

landowners under the Uganda agreement of 1900. The disposal of this land has long been a source of discontent, but two previous attempts to reach agreement on how it should be distributed ended in failure. The Minister of Education, Mr. A. K. Sempa, proposing the motion, suggested the following allocation :

The Speaker of the Lukiko and Ministers, 7 square miles each; the Buganda Regents, 3; chiefs, 10; members of the Lukiko, 30; nominees of the Kabaka, 3; officials, 4; the clerk to the Lukiko, 200 acres; the Kabaka's mother, 320. The Kabaka himself and other members of his family should receive a share of the remainder, with the rest going to the Kabaka's supporters during his exile.

The proposal has aroused adverse comment among Africans. The two most active political parties, the Uganda National Congress and the Progressive party, have led the criticism. The U.N.C. has issued a statement asking that the land should be retained by the Buganda Government and that the revenue from it should be used for developing services and agriculture. The statement adds that if the land is distributed, the U.N.C. will "do all in its power to return this land into the hands of the Kabaka's Government." Unable to resist a side-kick at Europeans, the U.N.C. blames them for the introduction of the idea of individual ownership of land.

The leader of the Progressive party, Mr. E. M. Mulira, also declared that the land belonged to all the people of Buganda and should not be distributed among individuals. And two Africans writing to the *Uganda Argus*, the Protectorate's principal newspaper, urge that the Governor should exercise the power of veto on this proposal. Hitherto the veto has been used when the Lukiko has passed resolutions against Ministerial advice.—*Manchester Guardian*, June 28.

A joint meeting of the Uganda National Congress and the Progressive party has called for a commission of inquiry to investigate alleged corruption in the Buganda Government. The meeting also carried resolutions opposing the proposal in the Buganda Lukiko to divide 154 square miles of land among certain individuals . . . One resolution declared that it was "appalled by the gross incompetence and short-sightedness of the Buganda Ministry whose blind policy up to date has been one series of blunders. We have no confidence in the Ministry."

The African Chamber of Commerce and the newly-formed Democratic party have also protested about the land decision. The Democratic party says the move is "unwarranted, unfortunate, gratuitous, perverse, vicious, injurious and definitely selfish."—*Manchester Guardian*, July 3.

The Kabaka of Buganda has ordered the postponement of any action on the Lukiko's proposal to distribute 154 square miles of land to certain individuals in Buganda, pending further discussions to obtain the views of the people. The Lukiko's plan, which involved the allocation of land to the Kabaka, Buganda Ministers, members of the Lukiko, and other persons, has aroused strong opposition among Africans, who have petitioned the Kabaka and the Governor.—*Manchester Guardian*, July 23.

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Many who have sympathised with the Kabaka in the prolonged constitutional trouble before he was permitted to return to his people, will be astonished that he of all persons takes a page of history from the Tudors. We can only hope that these plans will be defeated and that a solution upholding the equal rights of all the people to the use of the land will be found.

Food Prices and Landlords' Rents

Richard Cobden's Speech at Aylesbury, January 9, 1853

We are met here under the denomination of a reform meeting—a parliamentary and financial reform meeting; but it will be known to everyone present that the general impression, both here and abroad, is that this is a meeting for the purpose, so far as I am concerned in the matter, of discussing the question of protection or free trade, especially with reference to tenant-farmers' interests in this matter. I remember speaking to an audience in this hall six years ago, and on that occasion going through the arguments necessary to show that the corn law was founded upon impolicy and injustice; I remember on that occasion maintaining the proposition that the corn law had not proved beneficial to any class of the community, and I ventured to say that the country would be more prosperous without the system of agricultural protection than it had been with it. Well, I am here now to maintain that by every test which can proclaim the prosperity or adversity of a nation, we stand better now without the corn law than we did when we had it. [Cheers, and some cries of "No."] I am rather glad to see that there are some dissentients from that proposition; our opponents will not say that this is a packed meeting. We have got some protectionists here. And now, if you will only just keep that order which is necessary for any rational proceedings, I will endeavour to make you free traders before you leave.

