

THE CREED OF FREEDOM

All human beings are born with an inherent equal right to life. Life being a manifestation of natural law, and only to be sustained by access to nature, it follows that inasmuch as all have an equal right to life, all have an equal right to the air, and to a foothold on the earth. But inasmuch as access to the Land under the circumstances of these days secures opportunity of varying degrees of advantage, the equal right of all has to be established in conformity with these conditions. The law of rent determines, from the starting point of that land from which no rent is obtainable, because of lack of superior advantage, the value of the opportunity that any other land provides, and to secure which land rent is paid. The equal right of all to the land can be established by each occupier of the common property paying into a common fund the annual value of the privilege of holding any particular portion, a value ascribed to it directly by nature and by the presence of the community. Then all land will be held as from the community, and land rent will be paid to the community to meet communal needs. The community will then be the sole ground landlord. Thus all human beings born into the world will be born into it as its equal inheritors. Thus the equal right to life will be established.

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THE COMMONWEAL

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They have discovered in their fine politics the art of causing those to die of hunger who, by cultivating the earth, give the means of life to others.

—*Voltaire*

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By R. L. OUTHWAITE, Editor "Commonweal."
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"Agriculture Under Land Monopoly."

Readers of the striking article under the above title which appeared in the May issue of the COMMONWEAL from the pen of R. L. O. will be interested in the announcement that "in view of the serious condition of the national finances, the Cabinet has decided to repeal Part I of the Agriculture Act and the Corn Production Act." Not for the first time is Mr. Outhwaite able to say: "I told you so."

Conferences.

Readers in Kent are asked to note that the next Conference will be held at Chatham, on Saturday, September 24. Others will be announced as arrangements now in hand are completed.

(Concluded from page 3.)

Almighty God. It certainly should be the international policy of mankind. But the enforcement of the public right to the land and the encouragement of production should also be the policy of mankind. Land-rents would then take the place of tariffs, free course would be given to the linked processes of production and exchange, and the way would be prepared for international prosperity and international peace.

The Foundations of Peace

By JAMES DUNDAS WHITE, LL.D.

IF the foundations of peace are to be well and truly laid, steps must be taken everywhere to enforce the rights of the people to the bounties of Nature, and to promote production and exchange.

The great cause of unrest is the unfair distribution of wealth and of all that wealth can bring. Progress has been accompanied hitherto by privilege on the one hand and poverty on the other. The production of wealth has increased enormously; but the distribution of it continues to work out unfairly. At the root of this unfair distribution of wealth is the unfair appropriation of the natural resources from which wealth is derived. The first step must be to secure to the people the rights to Nature's storehouse, including the land itself and all that naturally pertains to it. The people in their corporate capacity should act as super-landlord; those who hold the land should be required to pay a national land-rent for it—based on the market value of the land apart from improvements—whether they are using it or not; and the payment of this land-rent should take the place of the present taxes on landed property. We would thus tap a true public revenue, open the natural opportunities to the people, free production, and do much to remove the causes of unrest.

Freedom of production should be accompanied by freedom of trade, and the breaking of land monopoly at home should be accompanied by a removal of the barriers which prevent the people in one country trading with the people in another, and are themselves a constant cause of international discord. Trade is of material advantage to those who engage in it, because it will only take place where each prefers what he gets to what he gives; it enables every country to participate in the natural advantages of the others; and it has moral advantages as well, for it binds together people in different countries by mutual interests and mutual sympathies. Cobden called Free Trade the International Law of
(Continued at foot of page 2.)

Ipswich and District Conference

A VERY successful conference was held at St. Nicholas Church Hall, Ipswich, on May 28, when 43 delegates attended, representing the following Labour organisations:—Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, Felixstowe, Holbrook, Ipswich, No. 3, and Woodbridge; I.L.P., Ipswich; Labour Party (Women's Section), Ipswich; Boilermakers; A.E.U., Ipswich, No. 2; N.U.R., Ipswich, No. 1; Associated Blacksmiths and Ironworkers, Ipswich; Sheet Metal Workers; Felixstowe Trades and Labour Council; General Workers' Union, Ipswich and Wittersham; Masons' Society, Ipswich. A number of visitors were also present. The Rev. Stuart Smith presided, supported by Councillor R. F. Jackson, Messrs. J. McCulloch, J. McCadyen, J. W. Graham Peace, and Councillor A. V. Smith.

