

had in no way increased. . . . Uncertainty regarding land taxation would drive capital away from the building industry, and he was afraid that neither builders, purchasers, nor mortgagees would incur any further commitments so long as threats of a special form of imposition were overhanging.—*Interviews reported in the TIMES, 2nd May.*

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The reference to land valuation and land taxation made by Mr. Snowden in his Budget speech on Tuesday hints, rather than indicates, that behind the façade of restrained and conservative finance the Chancellor still cherishes the predatory ambitions of his unregenerate days. . . . However the argument on the justice of special land taxes may be decided, the determining factor in the long run will be their practicability. Unless the Socialists can produce a far better plan than did Mr. Lloyd George they are in danger not only of severe disappointment for themselves, but of inflicting severe injury on the country and a severe check to the enterprise, often highly speculative, by which alone its progress is maintained.—*LEEDS MERCURY (Conservative), 2nd May.*

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. . . . The present Government, after restoring the status of the Land Valuation Department and equipping it afresh with its former powers of investigation, should be able, by the time of the next Budget, to attempt a solution. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, we note, is under no misapprehension regarding the Government's intentions. He regards the Chancellor's announcement as only a first step that will be followed at the first favourable opportunity by bolder measures designed to remove some at least of the most glaring inequities of the present system. In this direction the Government can count with confidence on the support of Liberals.—*SOUTH WALES NEWS (Liberal), 2nd May.*

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The Budget speech contains one thing which is much more sinister and much more dangerous than the proposal to put an untimely end to the McKenna duties—the revival of the Land Valuation machinery. In this matter the Chancellor doubtless counts on the support of the Liberal Party. He will need it.—*Raymond Needham, in the FINANCIAL TIMES, 7th May.*

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The Bill, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced will make an early appearance, will be awaited with anxiety, and at present there is no indication of the lines upon which it will be framed. That it will not revive the preposterous principles of the Act of 1909-10, with its chimerical "site value," can only be assumed from the statement of Mr. Snowden that "it is to be well thought out and as simple as possible." No one could thus characterize the scheme of 1909-10, which resulted in confusion and cost to the private owner and little or no profit to the Exchequer.—*THE BUILDER, 9th May.*

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The Land Union and other organizations representing property owners are up in arms against Mr. Snowden's proposal to re-establish the Land Valuation Department. It will be remembered that the powers of this Department were curtailed in the Finance Act of last year.—*BUILDING NEWS, 16th May.*

Colonel Wedgwood, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, speaking at a meeting of the Marylebone Labour Party on 7th May, said that by allowing the McKenna duties to lapse the Government was freeing industry from taxation, and the Chancellor made it clear that he proposed to go further next year by starting work on the land monopoly, to free industry from the landlord also. At one sweep the Government in the Budget had wiped out the chief opportunities for graft through Parliament.—*SOUTH WALES NEWS, 8th May.*

LAND-VALUE POLICY

A Review by Alderman F. C. R. Douglas, M.A.

Dr. Dundas White's latest work* is the most important contribution to the literature of the land-values movement that has appeared for many years past. It contains at once a re-statement of the economic foundations of the policy, a history of the development of the idea, a survey of its application in practice in various parts of the world, and suggestions for the legislative steps necessary for its application in this country. The reviewer, however, is embarrassed, without reprinting in detail the table of contents, to give an adequate impression of the wide variety of matters dealt with.

The first portion of this work is devoted to expounding the economic principles on which the policy of rating and taxing land-values depends, and the economic effects that would flow from the application of that policy. It is at all times difficult to re-tell a well-told tale, and this is one which men of talent in many lands have already tried their hands on. It says much for our author that even here he is always interesting, and in many cases suggests new view points.

There is in this section one passage which is open to slight correction. The author speaks of the point of diminishing return (*i.e.*, the point at which any further application of labour and capital, though it may increase the yield, does not increase it proportionally) as marking "the payable limit of improvements." This statement as it stands is only true of marginal land. On land above the margin of production the application of successive "doses of labour and capital" can with economic advantage be carried past the "point of diminishing return" until the yield of the last dose is equal to that obtained by a similar application of labour and capital to land on the margin. This amendment, however, does not in fact vitiate the practical conclusion drawn by the author as to the effects of taxation on improvements in restricting production.

After dealing with the economic principles, the author proceeds to give a brief account of those writers who have from time to time advocated principles analogous to those now maintained by the land-values movement. A comprehensive survey of the teachings of those who in all parts of the world have seen the fundamental importance of the land question and the advisability of making economic rent the basis of national revenue would fill a large tome. We cannot, therefore, complain that no space has been found for those economists, such as H. H. Gossen in Germany and Leon Walras in Switzerland, who have arrived at conclusions closely resembling Henry George's but by a very different route.

The next section of the book, after giving a brief but illuminating survey of the progress of land-value legislation all over the globe, proceeds to deal with various matters of a constructive and practical nature, that must of necessity be dealt with in putting the policy of land-value taxation in actual operation in this country.

Owing to the fact that in English law, property in land carries with it property in whatever may be on, in, or under the land, it is necessary to define land-value as the value of the land "irrespective of any improvements thereon," to use the phrase suggested by our author; or "assuming that the improvements (if any) thereon had not been made" to use the phrase adopted in various colonial enactments. This in turn appears to lead to the necessity of a definition of improvements, in order that they may be excluded from valuation. One is tempted to think that the word "improvements" is one of those which might have been left to define itself, and still more so when it is seen how difficult it is to produce an adequate definition of so essentially simple an idea. But part of

* LAND-VALUE POLICY, by James Dundas White, M.A., LL.D., London. The United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values. pp. 205+xx. 2s. net.

the difficulty lies in excluding those improvements (such as drainage, levelling and so on) which in course of time become indistinguishable from the land, in order that the work of valuation may not become "clogged with antiquarian research." These difficulties, of course, are no fault of the taxation of land values; they are the fault of the existing system of legislation and land tenure. We refer to them here as an illustration of the difficulties to which the author has been seeking a solution. There are numerous others relating to the method of collection of the tax and the apportionment of it between the various persons who may have rights relating to the same plot of land, and to these in their turn the author indicates a solution. Only those who are acquainted with the complexities of these matters will appreciate how much hard work has gone to the composition of these chapters, and how much indebted to the author those who are interested in the practical application of the policy should be.