I have said that, by every test which can decide the question of national prosperity or national adversity, we stand in a better position than we did when we had the corn law. What are the tests of a nation's prosperity? A declining or an improving revenue is one test. Well, our revenue is better

than it was under a corn law. Our exports and our imports are better than they were under the corn law. Take the question of pauperism. I will not shrink even from the test of pauperism in the agricultural districts; I have the statistics of many of your unions in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, and I warn the protectionist orators, who are going about persuading themselves that they have a case in the matter of pauperism, that when Parliament meets, and Mr. Baines is enabled to bring forward the poor-law statistics up to the last week (not going to the "blue books," and bringing forward the accounts of the previous year), I warn the protectionists that, with regard to the test of pauperism, even in the agricultural districts, it will be seen that things are more favourable now, with bread at a moderate price, than they were in 1847, when prices were to their hearts' content, and the loaf was nearly double the price it is now. Take the state of wages; that is a test of the condition of the people. What are the people earning now, compared with 1847, when the protectionists were so well satisfied with their high prices? Why, as a rule, throughout the country, there is more money earned now than there was then; and they are getting the comforts and necessities of life in many cases at two-thirds, and in some cases at less than that, of the prices of 1847. [A voice: "It is not so with the agricultural labourers."] I will come to them by-and-by. What I want you to agree with in the outset is that your labourers are not the nation; and if your agriculture be an exception to the rule, we must find out the reason why it is so; we will come to that by-and-by.

I remember quite well, when I came here to see you before,

how my ears used to be dinned by the argument that if we had free trade in corn, the gold would all be drained out of this country, for that you could not bring in 5,000,000 quarters of grain without being drained of your gold; that the foreigner would not take anything else in exchange. Why, we have had between 30,000,000 and 40,000,000 quarters within these last four years, and the Bank of England was never so encumbered with gold as it is now. I have spoken of wages, and I say that in every branch of industry the rate of wages has improved. You may say that agriculture is an exception. We will come to that, but I do not make an exception in favour of any trade in your district; I do not make an exception in the case of the employment of women in your district, for I have made particular inquiry, and I find, even in the article of straw-plaiting, that families who could not earn 15s. in 1847, are now earning 25s. ["No," and some confusion.] I say families. I know we have some of the most extensive manufacturers in this hall. Then there is the lace trade, the pillow-lace trade, employing a great number of women in Buckinghamshire. [Renewed confusion, owing to a gentleman pressing his way towards the platform. A voice: "He is a reporter."] Well, we are delighted to see the gentlemen of the press; the more of them the better; what we say here will be read elsewhere, and we speak for that purpose. I was about saying, that even the wages of the pillow-lace makers have advanced, and they are getting their bread at two-thirds the former price. Even the poor chair-makers of this and the adjoining county—a trade that has hardly known what it was to have a revival—are getting better. I repeat it, there is not an exception of any trade in which there is not an advantage gained by the moderate price of food that now prevails. ["Not the lace-makers?"] They are getting more employment.

LANDLORDS' INTEREST—HIGH FOOD PRICES

But I want now to come to the question which interests you in this immediate neighbourhood. If every other great interest of the State is thriving—and no one can deny it—how is it that agriculture is depressed? How is it that the interests of agriculture are found in antagonism with the interests of the rest of the community? Why, these people have been proceeding upon a false system, they have been upon an unsound basis; they have been reckoning upon Act of Parliament prices; they have made their calculations upon Act of Parliament prices, and now they find they are obliged, like other individuals, to be content with natural prices. What is the reason that agriculture cannot thrive as well as other trades? We find meetings called, purporting to be meetings of farmers, complaining of distress; and what is their remedy for that distress? Is it to go and talk like men of business to their landlords, and ask them for fresh terms of agreement, fresh arrangements, that they may have the raw material of their trade—the land—at the natural price, and free from those absurd restrictions that prevent their giving the natural value to it? No. Go to a meeting where there is a landlord in the chair, or a land-agent—his better-half—and you find them talking, but never as landlords and land-agents, but as farmers, and for farmers. And what do they say? Why, they say, "We must go to Parliament, and get an Act of Parliament to raise the price of corn, that you may be able to pay us your rents." That is what it amounts to.

