

YORKSHIRE AND NORTHERN LEAGUE: Fred Skirrow, Secretary, 71, North Street, Keighley.

We are glad to be able to announce that Alderman J. R. Firth, of Sydney, N.S.W., who, during his tour in this country will address a number of meetings, has arranged to come to Yorkshire. Engagements have been made for him by the League as follows:—

Monday, 25th. May—Rotary Club, Doncaster.
 " " " " —Barnsley.
 Tuesday, 26th. May—Bradford Liberal Club (noon).
 " " " " —Keighley (evening), by invitation of the Mayor.
 Wednesday, 27th. May—Huddersfield (two meetings).

Alderman Firth will speak on the working of land value rating in Sydney and New South Wales generally and, as a Free Trader, will deal also with the question of protection as it affects Australia.

ANNUAL MEETING

A representative gathering of members and friends from various parts of Yorkshire took part in the Annual General Meeting of the League which was held on 28th March at the York Café, Leeds. Among those present from a greater distance were the Hon. President, Mr. Charles H. Smithson, and Messrs. P. Wilson Raffan, ex-M.P., John Paul and A. W. Madsen. Greatly to be regretted was Mr. John Archer's inability to attend owing to serious illness. He was much missed both at the Leeds meetings and at the meeting held later in Huddersfield, where he lives. His many friends in Yorkshire and beyond earnestly hope for a speedy recovery.

Mr. Ashley Mitchell, Chairman of the Executive, presided at the business meeting, which considered and adopted the Secretary's report for the year and the financial statement submitted by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. J. E. Dugdale. An urgent appeal was made to members to help all they could with their subscriptions and donations. The Hon. Treasurer and the Chairman both emphasised the urgent need of funds to discharge the outstanding debt and to continue and extend the activities of the League. A special point was made of the duty that devolved on all our members to gain new adherents for the League. One plan in particular was approved—that everyone should subscribe for several extra copies (or at least one extra copy) of *LAND & LIBERTY* for a year for postage to any person likely to become interested in the movement. The member could either see to this postage himself or give the names and addresses (with subscriptions) to the Secretary. The recipient of the paper should be invited in due course to become a member of the League.

The Executive Committee of the League for the ensuing year was elected, including office-bearers, as follows: Hon. President, Charles H. Smithson; Chairman, Ashley Mitchell; Vice-Chairmen, Everett Binns, George Garnett, A. W. Dakers, C. H. Boyle, P. V. Olver; Hon. Treasurer, J. E. Dugdale; Hon. Secretaries, J. W. Booth and William Thomson; Hon. Auditors: Warwick Mitchell and Harold Whitaker; and members of the Executive Committee.

A public meeting followed after the business of the League was concluded. The Hon. President, Mr. Charles H. Smithson, occupied the Chair, and, introducing Mr. P. Wilson Raffan, spoke of the expectations that they had all entertained last year. They had hoped to see this year a Finance Bill brought forward by Mr. Snowden which would include some measure of land value taxation. The 1924 General Election, with its setback in the return of a Conservative Government, had postponed these hopes but he was convinced the reaction was only a brief and temporary incident. No



ASHLEY MITCHELL,
 Chairman of the Yorkshire League.

one could mistake the real growth of public sentiment in favour of land value taxation and they could not but be gratified to see the convincing proof of its justice and expediency in many countries where some measure of their policy was in operation.

Mr. Raffan said that the present complexion of the present House of Commons inspired little hope that early action would be taken to secure the practical application of the reform they advocated, but when they took the longer view there was no room for discouragement. At the last General Election a considerable majority of the citizens who went to the poll voted for Liberal and Labour candidates pledged to the Taxation and Rating of Land Values. It was not yet half a century since Henry George first proclaimed his message in this country, and gathered a small body of devoted adherents round him, and tremendous progress had been made in influencing public opinion in the intervening years. It was now admitted, on all hands, that land value in cities and urban communities was a communal creation, and a proper subject for contribution to local and Imperial funds. Definite action in this direction could not be long delayed whatever Government was in power. There was, however, an inclination in certain quarters to differentiate sharply between the urban land problem and the rural land problem, and to say that other measures than those which they advocated were necessary for the purpose of re-settling the people on the soil. In his view, this was the greatest danger in the immediate future, and whether a Liberal or a Labour Government came into power, the utmost vigilance would be necessary to prevent a solution being attempted on wrong lines. They required to spread information on the rural problem, and nothing could be more helpful than to point to the example of Denmark where valuation of land apart from improvements was an accepted and understood thing both in town and country, where a national land value tax, small in amount no doubt but absolutely sound in principle, was already in force and where Parliament now was considering a Bill to levy a substantial portion of the local taxes (again in both town and country) on land value instead of on buildings and other improvements, or upon industry generally. The lesson was that the problem was the same in town and country and that only through the breakdown of land monopoly by the taxation of land values could we secure a remedy for

unemployment, bad housing and the other social evils of our times.