The Chairman said the rank and file of the Labour Party must make the leaders toe the line. There was no doubt that legally the land belonged to the people, but at present it was held by a small section, mainly in their own interests, although some of them did regard themselves as stewards of the community. He recalled the events of the fourteenth century, when the people marched to London to interview the King, who promised that the land should be used for the people and not for a section. That promise had not been kept. He did not ask them now to go to London to see the King, or to send an army to London, but he did urge them, when the opportunity was afforded them, to send 400 sound men and women to the House of Commons to see that the people got what was legally theirs.

Mr. J. McCulloch (Commonwealth League Executive) proposed the following resolution:—

Unemployment.

“ This Conference declares that the land belongs by equal and inalienable right to all, and that its private usurpation is an infringement of common right that can no longer be tolerated.

“ In view of the fact that millions are destined to misery

unless the economic system based on land monopoly be transformed, this Conference demands that the common right shall be forthwith asserted, and that as from an Appointed Day the Land, with all the natural resources pertaining thereto, shall be deemed to have been restored to the people, and that its economic rent shall be collected by and for the people.”

The resolution, he said, indicated the only possible way out for the world at present. Unemployment and the even greater evil of poverty were due to the present system of land ownership. There was only one possible way of creating wealth, and that was the application of labour to the natural resources of the land and its products. If labour and land could not get into proper relationship, unemployment and poverty must result, and that was the position to a great extent at present. In 1846, with a population of 27 millions, there were in this country 3½ millions of people engaged in agricultural pursuits, but in 1921, with a population of about 48 millions, there were only 2 millions so engaged. According to the ratio of population there should be at least six millions on the land, and if there were the whole question of unemployment would have ceased. England had not felt this falling off in agricultural employment because her industrial products had been first in the field, but the world situation had now changed, and other nations were becoming big industrially, with the result that England would have to fall back upon work on the land. There were a tremendous number of fantastic architects at present with ideas of building a new world, but until the land monopoly was broken down there could be no true liberty.

Councillor R. F. Jackson (prospective Labour candidate, Ipswich), in seconding, said that within the next decade Labour would be called upon to assume the reins of Government, and when that time came they must be ready with a policy to carry out their aims. The ownership of land was at the bottom of most of their troubles, and the quickest way of solving it was undoubtedly along the lines advocated by the Commonwealth League; therefore, that

policy should be very carefully considered. He was not there to assert that unemployment to-day was entirely due to the private ownership of land, because there were other and smaller factors which made for periodic changes, but in the main it was the great cause.

The resolution was carried *nem. con.*

Mr. J. W. Graham Peace (Propaganda Secretary, Commonwealth League) moved the second resolution:—

Municipal Finance.

That this Conference calls upon the Executive of the Labour Party to bring to the forefront of Labour policy the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted at the last Annual Conference of the Party held at Scarborough, June, 1920:—

“ This Conference is of opinion that the present system of placing on the localities a large proportion of the cost of meeting our national responsibilities in the matter of education, maintenance of the poor, aged, and infirm, unemployed relief, asylums, infectious hospitals, etc., and the many optional powers given to Local Authorities, is unjust and oppressive, and, further, results in many of these urgent obligations being inadequately met, or altogether evaded, to the great detriment of the community. This Conference, therefore, demands that these charges shall be placed on a national fund raised by calling upon all holders of the national property, the land, and the resources of nature resident therein, to pay the economic rent thereof to a common fund through the National Exchequer, and that for administrative purposes the money so raised should be allocated to the Local Authorities in proportion to the requirements of their districts as determined by population and other essential factors.”

He contended that if the economic rent of land was pooled and disbursed amongst local authorities at the rate of £7 per head of the population, the local authorities would be able to do their work without raising a penny from rates, and do much more even than they were able to do at present owing to lack of funds. On this basis Ipswich would receive from

the Common Land-Rent Fund, taking the 1911 census figures of population, £517,524, as compared with £122,592, the sum raised in rates for 1911-12. Felixstowe raised in the same year £24,208. Its share would be £60,662. Stowmarket would receive £29,610 instead of £5,471 collected in rates, and Woodbridge, with a population of 4,623, which had a rate burden in the same year of £5,111, would get as its share of this real “ National Pool ” £32,361. To carry out that policy they must capture the Parliamentary machine of the country, and use it in the interests of the whole people without distinction of class or grade, as effectively and completely as the present holders of the machine had, and were using it in their own interests.

