

LABOUR AND THE LAND

COLONEL WEDGWOOD ON THE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Rt. Hon. Colonel Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, speaking on 5th July at Girton, Cambridge, asked who would have dared to prophesy a year ago that not only should we have to-day a Labour Government, but that that Government would be so popular that all vigorous opposition was left to languish in the arms of those extinguished exiles, Lord Birkenhead and Mr. Churchill.

If one had to define the difference between the Liberal and Labour outlook on politics it should surely be that both admit the social injustice of our society, but that while the Liberals seek to humanize the results of the injustice, Labour seeks to abolish the injustice itself. Measures of social reform were all very well, but if men got fair wages they could look after their own social conditions without being wet-nursed by philanthropists and bureaucrats.

So long as there were anywhere in the world the land and raw materials from which the goods could be made, so long there ought to be a demand for and a chance of useful work.

At a public demonstration at Wymondham, Norfolk, on 13th July, Colonel Wedgwood said that in the next Budget the Labour Government intended to introduce bold legislation to unlock the land for the people, to undo some of the mischief caused by the Enclosure Acts, and to give rural workers independence. At each stage the agitators, who stirred men up to think and act—Labour to-day, Radicals yesterday, Whigs, Roundheads, Protestants—had been hated, scoffed at, and destroyed for a while by the supporters of things as they were. Like their predecessors they did not care what posterity might think so long as to-day they helped to set free men's minds and bodies from the fetters of the past.

They were on soil hallowed by this struggle. There were Robert Kett and his men in 1549 tearing down the enclosing fences by which grasping lords sought to shut off labour from the land. From there they marched on Norwich, captured the town and set up their commonwealth, petitioning the King that, "All bondsmen may be made free, for God made all free with His precious blood-shedding." How they died, those predecessors of theirs, in the great struggle was known. Vengeance they could never get. We could only remember those who died for the cause, and carry on with all their fervour, with better intelligence, and with easier machinery, the fight waged by Kett and his men when they fought and died for the landless against the landlord.

Those who owned the land would not easily lose their hold. But so long as there were men wanting and needing land, which men must have to live on or work, so long would all the interests of Labour and all the power of Labour be on the side of the landless, that he might have a home, security and that economic freedom which was the basis of their creed.

The more we impose taxes that interfere with the free, and therefore the natural, course of trade, the more we tend to separate nation from nation, and the greater becomes the danger to world peace.

I have been watching some of these infant industries for over forty years, and have not yet discovered one than has outgrown the infancy state. The fact is the more sturdy they become the more protection they want, and the greater becomes their power to influence legislatures.—*Fred Skirrow in the YORKSHIRE POST, 25th June.*

MR. ANDREW MACLAREN'S CAMPAIGN IN THE POTTERIES.

A special meeting of the Burslem and Tunstall Labour Party was held in the Town Hall on 30th June for the selection of the Parliamentary candidate at the next election. About 120 delegates were present. The only candidate nominated was Mr. Andrew MacLaren, ex-M.P. for the constituency and candidate at the last General Election, who addressed the meeting. Thereafter a resolution was carried unanimously and with acclamation "That Mr. Andrew MacLaren be invited to contest again the Burslem Division in the interests of Labour."

The LABOUR CHRONICLE (2, Church Street, Burslem), edited by Mr. MacLaren has been increased in size and is now one of the most successful and enterprising Labour papers in the country. Its columns are a weekly record of sustained activity in the Potteries and its articles give great prominence to the Taxation of Land Values which Mr. MacLaren is doing very much to promote. Recent meetings addressed by Mr. MacLaren include the demonstrations in Newcastle, on 14th June, and in the Stoke Town Hall on June 15th with Colonel Wedgwood, Mr. Oswald Mosely and Mr. E. G. Hemmerde also on the platform; a meeting in the Burslem Town Hall on 10th July under the auspices of the Women's Advisory Council, in Newchapel and Goldenhill on 13th July and Mow Cop on 26th July.

The event of the month in Burslem was the "assault on Chester" in which more than 1,000 people from the Burslem and Tunstall joined. It was a day's outing by char-a-banc to take part in a joint demonstration at the "Roodee" in Chester on 20th July.

At the great mass meeting in the racecourse, presided over by Mr. George Muff who has twice contested Chester as Labour candidate, the principal speakers were Mr. MacLaren and Mr. Malcolm MacDonald. Mr. MacLaren in the course of his address said he ventured to make the prophecy, and said that the 1925 Budget would definitely include measures for the Taxation of Land Values, and that this would form the chief plank of the next election when it comes. He felt confident upon the soundness of a united Labour Party in the House of Commons and in the country being able to tackle the problems involved, though, as he pointed out, the opposition raised by the Landed Classes would seek always to smash the efforts of those who were working to rid the country of the evil of Landlordism and Land Monopoly. Only a clear-sighted and determined democracy could prevent this.

The activities of Mr. MacLaren and his colleagues in the Potteries have provoked the STAFFORDSHIRE SENTINEL to join issue with the "land taxers," and very good advantage of the opportunity for reply has been taken by Councillor Austin Brook in a letter to that paper of 4th July.

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