

A NEW RADICAL GROUP FORMED

LAND VALUE TAXATION IN THE FOREFRONT

A promising outcome of the numerous meetings among Liberals to discuss causes and remedies for their setback at the Election is the formation of a new Radical Group. A programme was published on 25th November stating that the Group has been formed with a view to consolidating and co-ordinating large bodies of progressive opinion throughout the country, and in order to secure adequate expression of fundamental principles. The program continues:—

The fundamental policy of true Liberalism is—Equality of Opportunity and the Freedom of the Individual.

The Group therefore stands for Free Land, Free Trade, Free People, and proposes to carry out the policy foreshadowed by Cobden: to bring about complete Freedom of Exchange by the abolition of all remaining Tariffs, and complete Freedom of Production through the break-up of Land Monopoly by means of the Taxation of Land Values.

THE BREAK-UP OF LAND MONOPOLY

Definite proposals to secure this are:—

(A) A national tax on the value of all land (including minerals) both in the towns and in the rural districts, and

(B) The allocation of part of the proceeds of this tax to the relief of charges which now fall upon the local rates for such predominantly national services as main roads, poor relief, education, police and asylums, with the concurrent abolition of all rating upon houses, factories, machinery and other improvements, whether industrial or agricultural, and

(C) The recognition of land values as the basis of assessment to the local rates thus reduced.

It is the view of the group that schemes of land purchase will never form a satisfactory basis for the solution of the land question.

As the value of all land is created by the community, such a system of taxation and rating would make the "common fund" available for the "common good."

These reforms would relieve industry of the heavy burden of taxation and rating, which is one of the main causes of trade depression. They would open up to productive industry the land which is now withheld from use, or which is capable of being put to a much better use, and so would provide productive work for those now unemployed, by increasing production, cheapening building materials, and bringing sites into the market. This would also lead to the speedy solution of the housing problem.

Other items in the policy of the group include security of tenure for tenants and leaseholders, encouragement of agricultural co-operation, adult suffrage, better provisions for education, extension of Old Age Pensions, widows' pensions, development of the League of Nations, and limitation of armaments.

The program is signed by Mr. P. Wilson Raffan (N. Edinburgh), Mr. T. Atholl Robertson (Finchley), Mr. James McCulloch (W. Willesden), Mr. J. Traill Stevenson (Wood Green), Mr. D. Cleghorn Thomson (S. Edinburgh), Mr. Frank Geary (South Leeds), Mr. W. Tudor Davies, Mr. C. J. Vasey, Mr. H. G. Chancellor, Mr. Charles Bevan, Mr. Ashley Mitchell (Scarborough), Mr. J. F. Loverseed (Sudbury), Mr. Robert Alstead (Altrincham), and Elfyn David (Llandaff and Barry), who become the Provisional Committee.

The honorary secretaries of the Group are Mr. Frank Geary, 1, Temple Gardens, E.C.4., and Mr. Chas. Bevan, Abbey House, Westminster.

PORTSMOUTH HOUSING SITES

Average Price of Land, £1,512 per Acre

On the occasion of a recent visit to Portsmouth to address a meeting there, Col. Josiah C. Wedgwood made some inquiries as to the prices paid for the land under the Addison Housing Scheme. He has since had particulars from Mr. G. W. Post, Secretary of the Portsmouth Trades Council and Labour Party, and has kindly passed on the matter to us for publication. The facts thus reported in respect of the housing schemes in Portsmouth within the old Borough boundaries are as follows:—

Situation.	Total Cost of Site.	Area of Site.	Cost of Site per acre.	No. of Houses.
	£	sq. yds.	£	
Eastney Farm Estate (Henderson Road and Bransbury Road) ..	12,889	60,930	1,024	245
Crofton Road	4,000	9,038	2,142	37
Easton Road	1,896	4,270	2,149	17
Bonchurch and Edgeware Roads	3,149	7,450	2,046	32
Hartley Road	2,025	4,250	2,306	17
Hewitt Road and St. Chad's Avenue ..	3,548	6,066	2,831	31
Hayling Avenue ..	2,400	6,000	1,936	24
Crofton Road	3,500	8,803	1,924	38

The total area is just over 22 acres and the average price of these sites works out at £1,512 per acre. The total number of houses is 441 and the average price of the land per house was £75 15s., which corresponds to an annual rent of £3 17s. 9d., or approximately 1s. 6d. per week, with the houses built 20 to the acre. In the case of the Hartley Road site the price of the land per house was £119, which corresponds to £4 19s. annual rent and approximately 1s. 11d. per week. Portsmouth, in fact, reveals a very different state of affairs than that presented to the House of Commons by Mr. Wheatley, late Minister of Health, when he suggested that the price of land for a house built under the Government Housing Schemes amounted to only 1½d. in the weekly rent.

The remaining question is: *What was the previous rateable value of these sites and what rates per acre were paid on them as compared with neighbouring improved sites?* The answer should prove conclusively the relation of the house famine to land monopoly and unjust taxation. The details are not at present available, but it is sufficient in the meantime to point out that, according to the Parliamentary Paper 119 of 1913, there were in 1911-12 no fewer than 1,181 acres of land in Portsmouth rated as "agricultural" out of a total area of 6,100 acres. The "agricultural land" contributed then only 8s. 5d. per acre in rates and now contributes less. But for 22 acres of such land the Portsmouth Town Council had to pay at the rate of £1,512 per acre.

In his communication to Col. Wedgwood, Mr. P. W. Post remarks that prior to the extension of the Borough in October, 1920, Portsmouth bought a site at Portsdown Hill, outside the boundaries, and there 99 houses have been erected. The Portsdown Hill site is referred to in the pamphlet *HOUSE FAMINE AND THE LAND BLOCKADE* as an example of the way in which towns have been driven to select land far from the centre and try to get it at a low price, only to go to an enormous expense to link it up afterwards with the town. Such is the result of the land purchase policy on which the housing schemes are based.

A. W. M.