Mr. J. McFadyen (Ipswich Trades Council and Labour Party), in seconding, said the importance of this question cannot be exaggerated. It is even more important to the Labour Party than to the Commonwealth League. It is urgent for the Labour Party to consider these problems, as at present they have no practical proposals. He did not think the Labour Party would ever permanently have control of municipal affairs until the problem of rating was solved, because it was impossible to carry out their social reforms with rating as high as it was at present. They must show the people the injustice of the present method of taxation, and teach them the way out.

Councillor A. V. Smith (Ipswich T.C. and Labour Party), supporting, said at one time the land question was little heard of on Labour and Socialist platforms. The war had changed all this, and the Commonwealth League now made the most effective appeal. The Labour Party to-day is up against problems impossible of solution because of high and increasing rates. He also pointed out how handicapped the authorities were in carrying out much-needed improvements, particularly in public health matters, owing to the lack of funds.

Mr. Graham Peace having replied to the discussion, the resolution was carried unanimously.

The *East Anglian Daily Times* gave a full report.

"The Treatment of Tuberculosis"

By Dr. S. V. PEARSON

PARLIAMENT has recently been dealing with a Tuberculosis Bill which empowers the Minister of Health to spend public money to provide institutional treatment. The total estimated cost at present is £2,300,000 p.a., of which the local authorities bear one million.

Once again the idea is put forward of stemming the ravages of preventible disease by throwing the cost of treating the sufferers upon the public purse. But the very methods of public finance used to-day turn the rate-collector and the tax-gatherer into abettors of disease. For they make houses scarcer and increase poverty and overcrowding, while they allow the natural source of revenue for communal services, the rent of site values, to flow into private pockets. Further, those localities where the poor live and those situations where tuberculosis is most rife, are the very ones where it is hardest to raise the money. Compare the rates of a wealthy, west-end, healthy district in London with a poor, overcrowded, east-end district. Or compare the 6s., or thereabouts, rate in the county of Norfolk, where tuberculosis is rare, with the rate in Norwich, which is well over 20s. in the £, where tuberculosis is much more common. People herd together in small house space because otherwise they cannot afford to pay the rent and the rates, often paid indirectly with the rent. Again, communal services are run for profit to relieve rates, instead of the economic rent of land being taken to enable such services to be supplied free to all. In other words, users of water, trams, gas, etc., are taxed to relieve land-holders and monopoly owners. Strike at the root of poverty and restore to the people the value of land which alone the industry of the workers creates (i.e., the rent of the natural position and resources of land, apart from buildings or other "improvements"), open up thereby opportunities for all, and then will it be possible not only to succour the consumptive properly, but also eventually to banish the scourge of tuberculosis.

A Land Raid in Lincolnshire

DURING the Napoleonic wars, while so many of the men were away fighting for "their country" and all those other things which they always fight for, but never get, the lords-of-the-manors, with their friends who stayed safely at home, were busily engaged annexing the country, sometimes by Act of Land-Lord Parliament, but as often as not without any such formality.

Enclosing had gone on ever since the fifteenth century, but the high corn-prices during the French War gave an added impetus to the movement.

In the course of the struggle with France (1796-1815) no less than 1,925 enclosures by Act of Parliament took place in England and Wales, depriving the men who were fighting of all their rights in the soil and so reducing them to the position of landless wage-slaves.

To the present generation a common signifies an open space reserved for purposes of recreation; what it meant to our grandfathers may be gathered from the following description of the three kinds of commons:—

"The arable fields were divided into strips, with different owners, some of whom owned few strips, and some many. The various strips that belonged to a particular owner were scattered among the fields. Strips were divided from each other, sometimes by a grass band called a balk, sometimes by a furrow. They were cultivated on a uniform system by agreement, and after harvest they were thrown open to pasturage.

"The common meadow land was divided up by lot, pegged out, and distributed among the owners of the strips; after the hay was carried, these meadows, like the arable fields, were used for pasture.

"The common, or waste, which was used as a common pasture at all times of the year, consisted sometimes of woodland, sometimes of roadside strips, and sometimes of commons in the modern sense."—(Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, "The Village Labourer.")

How the Spoil was Divided.

