

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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Let the people of Britain,
Restored to their senses,
Collect their land-rent
For all public expenses.

EDITED BY R. L. OUTHWAITE
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6-1630

IPSWICH & DISTRICT CONFERENCE

ON

UNEMPLOYMENT & MUNICIPAL FINANCE

(Convened by the Commonwealth League and the Ipswich and District Trades Council and Labour Party)

IN THE

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH HALL, Cutler St., Ipswich

At SEVEN p.m. (Entrance in St. Nicholas Church Lane)

SATURDAY, MAY 28th, 1921

SPEAKERS

Chairman: Rev. STUART SMITH

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| Councillor P. F. JACKSON (Prospective Labour Candidate, Ipswich). | J. W. GRAHAM PEACE (Propaganda Secretary, Commonwealth League). |
| J. McCULLOCH (Executive, Commonwealth League). | Councillor A. V. SMITH (Ipswich Trades Council and Labour Party). |
| J. McFADYEN (Ipswich Trades Council and Labour Party). | Alderman WADE, C.C. (Co-operative Societies, Stowmarket). |

NORWICH & DISTRICT CONFERENCE

ON

UNEMPLOYMENT & MUNICIPAL FINANCE

(Convened by the Commonwealth League and the Norwich Labour Party and Industrial Council)

IN THE

HARDIE MEMORIAL HALL, St. Gregorys Alley, Norwich

At THREE p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 4th, 1921

SPEAKERS

Chairman: Alderman H. E. WITARD, J.P.

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| (President Norwich Labour Party, Prospective Labour Candidate, Norwich) | |
| E. G. GOOCH (Secretary, Norfolk Federation of Labour Parties). | J. W. GRAHAM PEACE (Propaganda Secretary, Commonwealth League). |
| Councillor F. C. JEX (Secretary, Boot and Shoe Operatives' Union). | Dr. S. V. PEARSON (North Norfolk Labour Party and Executive, Commonwealth League). |
| G. F. JOHNSON, President Norwich I.L.P.; Secretary, Norwich Labour Party, and Prospective Labour Candidate, Norwich). | J. AUSTIN SMITH (Secretary, Norwich I.L.P.). |

Agriculture Under Land Monopoly

SINCE August, 1914, the agricultural interest has been the favoured child of the banquet table at which the sturdy beggars of privilege have waxed fat at the public expense. The nation's necessity provided the long-wished-for opportunity to enable the rural landlords to conspire to blackmail the community under threat of starvation. The old Tory toast of the days of the Napoleonic Wars was revived: "A long war and dear bread." The farmers at the outset demanded guaranteed prices in return for an increased production of corn. They were notoriously the one class that held back from the recruiting office, and even Lord Derby, in his famous report, was constrained to condemn the farmers' sons for evading enlistment by subterfuges such as classifying themselves as cowmen and carters whilst hunting the real labourers to the shambles. The big farmers squeezed the community, and the landlords squeezed the tenant farmers by selling the farms at high prices. The war over and the price of grain certain to fall, the land monopolists and farmers secured the Agriculture Act under which, as grain prices fall, the people will have to provide an annual subsidy to producers which will amount to tens of millions a year. What they stand to gain as consumers they stand to lose as taxpayers. The hook was baited for Liberal and Labour oafs by a clause which gave power to compel the putting of land under the plough. The land-hogs in the House of Lords rooted out this clause, and their mates in the House of Commons accepted the amendment. So it is that for some seven years the so-called "agricultural" interest has had the Treasury and the pockets of the individual consumers at their disposal. In the speech delivered by the Minister of Agriculture in introducing the estimates of his department, we can judge of the result. Those who claim to be alone entitled to speak with authority on the vital issue of production from the soil added their contributions, and the system they uphold stands condemned out of the mouths of its operators.

The Bureaucrats' Share.

Let us take in the first place the cost of this Ministry whose chief occupation is the distribution of public funds to buttress up the rural land monopoly. In the course of the debate it was pointed out by Mr. Lambert, M.P., that the estimates for 1913-14 were £319,000, and for the current year £3,211,000, or ten times the former figure. The salaries and wages of the Board of Agriculture were £121,000 in 1913-14, and for the new Ministry of Agriculture for the current year the amount for the salaries and allowances of officials stands at £618,000. To this figure the sum of £713,000 has to be added for travelling expenses, to be compared with £158,000 in 1913-14. How these expenses are incurred was indicated by Mr. W. R. Smith (Lab.), who said:

"I am informed that at one colony of 6,000 acres, of which less than one-fourth are in hand (i.e., worked under Government), there are eight residential officials, including a major, a captain, an architect, etc., and it is affirmed locally that three men come from London every week to ascertain how much is being paid in wages, and that overhead charges on the estate are in the aggregate rather large and, in many respects, totally unjustifiable." From which we get an indication of what would be the fate of the land user with Britain "nationalised," through land purchase, and under bureaucratic control. So much for the cost of smaller parasites of the greater parasites.

