

## A WREATH FOR TARIFF REFORM

Two reasons are given for the slipping from life of the Tariff Reform League. The one is that, with the Safeguarding of Industries Act, "the principles advocated by the League have received definite expression in legislation," and the other that it has been found impossible to obtain funds sufficient to carry on the League's work effectively. We fancy the weight is on the second of these excuses. A political body does not die because its principles are being adopted. When, however, the stream of financial support dries up it is obvious that its work has ceased to make an appeal even to the fanatic. As we follow respectfully the funeral, we cannot avoid reflecting on the strange turn of events which compels a body into whose coffers hundreds of thousands of pounds were poured to confess that it can no longer meet the expenses of its diminished and even skeleton staff.

The Tariff Reform League had not reached its twentieth year. Strange that we should record that of a body which, if now officially dead, had been for so long forgotten that few men could say whether it survived or not. It was born in the brain of the late Mr. Harry Marks when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain entered upon the last big political campaign of his life. Of the League it may truly be said that it was all things to all men. For each constituency it had a different set of arguments, of facts and of leaflets according to its local trade needs. It mattered nothing that the case for Tariff Reform put out in one district was wholly contradicted by the case presented in another area. Always there was the blessed word "scientific" to fall back upon. If only the tariff was scientific enough workmen would receive high wages, manufacturers would have a market for their goods in which there would be no competition, ordinary economic laws would be suspended, and taxation would be defrayed out of the duties upon produce which would not be allowed to enter the country. The case of the consumer, it is true, presented some difficulty, but it was always possible to say that if everybody was paid more for producing goods the goods could be sold at a lower price. It was, in fact, possible to say anything.

This amazingly dishonest programme was finally killed by the hard experiences of the war and the years that have followed the war. We have had a sample of the Eden of Tariff Reform. The war produced a boom such as Tariff Reform was to have given. It cut off supplies from abroad. We had high prices with wages that were always a little behind in the upward movement. Then there was the inevitable slump, with its wide wave of unemployment in which wages came tumbling down or vanished altogether. We found ourselves helpless in contested markets abroad, with no man daring to make contracts because of the changing values. War, in fact, carried through on a vast scale the very experiment to which the Tariff Reformers invited us. The country learned the value of the trade principles which had been recommended to it as a panacea for all ills. We may even concede that a final stroke may have been given to the Tariff Reform League by the Safeguarding of Industries Act—a measure which is cursed daily by the men who are involved in the maze of correspondence, of Custom House regulations, and of hindrance to legitimate business which it involves. In pointing to that detested Act as an example of success in its propaganda, we may well understand why the Tariff Reform League, even without its bankruptcy in funds, decided that it would be better dead.—*Westminster Gazette*, 13th September.

According to PETROLEUM, a book by Anthony Blum, the "Aquitania" took five days in port to coal for a voyage. When refitted to burn oil she could be loaded in five hours, and 88 lamp-trimmers did the work of 300 firemen. Capitalism is such a beautiful system that progress means poverty. Why "progress"?—*THE FORWARD* (Glasgow), 7th October.

## THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS AND THE LAND QUESTION

At the Committee on War and the Social Order, held at Jordans 6th to 8th October, the subject of the attitude of the Society towards the Land Question was introduced by Charles H. Smithson, who put before the Committee the idea that the private ownership of land, which is one of the free gifts of God to mankind, involves a violation of Christian principles. It was the duty of the Church to arouse the conscience of the individual to the iniquity of institutions contrary to Christianity, and it was then the duty of those who thus became aware of the existence of a wrong to consider what readjustments can be made to enable the wrong to be righted. It became clear on further discussion that what was the natural heritage of all could not be divided, but must be held in common, and the Committee adopted the following minute:—

"Having already expressed our belief that every human being has an equal right in the natural resources of the earth, we are convinced that such rights must be held in common, and cannot be alienated by the individual or by the community. Believing that the present system of the private ownership of land, in this country, violates this principle, we hold that it is essentially un-Christian. We believe that the appropriation of the value of natural resources by the community would be a right application of the principle—and would clear the ground for other steps in the direction of a Christian social order."—*From THE FRIEND*, 13th October.

It was agreed that the Secretary of the Committee should intimate to the various sections concerned throughout the Society that Chas. Smithson was ready to attend any meeting with his explanatory diagrams on the law of rent and of wages in further explanation and defence of the minute adopted.

## LAND AND MINERALS

Without the aid of human labour Nature provides land and minerals. Our laws provide that when land or minerals are used, the users, and also the capital they employ, are heavily rated and taxed.

There is, however, no law which provides for the assessment of unused land. Neither rates nor taxes are paid on the market value of vacant building sites, nor of unworked minerals.

The "legal fiction" is that where there is neither "beneficial occupation" nor use there is no value to tax.

The fact is that an adequate tax on the reserve selling price of these gratuitous gifts of Nature would reduce the price of urban and mining land.

Without resorting to nationalization, this policy would mean that the value of land, arising from public improvements, in the processes of production, would become the common and free heritage of the people at large.

This would make it easy for every law-abiding person to secure absolute security of tenure to occupy and use land at its actual current value.

G. A. GOODWIN.

No doubt there is the unearned increment, but what is it? When a landowner has land without house or buildings, around which the neighbouring landowners have fully equipped their farms, one of their tenants will often give for this land a rent equal per acre to what is paid for land and improvements. This is unearned increment, but it is due to the work of neighbouring landowners. In more densely populated districts a high price is paid for the site of a building though the building when completed is often sold for less than the cost of building with the land thrown in.—A. A. Whitehead, Broadstone, in the *DAILY TELEGRAPH*, 23rd September.