In the year 1807, by 47 Geo. III., c. xli., "An Act to Enclose Lands in Frodingham and Flixborough, Lincolnshire," the whole of the Township of Crosby was stolen from the people. The area is not stated in the Act, but an examination of the Award reveals the fact that, after providing for twelve roads and footpaths, 1,196 acres passed into possession of the raiders. The lord-of-the-manor, Sir John Sheffield, came in for the lion's share of the loot, getting twenty-one allotments, totalling in all over 756 acres. Another Sheffield, the Reverend Robert, was awarded 165 acres "in lieu of Tithes," while 64 acres went to the Rev. T. Smith, Vicar of Frodingham, as consolation for the loss of his Tithes. Nearly 96 acres was the share of George Healey, "owner of the Rectory Improprate of Frodingham entitled to all the Tithes of Corn and Patron of the Vicarage and Parish Church of Frodingham," as the wording of the Award has it. One John Chatterton, for no reason stated, received 55 acres; 21 went to the "Divisees of Richard Fox"; 12 acres comprised Richard Chatterton's little lot, while five other persons had to be content with about 24 acres between them. Half an acre was the Parish Clerk of Frodingham's share of the spoil. It is satisfactory to note that the claims of the public were not altogether forgotten in the scramble, *two whole* acres were allotted as a gravel pit for the repair of the roads!

Strange to say, the usual order directing the fencing of the plots awarded to the reverend tithe owners "at the expense of the rest of the allottees" was not made in this instance.

Encouraged, no doubt, by the success of the earlier effort, another raid was made in 1831 when, by 1 and 2 Will. IV. c. lvii. the townships of Frodingham, Scunthorpe, and Gunhouses, 2,000 acres in all, were enclosed. The next, and last, raid took place in 1865. This time Brumby Commons (785 acres) and Brumby Moors (605 acres) in Frodingham parish were seized and divided up amongst the raiders.

To all appearances the land thus acquired was simply

agricultural, though of good quality. As such its value in terms of money would be low. To the commoners its possession for use meant the difference between freedom and wage-slavery; and the value of this can never be expressed in cash, for it is priceless! Actually the land was part of a vast deposit of rich ironstone which stretches eastwards from the Trent to the coast, covering an area of many miles. The stone is quite close to the surface, lying at from six to thirty inches down, and, on the one-time commons, where it is worked in open mines, the seam is from ten to forty feet in depth. Its discovery was quite accidental.

A Fortunate Kick.

A traveller, so the story goes, striking his foot against a stone as he was crossing the common, was led to examine the same, with a result that completely changed the face of the country. Where in 1848 there was a population of 289, by 1911 this had grown to 10,170. Where in 1807 the land-raiding Sheffield was a poor man, Sir Berkley Sheffield, the present lord-of-the-manor, for allowing the Scunthorpe people to work the ironstone out of their own commons is said to have drawn in one war year £70,000 in royalties alone! This figure takes no account of the increased rent-roll due to the population having multiplied over thirty-eight times. Of course there is a housing problem, and the people through their Council are buying back part of their old common as a site for the scheme. £150 per acre is the price they are paying—"a reasonable price" said one of the Councillors to me, but no price paid for land can ever be reasonable; the land is the property of the people as a whole and justice dictates that it be restored without payment. The Commonwealth League plan meets the case, being both just and practicable. Sir Berkley Sheffield would pay the full rent of the land he holds to its rightful owners, the people, and the Scunthorpe Council would draw for public expenses its share of the Common Land Rent Fund as revenue to be used in lieu of the present rates. On the 1911 population basis this would amount to £71,190. In the year 1911-12 Scunthorpe's rate burden was £9,780.

J. W. G. P.

“ Britain Bunkered ”

IT has been said with scorn that “ Nero fiddled while Rome burned.” Somehow one can appreciate his attitude to-day. When disaster is unavoidable or irreparable a fiddle is as good as a golf club to play with.

Prophecy is a dangerous and uncertain business, but there is more than a chance that the historian of the future will be able to record that the British Empire tottered to its fall amid the greatest scenes ever witnessed on our playing fields. Nothing can interfere with our sport. The nation may be bankrupt, but the Derby will be run despite the miners. It is really rather wonderful that a race of sportsmen should remain in blissful ignorance of contests even greater than the Test Matches. The man next door may be putting up a fight against the greatest enemy of mankind, Poverty, besides which the endurance of our champions pales into insignificance. We know the pedigree and the form of to-morrow's favourite; we prefer not to know the form of thousands of starving children in our own streets. True, there is a sinister feeling that we are dangerously near the cataclysm, but there is almost a conspiracy to keep us from knowing how near. Sportsmen, however, like to know what they are up against. Why not, then, put it up to them that only a miracle can save us. Only the long chance can stave off disaster. As a country we're “ badly bunkered.” We have often been off the course before, but we had an expert knowledge of “ trade ” winds, and could always get back on the fairway. Other people are playing the game now, and to win we have to settle down and keep on the straight. The play is for higher stakes than ever, nothing less than national existence depends on it, and we cannot afford to be handicapped.