Now let us turn to such enlightenment as was forthcoming in the matter of the probable cost to the community as taxpayers of the plunder scheme under which the land monopolists are to be subsidised from the Treasury as the price of grain falls.

And be it remembered that the advantage is for the landlord and big grain grower. High price for grain is ruination for the small holder, who must buy feeding stuffs to keep stock on a small area. Mr. George Lambert, who sits for a rural constituency, and who claims to speak as a farmer, said:

The Land-Lords' Plunder.

"The financial liabilities under the Agriculture Act of last year are very considerable, and nobody can estimate what they are to be. They will not fall upon this year's Budget, but they will fall upon next year's Budget. If oats and wheat fall one shilling per quarter below the minimum prices fixed by the Commissioners, it will involve the Treasury in the payment of £1,400,000 a year. If they fall 10s. a quarter it would be £14,000,000 a year—a very large sum indeed. What preparation is being made for such a contingency? Corn may very likely fall 10s. a quarter from somewhere about the 80s. a quarter which, I believe, is promised in the Act of last year. It is a gigantic sum, and I do not think the House realised what it was when it passed this Act. It may even come to £30,000,000 a year if corn goes down £1 a quarter." Such a fall may be confidently predicted, and already in Australia wheat under Government control is being sold to South Africa and to the East at 60s. per quarter.

Captain Pretzman, of the Land Union, also predicted that "there is the possibility, and even the probability, of a very heavy liability upon the taxpayer." The method of subsidy now maintaining was explained by Sir A. Boscawen as follows: "With regard to the price of wheat. What we have done has been to say to the miller: 'We will give you 25 shillings per quarter on British wheat milled, and as foreign wheat is 75 shillings a quarter, there is no reason why the British millers should not buy British wheat.'" The money is coming from the funds of the Wheat Commission that sold wheat at a price higher than was paid for it.

With this indication in our mind of the vast subsidy payable, and to be paid, to enrich the land monopolists, we may turn to the results so far achieved in the stimulation of production. We shall see how agriculture fares under land monopoly and how would-be land users have been duped by the schemes of a Government controlled by the Junkers:

Sir A. Boscawen, the Minister of Agriculture, provided this information.

The Figures of Failure.

"Between 1914 and 1918 the amount of land under the plough increased by 1,401,000 acres. Between 1918 and 1920 we have lost 379,000 of those acres. I do not mean that they went out of cultivation. Roughly speaking, we still have rather more than 1,000,000 more acres under the plough than we had in 1914. My view is that the effect of the Agriculture Act has not been to increase the amount under the plough, *and we never expected that it would*, because we had largely increased that acreage during the war, and we never expected to increase it still more by the effect of the Act. We did hope, however, that it would put a stop to the tendency to lay down grass which had been going on for the past two years." Here, then, we have the damning truth revealed that not even a prospective dole of £30,000,000 a year is to do more than arrest the process of laying land down to grass. It will not speed the plough, but at best arrest the present process of speeding the ploughman from the soil to join the ranks of the unemployed.

Now let us see how the men are faring who, having saved the land, have been put upon it under conditions dictated by land monopoly. Sir A. Boscawen announced that up to December last 48,580 ex-Service men had applied for land under the provisions of the Land Settlement Act passed a year and a half ago, 13,975 of these have been rejected or withdrawn, 6,791 applications have not been dealt with, 16,741 have been approved and have not yet been provided with holdings, 12,658 applicants, of whom 11,104 are ex-Service men, have been settled on Ministry's Farm Settlements and Colonies, bringing the total of ex-Service men to 11,754, and of civilians 1,690. Land has been acquired for 6,000 more applicants, 160,000 more acres are to be acquired to satisfy a balance of 12,600 applications. "When the task is finished we shall therefore have acquired about 410,000 acres." Probably 30,000 applications will have to be satisfied.

Let us now see how the scheme operates. Sir A. Boscawen, having provided the foregoing figures, proceeded:

Settling the Settlers.

"Of course there are going to be losses. We have anticipated that from the beginning. It was laid down in the Act that the rents charged were to be such as the smallholder could be reasonably expected to pay, and not what actually represented the actual cost of the holding, and we anticipate that the losses will amount to about 40 per cent."

He further stated that "in the early days before we realised how costly buildings were going to be some schemes were started which will cost approximately £5,000 per owner. We have now a general rule that no single holding is to cost more than £2,500."

How this precious swindle of the landlords operates was indicated by Mr. Royce (Lab.), who said of the settlement at Sutton Bridge: "Take the case of one holding that is between five and six acres in extent. The total amount, including rates, that the tenant will have to pay on this very small area is, I am informed, £72 per annum . . . the rents, so far as the soldier settlers on this estate are concerned, vary from £6 to £8 per acre. In addition they have a charge on their farm buildings and houses which represents something like £20 per annum. Further, they are very heavily rated. Rating alone is a very serious problem so far as land settlement is concerned. The rates in that area are 16s. in the £. It brings the whole rent of the buildings alone up to 10s. a week, including rates." This is settling the soldier with a vengeance.

