

LAND & LIBERTY

(Incorporating "LAND VALUES.")

Twenty-sixth Year. (Established June, 1894.)

Monthly 2d. By Post 5s. per annum.

(United States and Canada, 75 cents.)

Editorial Offices:

11, TOTHILL STREET, LONDON, S.W.1.

All communications to be addressed to the Editor.

Telegrams: "Eulav, Vic, London."

Telephone: Victoria 7323.

Here are two simple principles, both of which are self-evident:

I.—That all men have equal rights to the use and enjoyment of the elements provided by Nature.

II.—That each man has an exclusive right to the use and enjoyment of what is produced by his own labour.

There is no conflict between these principles. On the contrary, they are correlative. To secure fully the individual right of property in the produce of labour, we must treat the elements of Nature as common property.—Henry George: "Protection or Free Trade," chapter 26.

THE OUTLOOK

The great class of taxes from which revenue may be derived without interference with production are taxes upon monopolies, for the profit of monopoly is in itself a tax levied on production, and to tax it is simply to divert into the public coffers what production must in any event pay. . . . But it may be asked: If the tax on Land Values is so advantageous a mode of raising revenue, how is it that so many other taxes are resorted to in preference by all governments? The answer is obvious: The tax on Land Values is the only tax of any importance that does not distribute itself. . . . The ingenuity of statesmen has been exercised in devising schemes of taxation which drain the wages of labour, and the earnings of capital as the vampire bat is said to suck the life blood of its victim. Nearly all these taxes are ultimately paid by that indefinable being the consumer; and he pays them in a way which does not call attention to the fact that he is paying a tax, pays them in such small amounts and in such insidious modes that he does not notice it, and is not likely to take the trouble to remonstrate effectually. Those who pay the money directly to the tax collector are not only not interested in opposing a tax which they so easily shift from their own shoulders, but are very frequently interested in its imposition and maintenance, as are other powerful interests which profit, or expect to profit, by the increase of prices which such taxes bring about.—"Progress and Poverty," Book VIII.

That thought on Social Questions is so confused and perplexed, that the aspirations of great bodies

of men, deeply though vaguely conscious of injustice, are in all civilised countries being diverted to futile and dangerous remedies, is largely due to the fact that those who assume and are credited with superior knowledge of social and economic laws have devoted their powers not to showing where the injustice lies, but to hiding it; not to clearing common thought, but to confusing it.—"A Perplexed Philosopher" (concluding chapter.)

Occasionally a correspondent writes asking what is the hope of progress on our lines in the immediate future. In looking out on the surging sea of politics, engendered by the war and directed by so much blundering ambition, we can understand and sympathise with those who weary of well doing, or who affect the mood, incline to let things drift. Nor can we get much comfort from the reflection that the mood is not particular to our movement, but is common to all advanced thought.

But the Single Taxer who knows his case and believes in it cannot be for long cast down or silenced by the signs and portents of an evil day, not even when these appear in their volume and weight to shatter hope of immediate social betterment. In the day-by-day contest with the well equipped forces, organised to stem the ever advancing tide of democratic ideas, the Single Taxer takes his place. But his inspiration comes not from any party programme designed to correct this or that social abuse; it is born of a faith that no passing conflict nor fear of panic may hope to subdue.

There are ups and downs in politics, as in other branches of human endeavour, and bitter disappointment for the man who blindly puts his trust in the statesmanship that fails to harmonise itself with revealed economic law. Good intentions and ethical standards which have no relation to the practical affairs of life beat in vain against the bulwarks of social injustice. The follower of Henry George engages in political strife not for any empty triumph, but for a high principle, the recognition of which will open the way to the complete enfranchisement of democracy. His inspiration is born of a profound conviction that he is a maker, in however humble a capacity, of the opinion that he believes will ultimately fashion the laws and determine the road to the ideal State.

A correspondent across the sea declares:—

"The time was perhaps never less propitious to have our Single Tax properly considered than in this its moment of greatest need. If I had unlimited wealth to-day, and full control of a good working organisation devoted to the Single Tax, I would bend every energy towards getting matters into shape for effective work, not now, but when the reaction comes. Until then I would do only enough work to advertise the fact of our existence."

We are at one with our colleague as to the need for bending every energy to the task of preparing for the reaction; and, knowing our man, we sincerely wish he

had that unlimited wealth, or so much of it as would enable him to do some measure of justice to the machinery we possess for advertising the fact of our existence, and something more. However it may be across the water, the reaction here has set in as the results of recent bye-elections indicate.