Our game, primarily, is trade. Successful trade demands cheap raw materials and unhampered production. Granted these, we can make the goods, find the markets, book the orders, give employment and pay wages. Good trade and good wages mean prosperity and peace. The other side of the picture need not be drawn.

What handicaps our progress? Firstly, raw materials must come from land, and if the entry fee to the natural resources is too high, the odds are against us in the game. The fees charged by the owners of the field can be estimated at 500 millions annually. No wonder so many of us can't play. In converting raw materials to finished articles we are weighted with rates and taxes to the tune of 1,000 millions annually, making all allowances for the new economy. Many starters don't finish under these conditions. When this nation of sportsmen begins to inquire why so many good players fail they may begin to see that the same rules do not apply socially that are applied to sport. What would they say if they discovered that one competitor in the game was allowed to charge a fee to all the other competitors, and that he could vary the fee according to the skill of the player? They would say at once that under such conditions the best players could not afford to come up to scratch, thereby increasing their penalty. In the interests of the game there would be a persistent demand for a level start. They would also claim that in fairness to the club for having provided the opportunity, all entry money should be paid into the club funds.

Players know that courses are not all alike, they expect to pay higher subscriptions to belong to the more attractive clubs. Commercially or industrially there are likewise some positions better than others, and for those more select sites no one in fairness objects to paying a higher rate.

The Commonwealth League should appeal to the sporting instincts of the nation. Their policy means a fair start and no favours, with all the green fees paid into the Common Fund. The handicaps cancelled, the awards would be according to the merits of the players, but the sportsmen of Britain will have to come into the game quickly, for natural man forgets all rules, fair or unfair, when his children cry for bread.

GLENFIRRA.

Renewing his subscription to the COMMONWEAL a reader writes: “ It may interest you to know that subscription is paid out of this week's ‘ State Unemployment Dole ’! ” It does! We think the money well spent.

Christianity and "Good Business"

"ANY industry that does not conform to the Christian Ethic must go." So said Mr. Sydney W. Pascall, chairman, at a Conference at the Central Hall, Westminster, on May 18. The purpose of the gathering was to inaugurate a "National Movement towards a Christian Order of Industry and Commerce."

The movement would appear to be confined at present to "employers, managers, owners of businesses, heads of departments, professional men," and such like. The workers are to be admitted later on. This savours of class-distinction and is unlikely to commend the cause to those who do not happen to come within these categories. It did not seem to have occurred to any of those who spoke in the discussions that the workers might one day decline to be patronised any longer by the masters, and so we were not told what would happen in that event.

Lord Robert Cecil, M.P., Mr. Arnold S. Rowntree, Mr. Charles H. Smithson, and Principal A. E. Garvie, D.D., addressed the meeting in turn. It cannot be said that either speaker, apart from Mr. Smithson, contributed anything new to the discussion. One has heard the same threadbare platitudes repeatedly for years past, but they do not get us anywhere. Opinions, pious or otherwise, do not help any; what is needed is a definite lead on constructive lines, and this was sadly lacking. There was much talk of God and righteousness; of profit-sharing and co-partnership, etc., but it was especially noticeable that these two latter were recommended on the ground that they led to greater effort on the part of the workers, or, in other words, that such schemes were "good business."

About the sincerity of those supporting the movement there is not the slightest doubt, but it was quite evident that they had the haziest notions as to what constituted righteousness, i.e., right doing. Mr. Smithson gave the conference a very clear lead. He had for his subject, "Private Responsibility and Public Rights," and this had a direct bearing

upon number six of the seven "demands" as they were called, put forward as a basis of discussion, and which runs as follows: "The value of all natural resources and of every privilege which owes its worth to the labour of all or to the necessities of all, should be held and utilised for the benefit of all." In an explanatory note we were told that this "Denies the right of reaping where one has not sowed. It does not, as might appear at first sight, set out a programme. It merely records that the common gift of nature or of God should be for the common benefit. The value (for it is the value, after all, and not the thing itself that counts) arising from the common need or common exertion, is not a fit subject for exclusive private enjoyment." This was an excellent opening, and the speaker made the fullest use of it. The large audience, which had listened to the previous speakers with evident satisfaction, was obviously ill at ease. As he proceeded to develop his case a chilly silence pervaded the hall. What was this they were hearing, and whither did it lead? Quietly, and with irresistible logic, Mr. Smithson went on to voice the demand which the Commonwealth League exists to promote, viz., the collection for public purposes of the whole of the rental value of all natural resources.

