

tion; how the Liberal Government challenged their action, and in a long struggle, supported by nothing except the approval of the country, broke the overweening power of the Lords. The Socialist Government to-day, in its Parliament Bill, is making use of this incidental achievement of land-value reform. Anarchy introduced from an international source subverted this movement for reform. The treachery of the author of the Budget, joined with the policy of its opponents in repealing it. But the reform still retains its power. The State Valuer and the State Collector of Land Value, dealing with the individual lords of land one by one, can break their power as the House of Commons broke the centralised strength of the Lords.

The State Valuers, going about the country to ascertain the value of land, would discover more fully the conditions on which this value depended. Like all scientific workers they would educate themselves. Everything which affected the value of land would be in their care. Everything which interfered with its flourishing condition would have to be examined and, if possible, removed. There might even be omissions or activities of planners, which would prove detrimental, small details overlooked and mishandled, or ambitious schemes which might go against the general interests of the country. These would come in proper measure under the review and control of the valuer. It is time that the State should abandon the practice of treating the part as greater than the whole. No surer sign of a backward and uncivilized State could be found than our sectionalized valuation, valuers trained in the tradition of those who distorted value by accepting it as "value to the owners," as real value plus 10 per cent. to 50 per cent., or as "floating value." This exaltation of a section of the community over the whole community is a mark of conquest and of the slavery which persists as a consequence.

For the Government to declare that the value of land is created by the community, and then hand over any of this value to a small section of its members, looks like the action of irresponsible men. The influence of the owners has produced once more this faintheartedness. If the Government assumed for the occasion the attitude of men with unenslaved minds on the connection between earnings and property, they would be loyal to the community which they represent and as a first step strengthen its position by taking a substantial proportion of the value of land—say, one-third—by means of a tax or rate. Land reform is a very large and very serious task. There are other departments of the country's life more in need of it even than Town and Country planning. The appropriation of land and its rent has been landlord policy, step by step defeating the Domesday survey of 1086. It has been followed by soil erosion and more insidiously by human body and soul erosion. Over-renting and overcrowding spring from property in land. The victim, not the beneficiaries of this policy, need compensation. The disquieting consideration is that it has received fullest encouragement from a Socialist Government. They are "compensating" land owners and setting a precedent for more severe erosion of the community when bigger problems are met. They have apparently an unlimited belief in and respect for legislation and the alleged rights which it creates. But they should remember that the rights which have been written in man's nature transcend the rights which have been printed on Government paper. The second must honour and keep themselves in harmony with the first.

(Part I of Mr. John Orr's Review of the Town and Country Planning Act appeared in our November and December issue.)

PALESTINE LAND SPECULATION

Mr. J. M. Berncastle, now in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, formerly Chief Valuer, Department of Land Settlement, Government of Palestine, had this letter in the *Daily Telegraph* of March 20:—

"As one who has practised land valuation professionally in Palestine for some 13 years, perhaps I may suggest an explanation for the discrepancy between Gen. Spears's estimate of £300 million as the value of Arab assets appropriated by the Jews and Mr. Yapou's dismissal of that figure as fantastic.

"During the British mandatory administration prices realised for land rose to levels which bore no relation to the capacity of the land to produce a return in the form of rent or produce. Stony hillsides and shifting sand dunes miles from any human habitation and incapable of being put to any productive use without vast expenditure were often sold at prices equal to those paid for first-class agricultural land in England.

"The reasons for this were various, but underlying them all was the demand created by Zionist ideals backed by Zionist capital.

"It is hardly to be expected that the Israeli Government will be prepared to compensate the dispossessed Arab owners on the basis of these inflated prices.

"Assuming that the appropriated Arab assets are correctly valued at £300 million on the basis of the prices ruling in recent years, their real or economic value would be much less."

We look back to the 1937 Royal Commission on Palestine which had many significant passages (see *LAND & LIBERTY*, September, 1937), revealing the intense land speculation that took place to the enrichment of the large Arab landowners and the impoverishment of the Arab masses, their misery and that of the Jews also. But despite all its testimony that land speculation was at the root of the trouble, the Commission reported its lame and impotent and cowardly recommendation that Palestine should be split into two States.

Mr. Ernest Bevin, only lately, in his distress and vexation, which ended in his throwing up his hands, said in a passing reflection that the Palestine question was a land question. The thought as well as any determination to act upon it passed into the thin air. The sadness is the falling of the curtain and the silent acceptance of the curse that sets men at each others' throats.

WHAT NEW SOUTH WALES THINKS

Experience teaches. Mr. J. R. Firth informs us that lately, acting under the provisions of the N.S.W. Local Government Act, fifty ratepayers in the Fourth and Fifth Wards of the Municipality of Burwood petitioned the Council to hold a referendum on the question whether the rates should continue to be levied on land values only or on the composite value of land and buildings. The poll took place, those 50, and no one else, voting for rating the composite subject. The voting for continuing to levy rates on land values only, numbered 568. A significant feature of this referendum is that only property owners can vote. The land values system, tested and tried, has also *their* overwhelming approval. Burwood is an important Sydney suburban municipality.

2d. HOW THE ENGLISH PEOPLE BECAME LANDLESS. And how to Regain the Land.