Now, what ought to be the plan pursued by the landlord and tenant on an occasion like this? The landlord, as Mr. Disraeli very properly observed yesterday at Great Marlow, is an individual who has land, which is a raw material, and nothing more, to dispose of; and the farmer is a capitalist,

who offers to take this raw material, in order that he may work it up and make a profit by it; in fact, the farmer and the landlord stand in precisely the same position that the cotton-spinner and the cotton-merchant stand in. The cotton-spinner buys his cotton wool from the cotton-merchant, in order that he may spin it up at a profit. If he can get his raw material cheap, he can make a profit; and if not, he cannot. But we never hear of the cotton-spinner and the merchant going together to Parliament for a law to keep up the price of cotton. I declare, when I find landlord and tenant running about raising a cry for "protection," and going to Parliament for a law to benefit them by raising the price of corn, I cannot help feeling humiliated at the spectacle, because it is a proof of want of intelligence on the one side, and, I fear, want of honesty, too, on the other.

WHO CALLS FOR TARIFF PROTECTION?

Now, supposing you were to see a crowd of people running up and down the streets of Aylesbury, shouting out, "Protection! protection! oh, give us protection! we are all rowing in the same boat!" and when you inquired who these people were, you were told they were the grocers of Aylesbury and their customers, who were crying out for a law which would raise the price of all the hogsheads of sugar in the grocers' stores—would you not say that this was a very curious combination of the grocers and their customers? Would not you say that the interest of the men who had the hogsheads of sugar to sell, and who wished therefore to raise the price, could not be identical with that of the men who had to buy the sugar? Yet, that is precisely the position in which the tenant farmers and the land owners stand. [Cries of "No, no," and "Yes."] Well, will any gentleman rise on this platform, and explain where I am wrong? Now, the plan I would recommend the tenant farmers and the land holders to pursue is precisely the plan which has been adopted by my own tenants and myself. I will explain how I acted in this matter. I promised I would explain my conduct, and I will do so; and if those newspapers that write for protectionist farmers report nothing else of what I may say to-night, I beg them to let their farming readers know what I am now going to say. [A voice: "How large are your farms?"] I will tell you all about it. I happen to stand here in the quality of a landlord, filling, as I avowed to you at the beginning, a most insignificant situation in that character.

COBDEN'S OWN ESTATE

I possess a small estate in West Sussex, of about 140 acres in extent, and a considerable part of it in wood. It is situated in a purely farming district, in the midst of the largest protectionist proprietors in Sussex; the land is inferior; it has no advantages; it is nearly ten miles distant from a railway; it has no chimneys or growing manufacturing towns to give it value. Now this is precisely the kind of land which we have been told again and again by Lord John Manners, the Marquis of Granby, and other protectionist landlords, cannot be cultivated at all with wheat at 40s., even if it were given to the cultivator rent free. This property came into my possession in 1847. [A voice: "You got it from the League funds."] Yes; I am indebted for that estate, and I am proud here to acknowledge it, to the bounty of my countrymen. That estate was the scene of my birth and of my infancy; it was the property of my ancestors; it is by the munificence of my countrymen that this small estate, which had been alienated by my father from necessity, has again come into my hands, and that I am enabled to light up again the hearth of my fathers; and I say that there is no warrior duke who owns a vast domain by the vote of the

imperial Parliament who holds his property by a more honourable title than that by which I possess mine.

My first visit to this property, after it came into my possession, was in 1848. At that time, as you are aware, prices ranged high in this country; but never expecting those prices would continue, I thought that the proper time for every man having an interest in the land to prepare for the coming competition with the foreigner. I gave orders that every hedge-row tree upon my estate should be cut down and removed. I authorised the two occupying tenants upon the property to remove every fence upon the estate, or, if they liked, to grub up only a portion of them; but I distinctly said I would rather not see a hedge remaining on the property inasmuch as it was surrounded with woods, and I did not think fences were necessary. That portion of the land which required draining, I had instantly drained at my own cost. The estate, as I have said, was situated in the midst of large protectionist land-owners, who, as a matter of course, were great game preservers; and it had therefore been particularly infested with hares and rabbits. I authorised the tenants on my land to kill the rabbits and hares, and to empower anyone else they pleased to kill them.