"The golden rule," said he, "was the most practical of practical politics, but it required the environment arising out of just economic conditions for its advantages as a practical policy to be fully recognised." The golden rule, being the evolution of a natural law, was a law which we disregarded at our peril, whether in our social, business or international relationships. What constituted a just economic foundation as a basis of society? The first essential was recognition of the fact that every member of the great and universal brotherhood of man came into the world possessed of an equal claim to use, share and enjoy the free gifts of the Creator. The second essential was that we must conform our man-made law to that principle of justice. That principle was enunciated in the statement that the principles of Christianity, as submitted to the conference, demanded that "the value of all natural resources and of every privilege which owes its worth to the labour of all or to the necessities

Norwich and District Conference

THE third of the series of Conferences on Unemployment and Municipal Finance which the Commonwealth League is holding in conjunction with local Labour organisations took place at Norwich on June 4, and was attended by forty-seven delegates and about an equal number of visitors.

The societies represented were: Norwich Labour Party and Industrial Council; I.L.P.; Women's Labour Groups; North Walsham I.L.P.; Norwich N.A.U.S.H.W. and C.; Amalgamated Musicians' Union; Norwich N.U.D. and A.W.; Melton Constable Local Labour Party; North Norfolk Divisional Labour Party; N.U. General Workers (Norwich); Co-operative Land and Crafts Guild; Norwich Boot and Shoe Operatives; South Norfolk Divisional Labour Party.

Alderman H. E. Witard, J.P. (President, Norwich Labour Party, prospective Labour candidate, Norwich), presided, supported by Messrs. G. F. Johnson, J. W. Graham Peace, Dr. S. V. Pearson, and J. Austin Smith.

Mr. R. B. Walker, General Secretary, National Union of Agricultural Workers, wrote:—"Nothing would have given me greater pleasure than to have been with you at your meeting had it been possible, and I trust that you will have a most successful gathering.—Yours fraternally,

R. B. WALKER."

The Chairman explained that the Conference was called under the auspices of the Commonwealth League. He was well acquainted with the line of thought and the principles advocated by that League, and it had his whole-hearted support. The land question was not a question associated exclusively with the British Isles. It was world-wide, and wherever modern civilisation or that capitalism which was called modern civilisation had set its foot, it had created or aggravated the existing land problems. Land was in law the property of the citizens of this country. In actual practice the citizen had no such right, and because he had no such right in the land, and because it was necessary he should have that right the Commonwealth League came

into existence. It came into existence to advocate a policy that was not being advocated in this country. Organisations existed for the purpose of making land the public property, but when they came to method they would find that there was a great deal of difference between the point of view of the Commonwealth League and the point of view of other organisations, which existed especially to advocate making the land public property. The Commonwealth League started off with the right principle. It stated that the land was already public property, and all the League asked for was the restitution of that land; that it should be declared to be the property of the public, and that the values arising from it should revert back to the people of this country. There was a large number of people—and they found the same difficulty in Russia—who worked and lived upon the land. The nature of their industry made them part and parcel of the soil, and those people seemed to think that the proposals to be submitted to the Conference would throw such people out of employment, and that their services on the land would no longer be required. The proposals put forward would, on the contrary, give for the first time real security of tenure to those on the land.

Dr. S. V. Pearson (President, North Norfolk Labour Party and Executive, Commonwealth League) moved the resolution on Unemployment (see p. 4).

The speaker declared that there were revolutionary times ahead of us, and there was a danger, in his judgment, of the Labour Party breaking up. We had before us industrial and national bankruptcy, times of unemployment, destitution, and even possibly of famine. The Labour Party, he believed, could be saved if it realised the importance of the land question and its right solution. He quoted Mr. Robert Smillie, who had written, "You might settle many big problems with little effect if the land is still to be privately owned and used to extract blackmail on life. . . . If the Labour movement forgot everything for two years and concentrated on getting rid of the land grabbers we should have a land fit for heroes to live in and heroes fit to live in a free land." Mr. Ramsay Macdonald had written

"That economic rent must be taken by the State is fundamental." The policy of the Labour Party was a simple policy. It was to take a leaf out of the book of the landlords. All that the Commonwealth League stood for was that the land should be made the common property of all by the economic rent of land being collected into a common fund. The more he studied the question the more convinced he was that Providence never meant the land to belong to the few. The wages question and the unemployment question could not be settled by trade unionism and the strike weapon, but only by the restoration of the land to the people. Some people thought that we might buy out the landlords and have the farms run nationally. He objected to that plan. In these days of national bankruptcy it was madness to suggest another plan which was going to add to the debts of the war. If we created bonds to buy out the landlords we were only continuing the present injustice in another form—a form of interest to the bondholders instead of rent to the landlords.

