

RESOUNDING VICTORY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

On May 1 another heartening victory for the land value policy and sound municipal government was won in South Australia in the face of very great odds. Vested interests spent money like water and engaged in every kind of misrepresentation in an endeavour to maintain intact their privileges. The citizens of the important town of Marion were not deluded by the specious arguments of privilege posing as the friend and protector of the ratepayers; beneath the sheep's clothing of the Marion District Vigilance Committee the townsmen detected land monopoly. When they went to the polls on May Day to choose between continuing the unjust and repressive system of taxing buildings and improvements or adopting land value rating and untaxing houses, shops, factories and other buildings and improvements they dealt a severe and emphatic blow to land monopoly and privilege.

Result of the poll was:—

For land value rating	5,211
Against land value rating	2,126

Majority for land values	3,085
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Henceforth the people of this town will be enabled, indeed encouraged, to improve existing properties and to build well for the future. No man will be punished for adding a garage or an extra room to his house. Poor and uneconomic developments will be replaced by well designed, spacious and soundly constructed properties. Sites that have lain idle will come suddenly on to the market, the speculative element of their price destroyed. New residents will be attracted to the town, bringing with them land value for the community and custom for local traders. Future improvements undertaken by the municipal council will no longer enrich only the landed interests (including absentee landowners)—a part at least of the resultant increases in land value will flow back into the local treasury.

The proportion of resident voters in favour of raising municipal revenue exclusively from a tax on the value of land apart from buildings and improvements is considerably greater than appears from the figures given above. Included in the votes *against* land value rating are those of an undisclosed number of holders of vacant blocks, many of them absentee landlords and some even resident in other States. The so-called "Vigilante Committee" spared no efforts to secure the votes of these absentees, sending them application forms for postal votes, with stamped addressed envelopes, and warning them that unless they exercised their vote their rates would be increased. And now, indeed, they will be—to the advantage of all who live in the town.

To resident ratepayers the hostile "Vigilantes" sent by post four separate sets of printed material and on the day before the poll they bought a whole page of the local paper, *The Advertiser*, to publish a tendentious but plausible advertisement warning citizens not to be "misled by the claims for land value rating." One of the "facts" which the Vigilance Committee felt that every ratepayer should know and consider before voting was that the expenditure of the Marion District Council had risen steeply year by year (under the system of rating on the composite value of land and buildings taken together—the system which they wished to maintain) and that it was certain to continue to rise. No great perception was required to see the irrelevance of this argument. What

was at issue was not how much revenue Marion Council would require this year and in future years, but the source from which this revenue was to come. Wisely the ratepayers decided that those who benefited from municipal government should contribute to its cost and in strict proportion to the benefits thus enjoyed.

The good news of the Marion poll result first reached us in an airmail letter sent by Mr. E. J. Craigie (who, as we report below, is now on holiday in this country). He wrote: "The Marion Ratepayers Progress Association rose to the occasion splendidly. I have never worked with a keener lot of men in connection with any rating poll. Meetings were addressed in halls, at street corners, and even on Sunday mornings. We sent out printed matter, had 40 painted streamers throughout the area in prominent positions, and sent postcards to every ratepayer whose rates would be reduced. The majority of 3,085 was 810 votes more than was required under the (unjust) clause in the Local Government Act which makes it necessary to secure a three-fifths majority before an *Adoption* poll is effective. It has been strenuous work but the effort was well worth while. It will show the opponents of land value rating that it is not *money* that counts when the show-down takes place."

RECEPTION TO MR. E. J. CRAIGIE

A hearty welcome awaited Mr. E. J. Craigie, ex-M.P. and past president of the International Union, when he arrived in London, June 12, his first visit for twenty-five years. He soon made himself at home at 4 Great Smith Street where he met many friends, old and new, and addressed the well attended annual general meeting of the United Committee.

During July Mr. Craigie is to spend a fortnight in Denmark to give and receive much information about the progress of the movement. For the evening of July 21 a private reception in London in his honour has been arranged by the publishers of LAND & LIBERTY. The editor will be pleased to hear from any readers who would like to join in thus greeting our distinguished guest. To obtain particulars, write at once or telephone Abbey 6665.

After a general tour of England and Scotland, and his visit to the continent, Mr. Craigie will spend some days in London before his return home to South Australia in September.

A Danish Merchant and Tariff Taxes

Mr. Dan Bjørner, Chairman of the Danish Henry George Union is president of the influential Danish Merchants' Guild. He has been in controversy with the Member of Parliament, Mr. Stær Johansen, in reply to the suggestion that the *ad valorem* rates of customs duties should be "brought up to date" in view of the fall in the purchasing power of the Crown since they were last fixed. Mr. Johansen had asked for an unprejudiced discussion of the question. Mr. Bjørner responded in a whole-page article in the Copenhagen daily *Nationaltidende* (the National Times) of June 24, in which, as it is summed up in a special editorial note, he says that an increase in their customs rates will not solve their problems. If imports are made dearer by higher tariffs, living standards will be reduced and then there must be price controls. But with a greater nominal purchasing power and fewer goods on offer they will be in for inflation which will add to costs of production at home and limit competitive power in the foreign markets. The choice stands not between restrictions and tariffs but between freedom of trade on the one hand and both restrictions and tariffs on the other hand.