Mr. Cautley, Unionist Member for a Sussex constituency, exposed the results of the Small Holding Colonies Act, 1916, another fraud. Under this Act, as amended in 1918, the Ministry of Agriculture have acquired 25,294 acres, which they run in fourteen separate propositions. Here we have operating bureaucratic control such as would rejoice the heart of Mr. Sidney Webb and of Sir L. C. Money.

However, an honest man happens to have been put in charge of the scheme.

The Farce of Whitehall's Colonies.

Mr. Cautley said " Sir Laurence Weaver — who has been Director-General of Land Settlement and a most practical person—in his report says that after fifteen months' experience of his farm administration the result is this: that the smallholders in being dry-nursed in this way have lost all sense of reliance and independence, which is absolutely vital to their success. . . . Out of the whole fourteen estates only one has made any profit at all; that was on a farm called Amesbury. Then Sir Laurence Weaver very straightforwardly reports: ' It is due to the fact that the bulk of the men employed on the colony were civilians, and not ex-Service men at all; the total loss has been £39,261 up to March 31, 1920.' " From his own personal knowledge Mr. Cautley spoke of one colony of 2,363 acres in the East Riding of Yorkshire. He knew one man who had 200 acres of this land, and in 1916 produced over 6½ quarters of wheat per acre. The Department had built thirty-four houses, each of which cost from £1,000 to £1,200; another 503 acres had been bought, making 2,863 acres of most fertile land. There are now only about twenty-nine people there; " the men said that they would not work, but they were there to share the profits. They said they would have their share of the profits then. They were helping themselves to the grain to keep their pigs and their poultry—that is, grain that belonged to the Government. I was informed, and I am certain it is true, that the men never stayed more than four or six months upon this outlandish property." No wonder that Sir Laurence Weaver reports as follows: " The main consideration which has prompted me to lay these proposals before you is the belief, forced upon me by my experience of the last fifteen months, that a commercial undertaking such as farming cannot conveniently be managed from Whitehall."

Many other instances were provided in the debate of the waste of public funds under the pretence of aiding agriculture. The loss on the Flax Production Department between January, 1918, and November, 1920, was £1,172,000.

Land Monopoly Must Go.

I have dealt at length with this exposure of the state of agriculture under the land monopoly, with the Treasury at the disposal of the Land-Lord Bureaucrats, because it has an important bearing upon the policy of the Commonwealth League. We see that the holders of the common property not only escape payment to the community for right of occupation, but themselves declare that production cannot proceed from the soil of Britain unless the community provides gigantic subsidies on top of a world price for corn that has doubled during the past few years. The parasites who live by drawing rent have made agriculture a parasitic industry.

At the same time the land monopolists, through their own legislation, have made clear that a man cannot get a foothold on the soil except to become a slave and a burden upon the taxpayers. In the acquisition of the land by purchase, in the provision of buildings constructed of materials drawn from the land, in the rates levied on buildings, in the high freights on railways whose " capitalisation " is in the main land value with attendant monopoly of transport, the producer is all along the line under the curse of land monopoly.

And this is the position in face of the end of Britain's capacity to maintain all but ten per cent. of her population otherwise than by way of agriculture, when millions must perish if the natural resources of the nation be not utilised to their fullest capacity.

It is by the application of the policy of the Commonwealth League alone that the countryside can be made to teem with a population whose demands for manufactured articles would save the industrial centres from ruin. The collection of the economic rent of the land would remove the Land-Lord, the super-parasite, and land with-holder. He would pay rent instead of receiving rent, and would continue to hold only so much land as he could use. The great farmer would go, because with the land set free agricultural labourers would become peasants and refuse to be wage slaves. Co-operation as practised in Denmark would all along the line take the place of the present system.

The Small-Holder Crushed by Rates.

Then by allocating the Land Rent Fund—the “national pool,” as Mr. Mardy Jones described it at the Cardiff Conference—to the local authorities, the rural producers would have superabundant revenues mainly derived from city lands with which to provide amenities for rural life and communal facilities which would bring about a transformation scene on the countryside.

In this connection special attention may be directed to the instance of rating provided by Mr. Royce. It is notorious that the big farmers who provide the rural assessment committees are under-assessed on their semi-utilised acres, and that the small-holders who put their capital in the main into improvements are assessed up to the full. Before the war I made public the results of my investigations as regards a portion of the Duke of Norfolk's estate in Sussex. I found that, taking an area of about 1,000 acres in large farms, the tenants for the land paid some £14 a year in rates. Close by a gardener, who had been unable to buy a plot, had secured the site of a disused quarry. After paying £50 to get soil carted on to the stripped surface, he had erected glass, and paid £10 a year in rates on less than an acre. In the instance given by Mr. Royce the small-holder pays £12 per acre in rent and rates. Under the proposal of the Commonwealth League he would pay land-rent to the Common Fund and receive back from the Fund, as a member of the rural commune, more than he paid into it, and be free of rates.