Mr. J. Austin Smith (secretary, Norwich I.L.P.) seconded the resolution.

Playing the Landlords' Game.

Mr. George Edwards, M.P., moved the following amendment:—"That this Conference declines to be a party to confiscation, and is of opinion that the fairest and best method of dealing with the land is to nationalise the same by such methods as the Labour Party, when it comes to power, deems just." We were all agreed, said Mr. Edwards, that the land laws were unjust and antiquated, and that the system of landlordism had inflicted on the country and the world at large untold evils. As far as the settlement of this question was concerned, the Labour Party had not yet issued a policy. There was a difference of opinion as to what was the best method of dealing with the land question and bringing the land into the hands of the people. He was anxious to know how the land was to become public property by this resolution. All they did was to reclaim the land, but they left it just where it was with the landlord to have the same power. ("No.")

Dr. Pearson had said that all the improvements made by human labour, such as drainage, the proper cultivation of the land, and all the houses and buildings put on the land were to remain private property as now. However wrong the landlords might have been—and they had been wrong because the people had been robbed—we had allowed a system to grow up for which the present generation was not responsible. He asked were they going to confiscate the land from the people who now held it and could show their title deeds? We should take the land at its proper value, whether it was £1 per acre or whatever it might be, take it on a certain number of years' purchase according to the rental value now, and let the owners be paid out either in bonds or how they please. We should not leave them in a helpless position.

Councillor W. B. Taylor, J.P., seconding the amendment, argued that there was a tremendous body of opinion in the community who were not going to imitate the sins of the past. It would be a long time before the Commonwealth League would be in a position to persuade the majority of the people of this country that we should right the wrongs that had been created by imitating the methods of the robber barons of past centuries. The present proposal was avowedly confiscatory. Thousands of occupiers had been obliged to purchase land at fancy prices in a competitive market. What remedy did the Commonwealth League provide? Speaking for the agricultural side, the great need both in regard to the labourer, the worker, or the farmer, was security of tenure, but in application the League's proposal was directly confirming the existing power of the landowners, for whilst the landlord's rent was taxed or transferred from him without a quid pro quo he was left in possession of the land. They were doubling the difficulties of the tenant and confirming the present insecurity and disturbing industry when terms of justice between the landlord and the farmer were more than ever necessary. They were sowing dragons' teeth for the future by imitating the methods of the robbers of the past. Let them pay honourably for what they wanted, and not a penny more.

Rout of the Purchasers.

Mr. G. F. Johnson (President Norwich I.L.P., prospective Labour candidate, Norwich), opposing the amendment, said: "You are asking us in the name of justice and principle to compound a felony, because that felony happens to have taken place at some period when we did not exist, there is not a person breathing on the Progressive side, or even among the Liberals, who cannot but say that robbery is robbery, and always robbery, and restitution must be made, no matter what time has elapsed since the robbery was committed." If they judged the position of the working classes to-day in relation to the position of the governing classes, then they were infinitely worse than they had ever been, and no student of history could deny it. It was just the policy of talking about justice between man and man that had condoned injustice and made injustice possible. "I belong to the working class," said Mr. Johnson. "It is out to acquire power, and we are going to acquire power for the workers of this country, and any other class except the working class doesn't matter a straw. That is the position I take up, and I will defy any man logically to contradict it, because after all if a man is not a worker in the community what good is he? He may as well be out of it. He is only exhausting the resources of the earth. And to talk about justice to a class which is exploiting us, as exposed through the miners' strike and the agricultural strikes, to talk about justice as between that class and our class is sloppy sentiment of the most idiotic kind. It doesn't square with the policy of the Labour Party. No question of compensation will arise when the people recognise that the land is theirs and that they have to acquire it. Nothing else matters. These people will think themselves lucky if they get off anyhow without any question of compensation."

Mr. J. Austin Smith (Secretary, Norwich I.L.P.), supporting the resolution, said there is an idea that this robbery took place long ago, under Enclosure Acts, etc., but it is a daily robbery, and the workers are entitled to take back the proceeds whenever they have a mind to do so. What considerations of justice did those in power allow to

enter their heads when they wanted men to give up their lives on the field of battle? None at all! It is not proposed that we give no consideration—there will be compassionate allowances, and the great landlords should have saved up enough to manage very well. The robbery of the people is going on right now, and the people are fully entitled to take back without any compensation.