So troublesome had been the hares and rabbits on that little property, that they even entered the gardens and allotments of the labourers; and one of those labourers appeared before the Committee of the House of Commons on the Games-laws in 1845, and stated that the rabbits had not only devoured his vegetables, his cabbages, and his peas, but had actually dug up his potatoes! At that time—in 1845—the property did not belong to me; but I took care to explain to this worthy man, in 1848, when I visited the estate, that if the hares or rabbits ever trouble him, or the other labourers living upon my property, that under the present law any man may destroy hares on his own holding without taking out a licence, and I advised the labourers to set gins and snares upon their allotments and in their gardens, to catch all the hares and rabbits they could; and when they caught them to be sure to put them in their own pots and eat them themselves. That is the way in which I dealt with the game on my property. I must confess that I have no taste whatever for the preservation of such vermin, which I believe to be utterly inconsistent with good farming, and the greatest obstacle to the employment of the labourers. For my own part I would rather see a good fat hog in every sty belonging to my labourers, than have the best game preserve in the country.

FARMERS UNAFRAID OF FOREIGN CORN

That, then, was the course which I took in 1848, to prepare for the coming competition with the foreigner. It was a time when prices ranged high; nothing was settled about rents. In the course of the last year, however, I received a letter from one of my tenants, saying, "When I took this land from your predecessor, it was upon the calculation of wheat being at 56s. a quarter; it is now little more than 40s., and I should like to have a new arrangement made." I wrote in reply, "The proposition you make is reasonable. We will have a new bargain. I am willing to enter upon an arrangement, estimating the future price of wheat at 40s.; but whilst I am willing to take all the disadvantages of low prices, I must have the benefit of good cultivation, and therefore we will estimate the produce of the land to be such as could be grown by good farmers upon the same quality of soil." Now, from the moment that this reasonable proposition was made, there was not the slightest anxiety of mind on the part of my tenants—not the least difficulty in carrying on their business of farming under a system of free trade as well as they had done under the system of protection. From

that moment the farmers on this small property felt themselves no longer interested in the matter of free trade and protection; and the labourers felt that they had as good a prospect of employment as they had before, and they had no interest in the question of protection. We settled our terms. I have bargained for my rent. It is no business of the public what rent I get. That is my business, and the business of the farmers; but if it is any satisfaction to my protectionist friends, I will admit that I am receiving a reduced rent, notwithstanding that I have drained the land, and given them the game, and removed the hedges, and cleared away every hedge-row tree.

What, then, becomes of the argument that it is impossible to carry on agriculture in this country with wheat at 40s. a quarter? I am getting some rent—and not so very large a reduction from the rent I got before; and it is enough for me to say that the land is being cultivated, and that farmers and labourers are employed and contented.

Now, with regard to a lease, I said to both my tenants, "Either take the land from year to year, with an agreement binding each of us to submit to arbitration the valuation of unexhausted improvements when you leave the land; or, if you like, take a lease, and I will bind you down to no covenants as to the way in which you are to cultivate the land while you possess it." What possible excuse, then, can the land-owners in any part of the country have for coming forward and telling us that land cannot be cultivated because wheat is 40s. a quarter? The answer I intend to give to those noble dukes and lords who are running about the country, and who are so angry with me, and are scolding me so lustily, is this—"Let me have the arranging of the affairs between you and your tenants—the terms, the rent, and condition of the holdings—and I will undertake to insure that your land shall be cultivated better than it was before, that farming shall be as profitable to the farmer, that the labourer shall have as full employment, and at as good wages, provided you allow me to enter into the same arrangement that I have made with my own tenants." But that would not suit these parties. It would make a dry, dull unprofitable matter of business of what is now made a piece of agitation, which ought to be called moonshine.

Now, if I had been a protectionist, I might have made money by this. I will show you how I should have done so. When my tenants wrote to me to say there ought to be a fresh agreement between us, what would have been my answer had I been a protectionist? I should have said, "That is true, my good friends; we will have a meeting at Great Marlow or High Wycombe, and we will petition Parliament to pass a law to protect you." Well, we should have had a meeting, my tenants would have been invited to attend, and would have shouted, "We are rowing in the same boat!" and after two or three hours of dull speeches, you would have had a conclusion with "three groans for Cobden." After this meeting was over my tenants might have gone home, and might have been prepared, until the next audit, to pay their full rents as before. And if I were a protectionist land-owner I should have then wanted some fresh excuse against the next audit-day. Consequently, I should probably have told the farmers to come to the next meeting, at 17 Old Bond Street, to memorialise her Majesty—for they were not to be told to petition the House of Commons, but to lay their complaints at the foot of the throne. After my poor tenants had done all this and gone home, and prepared their rents for the next audit-day, then some fresh excuse must be found, and we might have told the farmers that instead of memorialising the Queen they should agitate for a dissolution of Parliament. In this case we should have been safe in respect to

our rents for the next three years, because that is an agitation which would last such a period.