I am asked at meetings, “What about the man who has just bought a farm?” In this connection it has to be remembered that few men have just bought farms *and paid for them*. Almost without exception recent purchasers are only nominally land-owners. They have paid, perhaps, one-third down and on two-thirds of the price pay $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to 7 per cent. to a mortgagee. Were the land-rent of Britain taken for the Common Fund and land monopoly thus ended, there would be such a production of wealth that the monopoly of “capital” would be broken and interest would fall. The grip of the mortgagee would be relaxed.

Freedom for the Mortgaged Holder.

Let us take the case, for instance, of a man who has undertaken to pay £2,400 for a holding of which £1,000 represents land and £1,400 buildings and other improvements. He has paid one-third down—£800. On the balance, £1,600, he has to pay, say, 6 per cent.—i.e., £96 per annum. Such men are now paying 7 per cent. and over. Now, when land rent is taken this man would pay £50. To start with he would be rid of rates and gain all the advantages indicated above, which would themselves be sufficient compensation. But, through the play of economic forces, he would soon find himself able to reduce his £96 a year interest payment on mortgage. With the vast Land-Rent Fund granted to local authorities, it would not be long before his saving in interest would be as great as his rent payment to the Common Fund. Indeed, I look forward to the day when the communes will lend money, to further production through co-operation, free of interest, reaping a contingent advantage through the augmentation of the Land-Rent Fund. Furthermore, the present outlook for the “man who has just bought a farm” on the basis of fictitious prices and under threat of eviction is one of slavery to the mortgagee under the shadow of dispossession when the mortgage falls in. Such is the fate of the farmer under land monopoly the world over. Consequently, it is just where the policy of the Commonwealth League superficially seems to spell hardship that it will come as a boon to the man who holds land whereby to gain a livelihood by his labour, and in the promotion of justice and the common good we are not concerned with others.

R. L. O.

“The Torch.”

We offer our hearty congratulations to our contemporary upon its second anniversary. Our readers in Kent who have not yet made the acquaintance of this bright little Labour paper should seek to do so without delay. It is always good reading and is a strong supporter of the demand of the Commonwealth League. It is published monthly by the Sheerness Labour Party, 3, Russell Street, Sheerness, price 2d.

The Standard-Bearers

DESERTED by those who promised what they could not or dare not perform, the Miners of Great Britain and their women-folk have been left to resist the power of monopoly exercised with intent to enforce slavery. Alone amongst the Labour organisations, the Miners' Federation, under the inspired leadership of Mr. Robert Smillie, sought, after the war, to advance the common good in association with Labour's aspirations. They drafted their Bill for the Nationalisation of the Mines, and based it on the assertion of the common right to the coal without compensation, and through their President proclaimed this to be a first and minor step towards the restoration of the land as a whole.

The Betrayal of the Miners.

Astute Mr. Lloyd George knew that on these lines the campaign of the miners would consolidate all the forces of democracy, and so he side-tracked the movement by a Royal Commission. After which the desertion of the miners by the leaders of organised Labour began. They declared that the miners were seeking to use the machinery of Trade Unionism for political objects. By "bargaining for votes" they secured at the Trades Union Congress of 1919 that not a single representative of the Miners' Federation should secure a seat on the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress. At the last annual Conference of the Labour Party the same "bargaining for votes" for election to the Executive was in operation, and Mr. Robert Smillie denounced it as "corrupt," and announced that the Miners' Federation had been approached to participate and had refused. At the Trades Union Congress of last September Mr. Smillie returned to the charge. So the miners have been manoeuvred into isolation. It was but a logical conclusion that when the constituent organisations of the Triple Alliance were called upon to support the miners their leaders should find a way to refusal.

Coercion Defeated.

Be the immediate result what it may, the miners of Great Britain are to-day restoring to the Labour movement the noble attributes which it lost during the soul-destroying period of the war. One immeasurable benefit they have already conferred. In the crisis that the lock-out precipitated the Government sought to bring the country under a military dictatorship. The calling up of the Reserves, the enrolment of the Defence Force, the proclamations under the Emergency Powers Act, the rushing of military forces equipped with all the paraphernalia of war into mining areas, and other coercive measures, were all part of a deep-laid scheme. Panic was to be promoted, and the people were to be taught that only by the surrender of their liberties and their support of autocracy could the nation be saved from a conspiracy that aimed at overthrowing the social order through violence.

The Dawn of Reason.

The lock-out has continued for weeks, which are passing into months. In vain has been all the display of despotic force. A Sabbatical peace reigns upon the coal fields. Reason is being re-established in the public mind, and the great truth looms up that no solution is to be found by way of coercion. The truth is that the workers at grips with monopoly have only to fear the weapon of starvation directed against their wives and children. Starvation which can be enforced because they are dispossessed and must go hungry when Nature's resources are withheld from them.