Mr. E. G. Gooch (Norfolk Federation of Labour Parties), supporting the amendment, said he was inclined to think that the views put forward by Mr. Edwards and Mr. Taylor were views that would find acceptance with a very large proportion of the organised Labour forces in this country. Labour was not out for civil war, which the resolution in effect would involve. The resolution was widely impracticable and highly mischievous to the Labour cause. Much land was owned by small people, and considerable capital of the working classes was invested in it directly and indirectly. Such a network of thrift could not be destroyed by one blow.

Mr. Palmer (Norwich I.L.P.), supporting the resolution, declared that if landowners were to be given compensation, then compensation must be given to the owners of factories. That, of course, would reduce the whole thing to a farce.

Mr. J. W. Graham Peace (propaganda secretary of the Commonwealth League) denied that there was any suggestion of confiscation in the literature of the League, and it was because he was opposed to confiscation that he was present at that conference. The Land Nationalisation movement, he declared, was a movement for landlords.

Mr. George Edwards: Do you suggest that we have got into the camp of the landlords?

Mr. Peace: No; that is the pity of it; that you are allowing yourselves to be used by others who know what they are after.

Criticising the amendment, he said that it asked them to tie their hands in regard to the land until such time as a Labour Party should come into power. Without a definite policy on Land no Labour Party would ever attain office, and so they might as well dissolve their organisations right

away. Suppose, however, he added, that a Labour Government did materialise, and that it should deem the plan of the Commonwealth League just, Mr. Edwards and his friends would be bound by their own amendment to support the very same "confiscation" which they had so vigorously denounced that afternoon.

Mr. Peace also asserted that, when it came to a choice between the method of land restoration proposed by the Commonwealth League, and buying it back, the landlords would come down to a man in support of land nationalisation. Either this land was ours or it was not. Which was it? He held that this wonderful raw material was provided for the common use and sustenance of all mankind for all time and on equal terms, and those who were holding it as private property to the denial of the rest were the confiscators. We wanted the rent, not a tax. A tax was an arbitrary deduction. "The rent is a payment due, and we demand from our tenants, the holders of our land, every penny of the rent of the land they hold, to be paid into a national pool." This, said Mr. Peace, was the only national pool that would work. The tenants should pay their rent into the Treasury, which would share it out by way of the municipalities as revenue to pay for the public services, and so get rid of the rating burdens.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost, five only voting in support—the mover, seconder and their two fellow-delegates, and one visitor. The resolution was then put and carried, the same five dissenting.

Municipal Finance.

Mr. Graham Peace next briefly moved the second resolution (see p. 6), which was seconded by Mr. H. E. Durham (Co-operative Land and Crafts Guild, Holt), who said: I have always been in sympathy with the Commonwealth League since its foundation, and agree with its policy. Restitution is the only thing which can save the country—the world. There can be no development unless we can have the land free to ourselves. That is the first essential for building up any movement of a progressive character.

Speaking in support, Mr. G. F. Johnson said: There must be a radical change in the methods of industry. We were on the eve of a general break-up, and unless something was done or some body of people large enough to have some influence had a policy they could put into operation when this break-up came—because he was convinced it was inevitable—we were going to have the world revert back to barbarism.

The resolution was carried unanimously. The *Eastern Daily Press* and the *Eastern Evening News* each gave a two-column report of the conference. The *Norwich Mercury* also published a very full account and devoted over a column to a leading article entitled "Commonwealths and Common Sense," rebuking the extremists. We regret that want of space prevents us reprinting it. We have seldom read a more diverting screed—the more so because so obviously meant to be serious. Short notices appeared in both the *Daily Herald* and *Daily News*.

In the course of an interesting discussion at the Ipswich conference the question of "compensation" was mentioned. One of the delegates dealt very effectively with this suggestion. "Nationalisation" (by purchase), he said, "would be compensating thieves." He gave instances from his own experience where the County Council was buying back for housing sites in small villages enclosed land for which it was paying £50 to £100 per acre.

Following the Norwich conference, an open-air meeting was held at Reepham, under the chairmanship of Mr. S. John Gee (Secretary and Agent, N. Norfolk Labour Party), who made an excellent speech in opening, Dr. S. V. Pearson and Mr. J. W. Graham Peace being the other speakers.

Under the auspices of the I.L.P., Mr. Graham Peace addressed a very large meeting on the Cornhill, Ipswich, on the Sunday after the conference. The many questions put to the speaker testified to the interest aroused.