The book concludes with what are in effect two appendices. The first is a series of notes on matters too special or technical to be conveniently included in the text. We have read them with much enjoyment and edification. We might for instance advise an enterprising Member of Parliament to read and digest Note K, on tithe-rentcharge, and then raise an exciting amendment upon one of the driest of all measures, the Expiring Laws Continuance Act. And those who believe that we can make progress by retaining the last vestiges of the feudal system when the substance has departed, might be recommended to read Note N—On the Law of Property Act 1922.

The second appendix contains a collection of notable sayings on the land question, mainly those of philosophers and of statesmen. We are glad to see a number from the utterances of members of the present Cabinet, as well as of their Liberal "watch-dogs." It is useful to have ammunition such as this at hand, as promise and performance do not always concur, though we hope that in this case our hopes will not be so shattered as they have been in the past.

To sum up—this is a worthy contribution to the literature of the most important economic and social question of to-day. We wish it a wide circulation among all parties and classes of society.

A CAMPAIGN OF MENDACITY

Mr. Snowden on the Protectionists

Speaking at Slaithwaite, Yorkshire, on 16th May, Mr. Snowden said:—

His proposal to abolish the McKenna Duties had raised a howling campaign in the Tory and Protectionist Press. "Because two or three, not by any means the most important of our industries, imagine that they are going to be affected, that their selfish interests are going to be affected by the abolition of these duties, we have had the full force of the millionaire Press directed against our proposal. Try to imagine what would happen if you had a general tariff upon every article which comes into this country? Whenever a Chancellor proposes to make the slightest reduction on any of these tariffs you would have a repetition of what has been taking place during the last week. You would have, as you have had in the days before last Tuesday's debate, the lobbies of the House of Commons crowded with men trying to get interviews with Members of Parliament, actuated solely by a desire to protect their own selfish interests. There is one consoling thing about this Press campaign; the vote of the House of Commons last Tuesday night shows that we have in the House of Commons a majority of men who are not going to be terrorized by a Press campaign of mendacity. Those who were responsible for using a newspaper simply as an agent of vested interests mistake, I think, the common sense and the honesty of the people of this country.

"LAND & LIBERTY"

Thirtieth Anniversary

Thirty years ago to-day, 1st June, LAND & LIBERTY, then named THE SINGLE TAX, first appeared. Nine years ago, on the occasion of our twenty-first birthday, I said: "When the war cloud disappears the forces which the paper stands for will speedily and firmly be placed in position, and that our public would know how to meet the new alignments." The situation to-day recalls that opinion. The politicians and the circumstances of the war have disappeared, all but the debt, and our politics are turned largely towards the solution of social problems. And as this fact comes into sharp relief, the Taxation of Land Values is found to be on the front of the stage.

Our task to-day is lighter in many ways than at any previous time; because of past experience and the splendid and increasing services the cause can now command. This is as it should be; on the other hand, the work at headquarters is more exacting than ever before. But our readers do not require to be told. In each month's issue they have the news of what is being done to promote the movement and what is being accomplished step by step, in so many places.

LAND & LIBERTY has many well wishers throughout its wide dominion. It is in the nature of the case a home-made journal, what is called a "staff paper," but we are ever indebted to very many contributors for so much good news and writing of an inspiring character. This feature of the paper will be maintained, and would willingly be extended if space permitted.

We have not a few congratulations on this thirtieth anniversary and must put one at least on record from the pen of our good friend and colleague, Louis F. Post:—

"I congratulate you upon the Thirtieth Anniversary of LAND & LIBERTY. That this excellent periodical should have lived so long is in itself a tribute. But length of life is not its only virtue. Its trustworthiness in every statement of fact it has ever made is a welcome and by no means common trait. One never has to question any of its facts, or to wonder if peradventure some of its statements must be read between the lines. Whether its opinions are open to dispute or not, the facts on which they are based never are. What a different kind of world this would be if it were possible to say that sincerely of all periodicals. I trust that LAND & LIBERTY may double its present age with a future record as clean and clear as its past record. And to that wish let me add my hope that it may before that time experience a triumph politically as well as morally worthy of the cause it serves and the spirit in which it serves its cause."

We shall endeavour in the future to live up to this high tribute and do our utmost with the help of all who have the weal of the paper at heart to win that political triumph.

J. P.

The Sunlight League is appealing for £25,000 to give the children of the overcrowded districts their place in the sun. Bungalows, we are told, could be built cheaply for the purpose. The League had better consult the Ministry of Health on that score and the local tax gatherer on the watch for his annual collection. The United Committee are wanting £25,000, more or less, to make opinion for their better way of working. The promise of a Budget tax on land values next year should stimulate our people everywhere to throw their full weight into the campaign.

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Recent visitors to the offices of the United Committee have included Mr. Frank Garrison (U.S.A.), Mr. F. T. Hodgkiss and Mr. A. Chalmers (Melbourne), Mr. and Mrs. Haynes (Melbourne) and Mr. John Gray and Miss Gray (U.S.A.). With Messrs. Hodgkiss, Chalmers and Gray we have had many interesting conversations during their several weeks' stay in London. All were greatly impressed by the good prospects for the movement in this country.