The Great Truth Emerges.

So famine spreads upon the coal-fields. But every day that passes in patient resolution and high courage speeds the day of emancipation. For each day the domain of Reason spreads, and an awed public is brought to realise that when natural resources are withheld from the hand of Labour the nation must perish. So all honour to the miners and their women-folk, for their fortitude will restore its lost soul to Labour and in the end its stolen heritage.

The South Wales Conference

IT would not have been surprising if the Conference on Unemployment and Municipal Finance called by the Commonwealth League for the Cory Hall, Cardiff, on April 23 had had to be postponed in view of the conditions prevailing in South Wales at the present time. The large and increasing number of unemployed throughout the area, the lock-out in the coalfields, with the stoppage of industry and the acute distress entailed, the difficulty and expense of travel, all tended to deter organisations from appointing delegates. It was decided to proceed with the Conference in spite of the unfavourable conditions, and the result was a complete justification of that decision. Sixty-five delegates were appointed by the following Labour organisations:—I.L.P. : Bargoed, Barry, Cardiff City, Merthyr, Pontypridd, and Swansea; Trade and Labour Councils : Aber Valley, Blaenavon, Newport, New Tredegar, Tirphill and District, and Penarth; Labour Parties : Caerphilly Divisional, Canton Ward (Cardiff), Cardiff East Divisional, Carwent and District, Cwmbran (Men's Section), Cwmbran (Women's Section); Trade Unions : Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (Cardiff), Builders' Labourers, Coal Trimmers, National Union of Railwaymen (Cardiff No. 6), South Wales Miners' Federation (Cwmtillery Lodge), Tailors and Garment Workers, and Workers' Union (Cardiff No. 2); Co-operative Societies : Cardiff; Co-op. Women's Guilds : Aberdare, Barry, Barry Dock, Cwmbach-Aberaman, Dowlais, Penarth, Porthcawl, Splott, and Ynysybwl.

A number of visitors, including local Councillors and Poor Law Guardians, were also present.

Councillor H. Hiles, President Cardiff Trades and Labour Council, who was to have occupied the chair in place of Cr. Winstone, J.P., President South Wales Miners' Federation (detained upon duties arising out of the lock-out), was himself called away at the last moment to attend a hastily-convened meeting of Co-operative employees faced with a threatened "wage-cut" of 10s. per week.

Mr. J. W. Graham Peace presided, supported by Messrs. George Barker, M.P., T. I. Mardy Jones, F.R.E.S., Cr. Morgan Jones, R. L. Outhwaite, and Dr. R. E. Pearson, of Richmond, Surrey.

The chairman, in opening the proceedings, explained the purpose of the Conference, and apologised for the absence of Dr. Robert Dunstan (due to the death of his wife); he also read the following letter from Mr. J. E. Edmunds, Prospective Labour Candidate, Cardiff East:—

"Trades and Labour Hall, 49, Charles Street, Cardiff,
"April 23, 1921.

"Dear Mr. Peace,—It is with sincere regret that I find myself unable to attend the Conference to be held this afternoon at the Cory Hall under the auspices of the Commonwealth League. My absence is caused by a demand for my presence at Bridgend on Trade Union business.

"The part which the Land plays in contributing to the economic well-being or otherwise of the community is not sufficiently understood or considered, and the work of your League in pressing this upon the public is of great value."

"Trusting that your Conference will be very successful and initiate greater attention locally upon the injustice of the Land monopoly—I am, yours very cordially,

"J. E. EDMUNDS."

Mr. R. L. Outhwaite then 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."

They had, said the speaker, millions of unemployed at the present time, and they were going to have further millions. They could not solve their economic problems without overthrowing society as it at present existed. The trade of the country had been destroyed by the war, and reconstruction was being prevented by a policy of revenge. No small measure of reform would alter these conditions, and there was only one way of bringing the men back to the loom and the mine, and that was to make the fullest advantage of their natural resources. It was a farce to cry, "Produce more wealth" and to allow the monopoly of land to continue.

Mr. George Barker, M.P., who seconded, said it had been found necessary before the capitalist system could properly function to dispossess the common people of the land to which they had an inalienable right. He often wondered if the great mass of the people ever wondered how it was they had no land. The land system of the present day was the root of all the trouble which existed. Land was going out of cultivation, and he had found from statistics that during the last two years no less than 600,000 acres of wheat land had gone out of cultivation, while all the time the price of the loaf was more than a shilling and there were tens of thousands of unemployed in the country. The miners themselves, continued Mr. Barker, would be compelled by economic circumstances to settle the dispute, but they would not settle it upon the terms they would have settled it on had they been free men.

Dr. R. E. Pearson, in an excellent and reasoned speech, proposed 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 shall be allocated to the local authorities in proportion to the requirements of their districts as determined by population and other essential factors.'"