The United Committee and the Associated Leagues were never more active. During the year just ended over 3,000 communications by post carrying requests for literature and advice came to headquarters from new people. Very many of these additional supporters are with us in conviction and in spirit and are well worth having in the campaign for what they can do in their various spheres of influence. To cope with the requirements of this new public, literature was as generously provided as means and expectation of means would permit. We have held the ground that was ours and widened the scope of our efforts in every possible legitimate way. Our columns each month record in part only our insistent and successful agitation.

But let us not seek to disguise nor even to minimise the outstanding obstacles to normal life and national progress. Abroad at the close of one long year of peace, the language of the battlefield still holds sway, the doctrine of hatred and revenge is preached and practised, revolution holds commerce with parliaments and gaunt famine numbers its victims by the million. Verily, the children born of such a "peace" are fire and sword, red ruin and the breaking up of laws.

Here at home while the struggle between the opposing forces hangs in the balance, with Russia, India, Egypt and Ireland as dominating factors and the League of Nations still in the clouds, the Government and its supporters continue to wrestle with questions of Finance, Debt, Taxation or Confiscation, Housing, Unemployment and Health. The worker is told in press and on platform that the only way of escape from some fearful disaster is for him to produce more and spend less!

The cost of living still soars, enriching the few at the expense of the many, prices continue to chase wages, and the already overburdened taxpayer is complacently invited to shoulder additional burdens.

In the domain of local government, as we have shown and proved out of its own mouth, landlordism has made, and continues to make, its own remorseless terms for housing sites. The municipalities and local rating bodies have been almost everywhere in angry protest against this process of bleeding them white for idle acres manifestly intended for the use of an advancing population. The new houses, still in the paper stage, must be let at uneconomic rents. The rating question has reached alarming dimensions, and there is no sign of another Alexander Ure to rouse and direct the forces that are still latent for a "modest contribution" from the land that stands charged with so much communal value.

The hero of Limehouse has come down on the comfortable side of landlordism. With more than usual abandon he has given the law to the north and the nigger to the south, the while he hands over to the parliamentary agencies of the Land Union the agreeable task of burying out of sight his abortive and mischievous 1909 Budget Land Value Duties.

These Land Value Duties, so named, have brought us nothing but a measure of misunderstanding and ill-

will with many who are out for sound remedies, but who cannot be accused of any keen desire to get at the truth of the matter. With the best of them the belief is that Lloyd George tried his hand at Land Values Taxation, and that if there had been anything in it he would have succeeded. Another and altogether different set of vigilant knowing ones continue to engage themselves with a never-ending stream of letters to the editor contending that the scarcity of houses can be traced to these fatal land taxes. In all this backwash of innocence and duplicity the Single Taxers are supposed to be out of the picture. The prevailing idea seems to be there is a time for everything and that this is not the time to explore that side of the question. Every man is to be paid the full market value for the commodities he has for sale, and why should land forsooth, even though it does carry publicly earned value, be any exception to this just principle? The Prime Minister has asked and answered that question, and the Government has promised millions for housing sites. Yet the passionate cry of the overcrowded and the houseless is heard throughout the land.

The rating question cannot be talked into submission by threats of some worse alternative. The Secretary for Scotland announces the consideration of some comprehensive scheme of rating reform. The chairman of a Scottish Educational Authority out in defence of the education rate suggests a tax on land values as a possible remedy. The driving force for Land Values Taxation is ready for the asking, but, as Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law can tell, this is "party strife!"

The Taxation of Land Values and the corresponding untaxing of industry was but yesterday the accepted economic creed of almost every Liberal organisation throughout the length and breadth of the land. It was not everything, but it was the recognised Liberal solution of problems rooted in economic injustice, problems that required the deeper cut. It was the Liberal challenge to the monopoly that was driving private enterprise to the wall and making the pace for bureaucratic control of industry with all its blighting restriction on the liberty of the individual.

The callous betrayal of this emancipating policy by the Liberal leaders has, more than anything else, brought the Liberal Party to the brink of ruin; but the policy and the underlying principle survive. Eight years ago Mr. Asquith publicly gave the Single Taxers in the Party notice to quit. They have taken him at his word and bettered the occasion. They have gone over in tens of thousands to the ranks of the Labour Party. The war and its circumstances can be blamed, and is blamed, by Liberal supporters for the downfall of the party: that granted, who is going to say when and how the recovery is to be made? In view of pressing home problems, to say nothing of the outside imbroglio, what is the Liberal programme? The old watchwords of Peace, Retrenchment and Reform are affirmed and the voice says: What Peace, what Retrenchment, and what Reform?

We hold no brief for the Labour Party, whose onward sweep to place and power is fast defining new alignments. We are as free to work with them for the Taxation of Land Values as ever we were with the Liberals. It is something to have this coming force in politics declaring with emphasis for the Rating

of Land Values. The more the Labour men become wedded to this aspect of the reform the better it will be for their attachment to the fuller and more embracing national tax. Of course it remains to be seen if they will stand by their pledges; but the chances are that, when a Labour Cabinet comes to consider what can be done, "property" will be outside the room as it is outside the counsels of the Party.

