago when I gave away my fortune and my land it was given to the government to spend for social welfare. Now it comes back to the Crown, strictly given to the organisation bearing our family name providing the opportunity to manage better than was the case previously under government management It is not a question of partition and giving away, but of selling it to local peasants on favourable terms and over a long period. I want to expand the small holdings, and if the peasants pay they will naturally be much more interested in keeping it."

Referring to the land reform section in the programme of the new Cabinet formed since he returned from the United States, he said, "The Government will meet great hostility to this, but the opponents are not very numerous . . . We will balance our budget, and we are fighting corruption, and if we are helped in our economy and nothing unforeseen occurs, I shall not wait for the termination of our seven year plan to show a very hopeful picture."

In an article contributed to the *News Chronicle*, February 23, Geoffrey Hoare describes Persia as the most contradictory country in the Middle East, a bewildering mixture of beauty and ugliness, immense riches and crushing poverty, a superficial modernity and an age as old as history. Equal in size to France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Holland, Iran—or Persia as it is once more being called—has a population of not

much more than 15,000,000—and 90 per cent, of them are totally illiterate. It has a few hundred millionaires and near millionaires—and several millions who just manage to exist: how no one knows. Its great natural resources have only been pecked at, but its limitless oil wells are an important factor in international economics—and international politics. Nine-tenths of the country's income is spent on maintaining a huge and mainly useless force of 150,000 government officials and a standing army of much the same size. Many of the officials go to their offices on the first of each month to collect their meagre salaries and spend the intervening periods doing other jobs.

In all this welter of poverty and corruption, waste and oppression, it is no wonder that the Communist bogey looms large. From across the northern frontiers spreads a steady, relentless stream of Communist propaganda, finding fruitful soil amongst the depressed and nearly starving masses.

Of all the Middle Eastern countries with their down-trodden, unprivileged, hungry millions—obvious material for Communism—Persia's situation is the most perilous. In the first place conditions are rather worse than anywhere else. In the second, she is Russia's neighbour and the only obstacle between Russia and not only her own invaluable oil-fields but also those of Arabia and Iraq. Her army, however well trained and well-equipped it might eventually be, would be no barrier to Communism. That can only be fought inside the country—by bettering the wretched lot of the Persian masses.