In the meantime what would be the consequences to my tenants? With heartsickening delay, and with the hopelessness inspired into their souls by these dreary, dull, protectionist speeches, telling them that they could not cultivate their land even if no rent were paid; and with the constant drain on their resources to pay their old rents, without amelioration in their holdings, one-half the tenants might be ruined by the tactics of the protectionists at the present moment. But was it necessary for any farmer to be ruined if the landlords pursued the same system as myself? This is simply and purely a rent question. And if the farmers cannot carry on their business, it is because they pay too high a rent in proportion to the amount of their produce. I do not say that in many cases the rents of the landlords might not be excessive, provided the land were cultivated to its full capacity. But that cannot be done without sufficient capital, and that sufficient capital cannot be applied without sufficient security, or without a tenant-right, or a lease amounting to tenant-right. We want to bring the land-owner and the tenant together, to confront them in their separate capacity as buyers and sellers; so that they might deal together as other men of business, and not allow themselves to play this comedy of farmers and landlords crying about for protection, and saying that they are rowing in the same boat; when, in fact, they are rowing in two boats, and in opposite directions.

HOW DERATING RAISES RENT AND PRICES

There is a new red-herring thrown across the scent of the farmers; they are told that protection cannot be had just now; but in the meantime they must have half the amount of the local rates thrown on the Consolidated Fund. I am really astonished that anybody should have the assurance to get up and, facing a body of tenant-farmers, make such a proposal to them for the benefit of the landowners. The local rates at present are paid on the real property of the country. Such is the nature of the poor-rates and of the county-rates, etc. They are not assessed on the tenants' capital. ["Hear," and a cry, "Mr. Lattimore said they are."] He said no such thing. [Some expressions of dissent.] He did not say that the assessment was on the ploughs and oxen of the tenantry. It is on the rent of land, and not on the floating capital; for it is known to everybody that the assessment is on the rent, and, if the rate is assessed on the rent, why, the tenant charges it to the landlord when he takes his farm. He calculates what the rates and taxes are, and, if the farm is highly rated, he pays less rent. Did you ever know a landlord let his land tithe-free on the same terms as land which had the tithe on it? At present the rates were laid on the rent of land, and were ultimately paid by the landlord. I admit that at first the tenant pays it out of his pocket, but he gets it again when he pays his rent. But only think of this wise proposal of the farmers' friend, who says, "In order to relieve you tenant-farmers, I will take one-half of these £12,000,000 of local taxes off, and put it on the Consolidated Fund—that is to say, on tea, sugar, coffee, tobacco, and other articles which you tenant-farmers and labourers consume." There is a pretty project for benefiting the tenant-farmers!

But there is another scheme; there are two ways of doing this. The other way is by assessing the rates on the floating capital of the country. The argument is—why should not the shop-keepers, the bankers, and the fund-holders be

assessed? But if you allow the bringing in of stock-in-trade to be assessed, you must bring in the farmers' stock-in-trade to be assessed. I now ask the farmers in Aylesbury and its neighbourhood what they would gain if the value of all stock held upon land within the neighbourhood of Aylesbury were assessed? Has not Mr. Lattimore told you that the estimated value of the farming stock of this kingdom is £250,000,000? then I can only say it is five times as much as the capital invested in the cotton trade, and more than that employed in the great staple manufacturers together; and under such circumstances, how can those landlords tell the farmers that they would put rates on the floating stock? And is it not, then, a wise proposal to make to the farmers, to take off half of the rates, and to put the assessment on the floating capital, of which the farmer possesses the greater proportion? I am humiliated when I read of these meetings, in which the farmers listen and gape at such speeches; and I feel a relief that it is not my duty to attend at such meetings, and that I have no landlord to oblige by being present at these meetings.

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