

Monthly Bulletin

OF

The English League for the Taxation of Land Values

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FEBRUARY, 1938

Meetings (February).

- Th. 3.—Barnes and Mortlake Political Council (London Co-operative Society), St. Osmond's Hall, 77, Castlenau, Barnes: A. C. Blackburn, "Taxation and Rating of Land Values." 8 p.m.
- Th. 10.—Sutton and Cheam Liberal Association Grove Hall, Bridge Road, Sutton, Surrey: Fredk. Verinder, "Rates and Assessments." 8 p.m.
- Mo. 21.—Southall Political Council (London Co-operative Society), Labour Hall: A. C. Blackburn. 7.45 p.m.
- Th. 24.—Weston Turville Women's Institute, near Aylesbury: Rupert East, "Local Government."
- Th. 24.—Barnet and District Women's Liberal Association, Church House, Wood Street, High Barnet: A. C. Blackburn, "Taxation of Land Values." 3 p.m.
- MAR. 1.—Stamford Hill Women's Co-operative Guild, Earlsmead Hall, High Road, South Tottenham: Fredk. Verinder. 2.30 p.m.
- MAR. 2.—London Co-operative Society, West Green Political Council, New Labour Hall, 229, West Green Road, N. 15.

Two meetings in January, arranged after the *Bulletin* had gone to press, were held in connection with the South Tottenham Political Council of the London Co-operative Society (Jan. 18th) and the Aylesbury Liberal Association (31st). They were both addressed by the General Secretary. The President of the League took the chair at Aylesbury. The London Co-operative Society covers a very large area along the Thames Valley from Shoeburyness to Windsor. In each constituency in its area there is a Political Council. The work of the League has been brought to the notice of these Councils and some of them have already accepted speakers from the League.

The central Education Committee of the Society is affiliated to the English League.

Personal.

Miss Frances R. Levy, a member of the Executive, is to be a candidate for the Urban District Council

of Leatherhead, Surrey, at the election in April.

Congratulations and every good wish to R. Batty, who was married at St. Anne's, Solihull, on January 29th, to Miss Christina Foyle, organist of the famous Literary Luncheons. The bride belongs to a family which has given, and is giving, to the service of the cause, three generations to the service of the cause. His father and his grandfather have all in turn been members of the Executive of the League. Mr. Batty is one of the directors of the well-known book-firm of Foyle.

Please—

Will those members whose subscriptions are not paid "up to date" kindly help the Treasurer and Executive by a prompt remittance? The financial year of the League closes on March 31st.

Will any members who live in Urban or Suburban Districts where elections are to be held in April kindly send information as to what is happening locally to the General Secretary? The League's pamphlet "The Crying Injustice of our Rating System and the Remedy" could be made as useful in Urban District elections as it has been in the County and Borough elections of last year. (5/- per 100, post-free).

Landlord Relief.

Even the *Times* seems to think that a halt should be called to the "help" so generously given to agricultural landlords, at the expense of the funds and of the consumers of agricultural products, by the "National" Government. In a leading article (17/1/38) in which it sums up the controversy, which had been going on in its columns on a proposal to reduce the death duties on agricultural land by about £1,000,000, we read: "It should be remembered that the exemption of agricultural land from the increases in the rate of duty imposed in 1925 and in 1931 is already worth £400,000 a year to landowners. The exemption from all death duties granted in 1929 is a further considerable relief. In addition the landowner, whether owner-occupied or landlord, has benefited directly or indirectly by the subsidies given for sugar-beet, livestock, fertilizers, timber, milk, and rural housing. In view of all this assistance, some critics have been inclined to ask whether one class of taxpayer has been

advised to request further assistance at a time when other taxpayers are supporting increased burdens and have little prospect of relief. The Colwyn Committee in 1927 regretfully but flatly declared that the request was 'unjustifiable' for the very reason that it involved discriminatory taxation."

In the course of its argument, the *Times* uses some phrases which, if their implications are worked out, seem to go very near to the root of the matter. The italics are ours.

"After all, it may be argued, the overriding principle to observe in *taxation* is that it *should not discourage enterprise*, and the present discouragement of enterprise in landownership is the basis of the request for further relief to-day. Moreover, *land is distinct from all other forms of property and logically merits distinctive treatment*." But the editor, apparently recognising that landlord relief is not the same as relief to agricultural industry, also says: "As Lord Waldegrave has pointed out there is really no guarantee that the extra money which would be left in [the landlord's] pocket would be spent upon the estates; and it would be no easy matter to devise an effective guarantee."

"Prosperity."

The "Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom," issued last week by the Board of Trade, shows what is meant by the talk about the "prosperity" which the "National" Government has brought about by its restrictions on trade. In 1935-36 there were 334 millionaires in Britain, nearly 40 more than in the previous year. Their incomes varied from £75,000 to over £100,000.

Trade Restrictions and International Peace.

Progress, organ of the Henry George League of Victoria, Australia, recalls, in its December issue, that laws in restriction of trade are no new thing in English history. When Elizabeth came to the throne there were statutes prohibiting the export or import of merchandise by English subjects in any but English ships. These restrictions were repealed in 1571 by I. Elizabeth c. 13, in the preamble of which Act the reason was clearly stated in the following terms:—

"Other foreign princes, finding themselves aggrieved with the said several acts as thinking that the same were made to the hurt and prejudice of their country and navy, have made like penal laws such as should ship out of their countries in any other vessels than of their several countries and dominions; by reason of which there hath not only grown great displeasure between the foreign princes and the Kings of this realm, but also the merchants have been sore, grieved and endamaged."

A local "Parliament."

The Hampstead "Parliament" opened its Session last month. A Liberal Government "power" and presented its Ministerial Statement ("King's Speech?") on January 12th. It contains the two following paragraphs:—

"3. The rising cost of living in this country has been accentuated by restrictive economic policies which handicap efforts to improve the health of the people so largely dependent on adequate supplies of cheap food. Measures will be introduced to relax these restrictions and to revive agriculture. . . .

"4. The Government will introduce legislation to secure that the benefit of land value increases to the community should not accrue to private individuals and that such increases shall be applied for the benefit of the community as a whole. The present short-sighted system of penalising development by an increase of rates will be abolished and the resulting loss of revenue recouped by the tax on land values."

"National" Government, please copy, noting ever that the words "that such increases" in italics are quite unnecessary.

Spain.

A story told by the Madrid correspondent of the *Times* (20/1/38) throws light on the condition of things in Spain which led to the Revolution; and which General Franco is apparently trying to re-establish. A sick and penniless widow, just admitted to the Madrid Asylum for poor working women, only daughter of the 13th Duke of Osuna. The Duke, her father's cousin and predecessor, "used to boast that he could drive from either the Portuguese or the French frontier to Madrid without having to leave his own land."

Why theatre seats are dear.

The *London News* states that the site for the Prince of Wales Theatre is held on lease at a gross rent of £3,500 a year (over £67 a week), and the theatre, when built, will be under-leased at £26,000 a year (£500 a week). When it opens, heavy Rates will of course be levied by the Council, and Entertainment Tax by the Government.

Star-light.

"There is no limit to what a man can do if he does not care who gains the credit for it."—Lord Hailsham of Bury, Lord Chief Justice, in the London Convention (Jan. 21st) on the occasion of its Jubilee.