Mr. Mardy Jones, F.R.E.S., author of "Colliery Rating Exposed," etc., in seconding, dealt in a masterly manner with the problem confronting municipal authorities, and endorsed the Commonwealth League's solution. Councillor Morgan Jones supported in an eloquent speech.

After the speakers had replied to questions, both resolutions were carried unanimously.

The *South Wales Daily News* and the *Western Mail* both gave prominence to the conference and printed the resolutions in full.

Cardiff City I.L.P. held a meeting in the Hippodrome on the Sunday evening, at which Messrs. R. L. Outhwaite, J. W. Graham Peace, and J. E. Edmunds spoke. Mr. Stanley Rees presided. Notwithstanding the strong temptation to remain out of doors, offered by the delightful evening, and also the counter attraction at Roath Park, where a Trade Union demonstration was being held at the same time, about 1,000 persons attended and manifested great interest in the League's proposal.

Four well-attended open-air meetings were also addressed by Mr. Graham Peace during his stay in Cardiff. So great is the interest aroused that already the League has been asked to arrange a similar conference for an early date following the settlement of the present dispute, and to be held at Swansea to allow of West Wales coming in.

The Bondholders' Budget

THE Budget for 1921-2, introduced on April 25, provides for a revenue of £1,216,650,000 and an expenditure of £1,039,728,000. Mr. Chamberlain placed the "ordinary expenditure" at £974,023,000 and the "ordinary revenue" at £1,058,150,000. The excess in revenue and expenditure relates on the one hand to the sale of assets acquired during the war, and on the other to the liquidation of transient war commitments. In connection with the ordinary expenditure for the current year it has to be borne in mind that Great Britain is at present defaulting in interest on her debt to America, which at par of exchange amounts to over £40,000,000 a year, the sum of £65,000,000 of arrears having accumulated on March 31 last. The Debt services provided for account for £345,000,000. Add the interest due to America and the total reaches £385,000,000 per annum. The "dead-weight debt" is £7,573,000,000, of which £1,161,560,000 is Foreign Debt.

Nor is that all the story. For 1921-2 the sum estimated to be raised in local rates in England and Wales is £149,000,000, which is more than twice the sum raised in 1913-14. Upwards of half this sum is for national services which should be met from the Exchequer.

Such are the main features of the Budget of 1921-2. A few general considerations will serve to show that it is a fraudulent imposture: the window-dressing of a bankrupt concern that should go into liquidation. Taxation as levied is the transference of wealth from those who create it. The service of the Debt, for instance, means the annual transference to the bondholders of a call upon wealth produced to the amount represented by the sum of £345,000,000, to which will have to be added the £40,000,000 per annum due to America. As millions of men are now prohibited from producing wealth, a taxation demand five times as great as the pre-war demand falling upon a people ceasing by millions to be wealth-producers is a proposal to get blood out of a stone, and inevitably will fail.

Taxing the Bankrupted.

Then, consider certain figures recently issued by the Board of Trade.

In March, 1921, Great Britain imported rather less than one-half the tonnage of raw material imported in March, 1913, and not much more than half that imported in 1920. The tonnage of coal exported in March last was little more than one-third that exported in March, 1913, and of manufactures less than one-half. These figures spell the doom of Great Britain's industrial pre-eminence. As less than 10 per cent. of the population is maintained by way of agriculture the collapse of trade spells national insolvency.

Furthermore, the Government proposes by way of high protective duties to give permanence to the protection at present accorded in devious ways to the manufacturing trusts. This means that consumers will pay tariff-raised prices, not only for imported articles but for those which are of home manufacture. So a huge revenue will be raised, which in the main will go into the pockets of private tax-gatherers. With these considerations in mind it is obvious that a Financial Statement which bases solvency on the assurance that a revenue of approximately £1,000,000,000 will be raised savours of the methods of the fraudulent company promoter. The estimate for Customs and Excise is £323,000,000, comparable with the total pre-war revenue of roughly £200,000,000 and with £75,040,000 from the same source. Mr. Chamberlain said: "Customs and Excise are placed £11,000,000 below last year's yield, which was itself £15,000,000 below the estimate."

With millions of men unemployed or partially employed, the consumption of articles subject to Customs and Excise Duties will fall away and the revenue from this source will decline. So all along the line the check in consumption will make havoc of the Budget Estimates.

These salient facts grasped, the financial straits to which the nation will be reduced when during the next few years debts mature to the extent of thousands of millions and the holders can exercise their right of repayment can be gauged.

Doomed Through Debt.

