

"OUR POLICY."

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—Henry George.

A WARNING FROM SCOTLAND

In the autumn of 1912 the Chancellor of the Exchequer was expected to open a Land Campaign at Swindon to be based on the taxation of land values, a policy which had just received such emphatic endorsement at the N.W. Norfolk and Hanley by-elections. The meeting was postponed on account, it was officially stated, of the outbreak of hostilities in the Balkans. The postponement proved to be of a year's duration, for it was not till October, 1913, that the Chancellor opened the land campaign at Bedford. During this period the land reform movement had been transferred into official keeping by the appointment of the Inquiry Committee. Those who had brought the issue to the forefront of Liberal policy and had popularised it throughout the constituencies were set aside, and in place of the land values propagandists there emerged Mr. Seebohm Rowntree of York and his coadjutors in the formulation of bureaucratic palliatives who had rested since the fiasco of the Small Holdings Act, which lost rural England to the Liberal Party in the elections of 1910. This procedure was, no doubt, intended to allay the alarm of the Whigs, who had become scared at the prospect of the Liberal Party being stampeded into the fulfilment of its pledges regarding the taxation and rating of land values. Up to a point it was successful. Pending the issue of the report for England and Wales and the Chancellor's declaration of policy, the Land Values men refrained from active agitation, firmly believing that from the outset Mr. Lloyd George would declare the taxation and rating of land values to be an integral part of the reform programme.

The Land Campaign has been launched in five great speeches by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and one by the Prime Minister. In none of these speeches has the Government been committed to the taxation and rating of land values.

The position is best indicated by the fact that an organisation to conduct the campaign has been brought

into being the executive of which consists of the greatest rural and urban landowners in the party. Their view of the campaign was expressed by the President, the Marquis of Lincolnshire, who wrote:

"No solvent or sensible landlord has anything to fear from the Government proposals, and this opinion is shared by so shrewd a Unionist M.P. as Mr. Mallaby-Deeley."

An army of gossellers was recruited and instructed at the National Liberal Club by official lecturers on the new policy, who ruled out any reference to the taxation of land values. At the same time the Liberal Press closed down on those who desired to protest against this side-tracking of the issue. When that most distinguished authority on scientific agriculture, Professor Long, spoke at Essex Hall on January 21st, under the auspices of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values on "The Rating of Agricultural Land," and advocated the imposition of a land values tax of 1d. in the £ to start with, his speech received not a word of mention in any Liberal paper.

"The land clauses floated the Budget," said Mr. Lloyd George after the recognition of the principle of land value taxation had saved the Government from destruction. But official wire-pullers were now busily engaged in making advocacy of that principle appear heretical. The country was given to understand that the land taxers had been "dished," and Whig and Socialist combined in jubilation. So the land campaign was launched for England and Wales.

Then came a check. It was necessary for Mr. Lloyd

George to carry the campaign to Scotland, and the agents of the Land Inquiry Committee were duly dispatched to that country. But they were at once met with an inquiry as to who had appointed them, and by what authority from Scottish Liberals. In face of this discouragement they faked up a report on the lines of that which had served for the well-controlled Liberals of England and Wales, who are accustomed to dance to whatever tune is piped from official Headquarters. But from Scottish Liberals came an emphatic warning to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that to come to Scotland and make a speech except on the taxation and rating of land values would split the party. So the Scottish report never saw the light, and the Chancellor postponed his Glasgow speech from December 11th to January 28th. This gave the United Committee and the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values the opportunity to step into the field. At great demonstrations held at Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen the position of affairs was revealed. Immediately the breeze of discontent rose to a storm, of which Glasgow became the centre, and on January 21st the Executive of the Scottish Liberal Federation, by way of a resolution unanimously carried, sent an official warning to the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer that a declaration for the taxation and rating of land values was essential. Again the Glasgow meeting was postponed, this time to February 4th.

The reason given for these postponements provides a full justification for the action of Scottish Liberals and of the United Committee and the Scottish League. It is that the Cabinet has not decided on any policy for the taxation and rating of land values. So land values men for eighteen months have been bamboozled into the belief that their cause was at least in the running with the palliative proposals, whilst as a matter of fact the campaign would have been launched in England, Wales, and Scotland without its having received authoritative recognition. The whole of the party machine would have been put into operation to suppress the issue and its advocates, Parliament would have met and other questions would have been brought

to the forefront, and the triumph of the reactionaries would have been complete.

Out of these recent happenings a lesson for future guidance emerges. As has been indicated, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will in some form officially recognise the fact that the Liberal Party is pledged to a levy upon land value. From that day land values men must take the field as the exponents of authorised Liberal policy and turn the tables on those who have manoeuvred to isolate them as Ishmaelites. There must be no more suing for a place in the sun, no more assent to being warned off the field at by-elections and off the official platform. The land campaign must be made a campaign with an objective the realization of which will not suit the book of Mr. Mallaby-Deeley, the speculative purchaser of the Duke of Bedford's ground rents. From the House of Commons, from the platform, it must be declared that land value taxation provides the only means for the destruction of land monopoly and for the solution of its attendant evils; that only by way of the Memorial policy can food taxes be remitted, the burden of national services be removed from the rates, and industry be relieved. Victory is certain so far as the people can achieve it at the ballot box, but unceasing vigilance will be requisite to ensure that the fruits of victory are not filched away in the future as in the past by those who are within the inner circle of Liberalism, not to serve the people but to serve themselves. Allegiance to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has during past months inflicted a galling restraint upon land values men which was only relaxed when it seemed likely to defeat its object. All they have asked is that the Cabinet shall at this juncture reaffirm an oft-affirmed Liberal principle.

R. L. O.

CHANGE OF TELEPHONE NUMBER

Will readers kindly note that the telephonic address of the United Committee and "Land Values" has been changed to

Victoria 7323