Meanwhile it is the plain duty of the Single Taxers to put their trust in their own right arm and spend their energy, their money and their enthusiasm exploring every likely looking avenue where new strength may be discovered. The Liberal Party, once the hope of democracy, has fallen because it forsook the cause of the people, and the industrial workers of the country have taken the matter of their own salvation into their own hands. They are on the high road to success. With the Taxation of Land Values they can go fast and far, for it is a reform that does not compete with any sound remedy; on the contrary, its application will open up the way to the solution of wider issues.

While we stress our remedy for social ills let us never forget its wider and far more reaching effects. In liberating the land we are freeing the springs and wells of trade and bringing to society a more equitable distribution of wealth and power. And it is in this direction we must travel if we would emancipate in all their strength and abundance the intellectual and spiritual forces that yearn to go in freedom and in truth to the help of the oppressed in every land. J. P.

THE CARDIFF RATING RESOLUTION

On October 29th the Cardiff City Council passed the following resolution by 18 votes to 2:—

That in the opinion of this Council the first step towards a reform of the system of local rating is that rates should be levied on land on an assessment based on its full capital value irrespective of the use to which the land is being put and as to whether it is in use or not; and that the Town Clerk be instructed to enter into communication with county and municipal authorities throughout the country with a view to joint action to secure the necessary amendments to the present law to enable this resolution to be carried into effect.

The City Council has communicated with 190 local authorities, and has received replies from 21 that the resolution has been endorsed.

Glyncorrwg

Glyncorrwg District Council met on November 26th, Mr. Robert Gibb (junr.) presiding.

Mr. James Griffiths moved a resolution:—

That in the opinion of the Council the first steps towards the reform of the system of local rating is that rates should be levied on land on an assessment based upon its full capital value, whether put to use or not, and that houses and other improvements should be relieved in local rates.

The resolution was carried unanimously.—"South Wales News," 27th November.

Merthyr

Merthyr Town Council on November 19th approved a resolution forwarded by the Cardiff Corporation expressing the opinion that "the first steps towards a reform of the system of land rating was that rates should be levied on land on an assessment based on its

full capital value, irrespective of the use to which the land is being put and whether it is in use or not."

Mr. Andrew Wilson said that this system of taxation should have been in existence for many years. They had land at Treharris which was practically being held up to secure big prices for building ground, and on which only nominal rent was being paid.—"Western Mail," November 26th.

Salford

At a meeting of the Salford Council, on December 3rd, a copy was read of the resolution passed by the Cardiff Council on October 29th in favour of rating land values. Councillor Corbey said the system practised by land-owners of hanging on to land in the hope of municipalities paying exorbitant prices for it was the most iniquitous form of profiteering. He welcomed the principle embodied in the resolution, and moved that the letter from Cardiff be referred to the Finance Committee. Councillor Rothwell seconded the proposition, which, after considerable discussion, was agreed to.

Worcester

Worcester City Council supports the rating of land values. On November 18th a letter of the 1st instant from the Cardiff Corporation was read, urging that rates should be levied on the full capital value of land, irrespective of the use to which it was being put, and whether in use or not.

It was moved by Mr. Fairbairn, seconded by the Chamberlain, and resolved *nem. con.*:—

That the Council support the view of the Cardiff Corporation that land, as distinguished from buildings, should be rated on its full capital value, irrespective of the use to which it is being put, and whether in use or not.

Burnley

At the meeting of the Burnley Corporation on November 18th a report was made that the Parliamentary Sub-Committee at the last meeting had before them a letter from the Town Clerk of Cardiff, in which the support of the Burnley Town Council was asked in promoting an amendment in the law to carry out the reform suggested in the following resolution passed by the Cardiff City Council:—

That in the opinion of this Council the first step towards a reform of the system of local rating is that rates should be levied on land on an assessment based on its full capital value irrespective of the use to which the land is being put, and whether it is in use or not.

It was resolved that the Town Clerk be instructed to obtain further information from the Town Clerk of Cardiff with reference to the matter, and that the said letter be again considered at the next meeting of this Committee.—"Burnley News," November 26th.

Other Towns

We are informed that among other Councils, the Cardiff Resolution has been endorsed, *nem. con.*, by the Battersea Metropolitan Borough Council, the Cleethorpes Town Council, and the Grimsby Town Council.

A "Garden Cities Conference," under the auspices of the Surrey Land Settlement Committee, will be held in the Croydon Town Hall on January 26th to 30th. At the meeting on Friday, January 30th (7.45 p.m.), Mr. Alderman Douglas, M.A., will open a discussion on the Taxation of Land Values.