To begin with, there is the Floating Debt of £1,275,000,000, which means day-to-day borrowing and repayment. Five per cent. and $5\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. Exchequer Bonds mature to the sum of £220,000,000 this year, and in addition £80,000,000 of foreign obligations have to be met, making a total of £300,000,000. Mr. Chamberlain said: "During 1922-3, apart from the External and Floating Debt, Exchequer Bonds fall due to the total of no less than £232,000,000, of which £35,000,000 mature on the first day of the financial year. In 1923-4 £375,000,000 of National War Bonds mature. In 1924-5 Exchequer and National War Bonds maturing reach a total of £160,000,000. . . . In 1925-26 the maturing debt falls to £51,000,000. There is nothing in 1926-27, but the two following years will be heavy years, the figures being £359,000,000 and £488,000,000 respectively. After that there are no heavy maturities until the 4 per cent. War Loan finally becomes due in 1942 and the 5 per cent. War Loan in 1947."

So, during the next eight years, bondholders will be entitled to claim repayment of £1,835,000,000 of Internal Debt. In addition there is the Floating Debt of £1,275,000,000, on which option of repayment can be exercised from day to day. And, furthermore, there is the debt of over £1,000,000,000 due to America, repayment of which can be claimed and the interest on which is in default. These bondholders have the nation by the throat, and in face of the limitation of production by land monopoly and the disruption of trade by war and its restriction by tariffs, the time is not far ahead when the nation will not be able to do more than satisfy the claims of the bondholders.

In view of this perilous future the present Chancellor of the Exchequer has taken steps to try and buy off now some bondholders whose securities mature in the course of the next year or two. Nor will the estimated surplus for redemption be realised. Since Mr. Chamberlain's statement £51,000,000 of the surplus has been allocated to the railway companies to satisfy blackmailing demands.

Conversion Through Faith in Folly.

So we now have the "Conversion Loan." The holders of National War Bonds maturing from October 1, 1922, to September 1, 1925, are offered for each £100 nominal National War Bond a capital sum of £163 for each bond maturing at the former date and an equivalent for bonds maturing at the later dates to September 1, 1925. The Conversion Loan will be redeemable at par in 1961. This means that the holder of a National War Bond of £100, on which he receives 5 per cent., will receive, on its conversion into a Conversion Bond, interest of "£5 14s. per cent. to £5 12s. per cent. according to the maturity of the War Bond converted."

Mr. Chamberlain said: "The total amount of bonds outstanding to which the offer applies is £632,000,000. If all of them were converted the resulting figure of Conversion Loan would be just over £1,000,000,000," an increase in the capital sum of the National Debt by £368,000,000. If they convert, the holders of National War Bonds will receive from the taxpayers an extra £4,000,000 a year in interest. Well may Mr. Chamberlain say: "The terms are generous. . . . If there be any criticism of the proposal I expect it will be that it is unduly generous." And well may the *Morning Post* dub it "An Investor's Budget."

But the bondholders may not convert even on these terms. The National War Bonds amount to only about one-third of the Debt maturing during the next eight years.

The Conversion Loan is but an indication of the coming power of the bondholders to levy a heavier and heavier tribute upon the community. It is outcome of the war finance which assured that millions who volunteered to undergo the horrors of the trenches at a shilling a day, or were forced to the shambles, should, if they survived, return to toil as slaves for the credit-mongers. It means that for the wretched debtors there is no alternative but repudiation or the assertion of their right to the land of Britain as an asset to set against the Debt incurred in its salvation.

R. L. O.

Annual Meeting

THE second annual meeting of the League was held at Caxton Hall, London, on Wednesday, April 13, when there was a good attendance of members and friends.

Mr. R. L. Outhwaite, the Secretary, was to have occupied the chair, but could not do so on account of illness. Dr. S. V. Pearson, of Mundesley, ably filled the gap, and was supported by Messrs. George Barker, M.P., Abertillery; Tom Myers, M.P., Spen Valley; and J. W. Graham Peace, propaganda secretary, who read the following letter from Mr. Outhwaite:—

Mr. Outhwaite's Message.

“The past year may be said to have seen the Commonwealth League thoroughly established as a factor in our political life. This has been partly due to the platform propaganda, partly to the success of the COMMONWEAL, but in the main it is due to the fact that circumstances have created a call for the message that the League was founded to convey. The past year has seen the end of the artificial conditions of the war period. The vanquished are enslaved to the victors as well as to their own taskmasters. The victors are in process of being crushed into bondage, it being their lot to toil for the satisfaction of land-holder and bond-holder. A revolt against the fate prepared for them is now being met by a demonstration of armed force, such as threat of imminent foreign invasion has only called forth in the past. But the mobilisation of the regular army, the calling up of the reservists, and the creation of the new Defence Army, cannot enslave Labour. The armed forces of the Crown are only needed to keep the ring whilst organised Labour is beaten into the dust, not by the Army of the King but by the army of the unemployed, a million and a half strong. The army that landlordism provides for the maintenance of the system of wage-slavery that goes by the name of Capitalism.