After a general discussion, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:—

This annual meeting of the Yorkshire League for the Taxation of Land Values deplores the continued existence of unemployment and the house famine; affirms the urgency of opening up the opportunities to new production; and declares that land monopoly is the chief obstacle to industrial development and that the remedy is to be found in the direction of real Free Trade by the Taxation of Land Values and the untaxing of enterprise and industry.

OTHER PUBLIC MEETINGS

Next day, also at the York Café, Leeds, the League held afternoon and evening meetings, the speakers being Messrs. A. W. Madsen and John Paul. Mr. Ashley Mitchell presided on both occasions. Mr. Madsen spoke on "Land Value Policy in relation to Agriculture," and the subject was further developed in Mr. Paul's address in the evening on "The Inefficient Farmer as the Alleged Cause of Unemployment." The speeches were most instructive, making clear both in principle and policy the application of land value taxation to all land without distinction as to its situations or use in town or country.

Mr. Ashley Mitchell, speaking from the Chair, summed up the discussion and said that in his opinion it was a totally wrong idea to suggest that land value taxation could not be understood in rural areas. He had proved on two occasions as a Parliamentary candidate how readily the policy was understood and accepted in these very districts. Some people seemed to think that farmers, and Tory-minded farmers at that, were the only inhabitants of agricultural districts, forgetting that labourers, small shopkeepers and the various people in the villages far outnumber the farmers. He had dealt with the Tory tale that he was out to "tax the land," by asking if land was not taxed already *and on its use*. He was out to reform that system of taxation by making the basis of assessment not the use to which land was put but the value of land apart from improvements. The Minister for Agriculture had stated in the House of Commons in May, 1924, that 11,000 approved applicants for small holdings were waiting for land and could not be satisfied. Under present conditions, if those men got holdings they would have to pay high rents because the land had been bought at a high price, and then the better they used the land the more they would be rated and taxed, yet people said that the system of rating and taxing on land value would not be a good thing for agriculture, ignoring the fact that the existing system obviously was a cruel penalty on enterprise and industry. It was useless to say that small holdings could not be made to pay because some small holders were found in the bankruptcy court; the marvel was that they were not all there, under present conditions of high rents and rates on improvements. Tenant farmers were not all rack-rented and many landowners were not seriously concerned about the rents they received from their agricultural estates, since they derived the bulk of their income from land values in towns. Many of them could therefore afford to deal lightly with their tenants, and the latter in turn simply exploited the landless labourers. What the landlord as landowner was deeply concerned to perpetuate was the unrestricted control over wide acres, that is over land that had a high monopoly price if anyone tried to buy it, especially in smaller parcels, although it was let on a yearly tenure to large farmers at comparatively low rents. Land of that kind was farmed in slipshod fashion or was left altogether unused. Taxation and rating of land values

would very soon alter such conditions and country folk had as much sense as townspeople to grasp and support the principle whenever it was explained to an audience.

At Huddersfield on 30th March, and at Keighley on 31st March, Mr. Paul and Mr. Madsen spoke on "Land Value Taxation in Relation to Housing." Excellent reports of these meetings appeared in the HUDDERSFIELD DAILY EXAMINER, the YORKSHIRE OBSERVER and the KEIGHLEY NEWS, and the HUDDERSFIELD EXAMINER, in a leading article, warmly endorsed the principle and policy that had been advocated by our speakers.

Other meetings have been held as follows:—

- Mar. 15th.—A. W. Dakers, Adult School, Wallsend.
- " 22nd.—W. D. Brierley, Farnhill, Crosshills.
- " 23rd.—The Secretary, All Souls (Men's Association), Leeds.
- " 24th.—The Secretary, Mexborough Rotary Club.
- " 25th.—The Secretary, Rotherham Rotary Club.
- " 25th.—The Secretary, Deepcar meeting held at Andrew Clarks.
- " 28th.—J. M. Marston, Stocksbridge.
- " 31st.—J. M. Marston, Clayton West.
- April 1st.—Ashley Mitchell, W.L.A. Primrose Hill, Huddersfield.
- " 4th.—Ashley Mitchell and J. M. Marston, Stocksbridge.
- " 8th.—Ashley Mitchell, L.A.S.Soc., Chapelton, Sheffield.
- " 9th.—Ashley Mitchell, L. of Y. L., Ikelmanthope.
- " 15th.—The Secretary, W.C.G., Halifax.
- " 17th.—Ashley Mitchell, L. of Y. L., Gomersall.
- " 19th.—Ashley Mitchell, Central Fellowship, Scarborough.
- " 20th.—The Secretary, The Crotona Club, Keighley.

Letters to the Press have been contributed among others by J. K. Musgrave, YORKSHIRE OBSERVER, 1st April. The Secretary, WEST YORKSHIRE PIONEER, 4th April. The Secretary, YORKSHIRE OBSERVER, 6th April. J. M. Marston, SHEFFIELD INDEPENDENT, 15th April.

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