

## A FORGOTTEN AND ABANDONED LAND CAMPAIGN

### "VESTED INTERESTS" NOW SECURE

**M**R. LLOYD GEORGE has ordained a General Election and appealed for the continuation in power of a "Coalition" Government, not merely to settle the terms of peace, but to take charge of reconstruction after the war on alleged non-party lines. The methods adopted in recommending the new administration to the country, and its political make-up, are matters for later comment and discussion. We are concerned meantime with Mr. Lloyd George's Coalition policy and the contrast it presents with what he has been pledged to in the past. He advocates Imperial Preference "without taxation of food" on existing duties and on any duties to be imposed; he advocates the continuance of the rent-raising Corn Production Act; land for soldiers is only to be obtained by purchase "at the full value" after it has been proved by State-training that they are fit for the job on charity holdings and allotments; State action is to subsidise, interfere with and control numerous branches of industry. The outlook is characteristic of Mr. Lloyd George's new horizon: "the State has many interests, and when there is a loss on one the State makes a profit on the other"; there is not a word about levying taxation, which is the first function of government, especially now with the need for enormous revenues. Why is that question burked? What is the connection between this significant silence, the prospect of Tariff Reform, and the safeguarding of the great monetary and monopolistic interests that have passed unscathed through the horrors of war? These questions are quietly put aside. They will demand an answer, and very soon, when it is seen that the Coalition Alliance is an absolute surrender to those "vested interests" of which Mr. George says he is no longer afraid.

Recent speeches made and other proclamations of policy are too numerous to reprint or even to refer to. We content ourselves with extracts from Mr. George's Wolverhampton address on 23rd November, the Earl of Dartmouth being in the chair, and follow with some reminders of WHAT HE HAS SAID when he interpreted "dishonesty" in a very different sense.

#### "COALITION" LAND REFORM

We undertook a great agricultural policy. . . . We brought the landlords in and the farmers in and the labourers in, and everybody was concerned with the cultivation of the land.

We must sweep aside prejudices. The difficulty, believe me, is not with interests: it is with prejudices. . . . People talk about the vested interests. It is not the vested interests I am afraid of; it is the vested prejudices.

You must not take any man's property away. You cannot build a great State on dishonesty. You are bound to come to grief if you attempt it. . . . Whatever the man has got, pay him his full value for it. Do not stand upon it like a dog in the manger and say, "I cannot use it myself and I do not want anyone else to."

I am told a good many of the soldiers . . . do not want to return to the closer atmosphere of the workshop and factory. If that is the case, they ought to have the opportunity of living on the land, but they ought to be trained for the purpose. . . . It requires training, like any other industry, and you must provide that training to begin with. . . . The first thing to do is to set up machinery in each area to ascertain how many soldiers and sailors there are who want to go on the land and what their special qualifications are and what training they need.

Then you must have a grant for the purchase of the necessary land and for the equipment of the holdings. The State must assist in the equipment where the man is a vigorous, healthy, intelligent fellow, who is able to run the holding.

There was the compulsory cultivation of the land, which was instituted by the present Government, and which is a recognition of the principles that the land is for the nation as a whole and not for an individual, and that all the individual is entitled to is an adequate recompense for his property and his interest in it.

Take housing. You cannot approach re-housing inside a town. The space is limited. Your housing schemes have got in the majority of cases to be schemes outside the town. There is your only chance to get land.—Mr. Lloyd George, at Wolverhampton, 23rd November, 1918.

*N.B.—The "great agricultural policy" referred to above was the guaranteeing of minimum prices by the Corn Production Act. The landlords were "brought in" truly enough. The Act has been a gift of many millions of pounds for which the rest of the people must pay. It has raised the price of land and promoted such speculation that the men who cultivate and use the land have suffered serious injury. It is now proposed that the proceeds of taxation shall be used to buy land thus inflated in value by corrupt legislation. The landowner must get "adequate recompense." Thus the services of fighting men and workers are recognised in the new code of honesty established under Coalition auspices!*

*What is true of agricultural land is true of town land. Monopoly prices prevent access. The facts revealed in the White Paper 119 of 1913 as to the area of "agricultural" land within municipal boundaries demonstrate what space there is inside our towns for housing purposes, and show to what extent that land is exempt from taxation while held in speculation. In 1,076 County Boroughs and Urban Districts in England and Wales, with a total area of 3,884,139 acres, there are 2,533,035 acres of land, rated as agricultural, but which is really land "ripening" for building purposes. Out of a total annual rate burden of £35,429,301, these two and a half million acres pay only £400,689. In 190 Burghs in Scotland (White Paper 144 of 1914), with a total area of 157,881 acres and total annual rate burden of £5,369,029, there are 58,833 acres of agricultural land contributing only £16,823. In the light of these figures, can it be seriously affirmed that space for housing inside towns is "limited"?*