“In view of circumstances which are so obvious as not to need detailed reference, in view of the utter impotence of

Labour leaders as they see the barriers that Trade Unionism has erected being swept away, and in view of their inability to provide counsels other than those of despair, it is not surprising that the message of the Commonwealth League meets with a growing measure of acceptance. As the skies darken, and chaos comes again upon the world, the simplicity of the League's presentation of the fundamental cause of mankind's undoing, and the simplicity and appropriateness of the League's method of redress, stand out as a great causeway across a dark morass. The assertion of the Common Right to the Land, the collection of the Land Rent for the Common Fund, the allocation of the Common Fund to the local authorities, or communes, for communal purposes and to promote decentralisation of administration, is a proposal so simple, so just, so practical, so in accord with popular sentiment, whilst at the same time embodying a transformation in political, social and economic conditions, that only publicity for it is needed to assure support from millions who refuse to despair, and still watch the heavens for a sign.

“A most satisfactory fact in the history of the past year was the adoption by the annual Conference of the Labour Party, held in June, of a resolution under the head of Municipal Finance, which embodies the full demand of the League. The League is now engaged in holding conferences in conjunction with Labour organisations to urge that the Scarborough resolution shall be placed in the forefront of the Party programme.

“Such conferences of delegates provide perhaps the most satisfactory means of promoting the League's demand, and the co-operation of the local Labour organisations and I.L.P. branches is being readily given. In this fact there is ground for the greatest satisfaction. The Labour movement is gathering force as the challenge to the reactionary movement which is cancelling a century of progress. That movement has grown out of the swaddling-clothes provided by the Fabian Society. It is for the Commonwealth League to show Labour how to perform a giant's task—the emancipation of mankind from bondage.”

After the transaction of the usual formal business, the chairman called upon Mr. Myers to open a discussion on The Industrial Crisis. The speaker dealt with the effect of the war in relation to trade and unemployment, and exposed the humbug of the Reparations Act and measures of like nature. It was a very interesting speech, and covered a wide field.

Mr. Barker followed, and dealt very fully with the present position in the coalfields. As a practical miner himself, he spoke with a knowledge and authority which carried conviction to his hearers. Though neither speaker had said much about the land in his address, their replies to the many questions from the audience made it quite clear that they realised the fundamental importance of the question, and endorsed the League's demand.

A Busy Year.

In the year just ended League speakers have addressed 345 public meetings, the aggregate attendance at which amounted to at least 150,000 persons. As in most cases the Press gave very full reports, it will be seen that the demand of the League thereby secured wide publicity. Some idea of the extent of the ground covered will be gathered from the following list:—

Berks (1), Carmarthen (1), Cheshire (39), Derby (1), Dorset (1), Durham (8), Edinburgh (2), Essex (16), Glamorgan (31), Glasgow (2), Gloucester (1), Greenock (1), Kent (25), Lancs (9), Leicester (1), London (123), Middlesex (8), Monmouth (1), Norfolk (6), Northampton (5), Stafford (1), Suffolk (1), Surrey (31), Yorks (30).

At each of the following Conferences the League organised a personal distribution to those attending, and over 15,000 C.L. publications were thus placed in the hands of active Labour men and women drawn from all parts of the kingdom.

Women's Labour Party, London	1,000
Co-operative Congress, Bristol	3,000
Women's Co-op. Guilds, Derby	2,000
National Labour Party, Scarborough	3,000
Miners' Federation, Leamington	200

Trades Union Congress, Portsmouth	2,500
I. L. P., Southport	2,000
Labour Party (Ireland), London	900
Labour Party (Unemployment), London	1,000

League literature to the number of 75,000 copies has been circulated through various other channels, several parcels having gone to America and Australia in response to requests received.

The COMMONWEAL in its new form is steadily making headway. Many very encouraging letters continue to reach the office telling of the useful work it is doing. Very frequently we find quotations from its pages appearing in other papers, not only in this country, but the world over. As a handbook for speakers it is in continual use. At its present price it does not pay for itself, but if each present reader will but find one other the problem will have been solved.

The appearance in many constituencies of a local Labour paper has afforded an increasing opportunity for propaganda, and has led to a Press Bureau being set up for the circulation of short articles on League lines which find ready acceptance in the various editorial offices. The "Correspondence Column" is another field that has been cultivated during the period under review, and many useful letters from the pens of our members have appeared.

Dr. Dunstan's Loss.

To Dr. Robert Dunstan, a member of the Executive of the Commonwealth League, the deepest sympathy of his fellow-members goes out in the tragic loss he has suffered. Those intimately associated with Dr. Dunstan know the fervour of his zeal for the betterment of mankind and the personal sacrifices he has made to promote the cause of human emancipation. He now has to go forward without the wife and comrade who was his mainstay.

The Conferences.

The attention of all readers of the COMMONWEAL in the Ipswich and Norwich districts is called to the important Conferences to be held in each of these towns (see page 2 of cover of this issue), and they are asked to co-operate in making them widely known amongst their friends. Visitors' tickets may be had in return for stamped envelope.