

# LAND & LIBERTY

Published by THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE  
TAXATION OF LAND VALUES, LTD.

Forty-Third Year.

Established June, 1894.

By Post 2s. 6d. per annum.

Editorial Offices

94 PETTY FRANCE, LONDON, S.W.1.

*All communications to be addressed to the Editor.*

Telegrams: "Enlav, Sowest, London."

Telephone: Whitehall 6008.

*Postage on this issue is One Halfpenny.*

MARCH, 1936.

## ACCESS TO RAW MATERIALS

The belief that the desire for colonial possessions in order to obtain access to raw materials is one of the main causes of war is widely held. Sir Samuel Hoare, in his speech to the Assembly of the League of Nations on 11th September, pledged the co-operation of this country in investigating access to raw materials in colonial and mandated territories. Linked with this opinion is the view that certain countries are over-populated and have need of expansion-doctrine to which our late Foreign Secretary gave expression in relation to Italy.

The broad fact is no doubt true, that to prevent the people of any country from having access to colonial raw materials would do that people an injury. But what is meant by access to raw materials? Such raw materials as are produced in colonial countries may generally be bought by anyone who is in the position to pay the market price for them. Any obstacle in the way of this lies in the tariff barriers and trade restrictions which all countries are guilty of creating. Nor does it follow that the transfer of the domination of a colony from one nation to another will give the citizens of the latter any easier access to the raw materials, except in so far as it may lead to a reduction of tariffs—a thing which can be achieved without any change of dominion.

Moreover, if a transfer of colonial possessions is made between one country and another, the land, the source of the raw materials will on the policies of all the great countries (except Russia) continue to be private property. Even if the ownership of this property is taken from the nationals of one country and given to that of another, the majority of the people will still have to buy their access to raw materials from the landlords, and will be no better off in the one case than in the other.

The real question is access to land, not access to raw materials, and it is a problem which is greatly aggravated by the many schemes now in operation for restricting the production of staple commodities such as tin, copper, rubber, cotton.

To talk of the problem, as some eminent pacifists have recently, as a struggle between the "Haves" and the "Have-nots" among nations is to miss the main point. It is individuals who have to be fed, clothed, and housed. There are poor people in the United States despite the great natural resources of that country, and in Britain with its great colonial possessions, just as there are in Italy or in Germany; and there is also in all these countries a small minority of inordinately wealthy people. The struggle is not between nations but between the "Haves" and the "Have-nots" in all nations.

Nor can it be admitted that countries like Italy or Germany are in an absolute sense over-populated, when their density of population is in fact much lower than that of countries such as Belgium or Great Britain. They all suffer from a defective land system which places the ownership of the natural sources of wealth in the hands of a fraction of the people, and deprives the rest of the opportunity of producing except upon such terms as the owners of land permit. There is in any case no great field for colonization in colonial countries. The whole German population in Germany's pre-war colonies was less than the German population of London and New York. The number of Italian colonists in Italy's present colonies is an insignificant percentage of her population.

The real outlet for European emigration would be the self-governing countries such as the British Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the United States and so on. Many of these countries unfortunately have raised strong barriers to immigration, and they have done so with the motive of preventing the wages of their people from being reduced by more competition of workers for jobs. Just as the free flow of commodities has been obstructed by tariffs, so has the flow of population been restricted by quotas and other hindrances to immigration. Both policies rest upon economic fallacies of the same nature. They fail to see that over-population is not the evil, but land monopoly. If free access to land were established all these countries could maintain much larger populations and maintain them in greater comfort, for closer settlement and greater division of labour would add to the output of wealth per head.

In the tropical and semi-tropical countries which are now the principal areas under a colonial regime, the opportunities for European settlement are not so great. These countries have rather been the field for an exploitation which has driven the native from the land, imposed taxes upon him payable in money, and compelled him to work at low wages in mines and other enterprises owned by Europeans and managed by Europeans who have no desire or intention of settling in them. There are honourable exceptions, such as Northern Nigeria, where the rights of the natives to the land have been safeguarded, and the land revenue has been used to defray the expenses of government instead of being appropriated by alien landlords.

Men's ideas on these subjects are distorted by a false usage of speech. We talk of British colonies or French colonies, and imply that every Briton or every Frenchman has some share or lot in them. In fact they are owned, as Britain and France is, by individuals, and the only share in them that the bulk of the people enjoy is a share in the expenses of government and the armies and navies which are considered necessary to protect these possessions.

What the world needs is to break down the barriers which in every country prevent men from making use of the natural resources, to break down the barriers which prevent them from buying food and raw materials from the places which can best produce them, and break down the barriers which prevent free migration of population between country and country.

F. C. R. D.

During a debate in the Oldham Town Council on a proposal to sell a plot of land bounded by Church Lane, Lord Street, and Albion Street for £10,750 it was stated that the price worked out at £11 5s. 5d. a square yard.—*Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 9th January.