

"OUR POLICY."

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—Henry George.

LABOUR UNREST.

The Coal Strike, the latest phase of labour unrest, has been patched up for the time being. The Coal Mines Minimum Wage Act, 1912, is now in force, and the Wage Boards it provides for are at work endeavouring to cope with the troubles that precipitated the quarrel. This strike, like the Railway and Transport Workers' Strike last year, has many lessons to teach, but one lesson stands out in bold relief: the change that has come over the face of British politics. Economic and industrial questions, as such, have now taken the place of political questions, as such. The unemployed man, the badly paid worker, the millions condemned to live in unspeakable housing conditions in both town and country feel deeply the wrongs they endure. In a dumb way the working people have borne patiently their burden, hoping against hope that some day redress would come. The reformers of past generations kept the fires burning and fought with giants for political emancipation and for wider educational facilities. They believed firmly in more democracy, and accepted the wider extension of the franchise as the means to their goal of universal peace, and health and progress. But the schoolmaster, inside the schools and without, has been abroad, and the seething mass of discontent among the labouring people to-day is provoked and controlled by a new and altogether different philosophy.

It is now clearly seen that mere political enfranchisement, good enough as far as it goes, is no remedy for labour troubles. To give a man a vote and force him to tramp in search of a living, to cede the right of citizenship and compel the citizen to endure hopeless unrequited toil, side by side with the most glaring examples of prosperity and refinement, is what more than anything else in a progressive community awakens forces of discontent. The labour unrest now abroad in the land is no mere ephemeral disturbance; it is there to stay and to become deeper and wider till the cure for it is discovered and applied.

Industrial questions, the question of work and wages, the questions of unemployment and of housing, are now uncomfortably in occupation in the front seats of public opinion, and they are going to remain there till public opinion gets ripe for a settlement of their case. These great strikes mean only one thing. The worker has roused himself, he wants his wages advanced, he demands a fairer share of the wealth which he labours so incessantly to

produce. He knows there is enough and to spare, for he sees and hears of the overflowing abundance which he has learned by bitter experience is not for him, but is earmarked for others, many of whom are less entitled to it than he is. In all his suffering he has been more than patient, and now he is indicating in plain terms that he is out for a change. If the politicians whom he has voted into place and power time and again cannot or will not bring him the justice and fair play he demands, he is prepared to speak and act for himself; and this is what he must do or sink even lower in the social scale.

The worker is right, and he has a measure of popular support behind him that even the dull-minded politicians do not seek to ignore or belittle. This struggle of the miners was the usual fight between "capital and labour" with the real enemy, the mine owner, the land monopoliser, behind the scenes. The Government with its Minimum Wage Act, a species of the half-baked Socialism it provides in the name of Liberalism, has brought to itself and the country a breathing space for the time being. The miners are back at work, and in their off time engaged in a sordid struggle for a minimum legal share of what is left after the man in the background has made his deductions in the form of royalties, wayleaves, dead-rents, surface-rents, and all the rest.

But this measure does not mean that the unrest of labour is settled, even for a time. The cause of poverty is still actively at work, and if the Government are not prepared to take the "deeper cut" than the Minimum Wage for coal miners has but set the pace for similar legislation all round. If the Government will not fulfil the hopes they held out of going to the root of the poverty problem they are going to have an uneasy time. If they will not go forward with the liberating policy set forth in the Taxation of Land Values they are going to be driven along the lines of restriction and that way lies the end of all things, at least for Liberalism.

The chief cause of all labour troubles is landlordism; the rent of land keeps pace with all attempts of labour to escape. Education, invention, improvement of any kind, anything that would lighten the day's toil, is arrested and stifled by this constantly acting force. The advance of rent is an enduring obstacle to higher wages. In the words of Henry George: "It is a fresh and continuous robbery that goes on every day and every hour. It is not from the produce of the past that rent is drawn; it is from the produce of the present. It is a toll levied upon labour constantly and continuously." This power to appropriate the rent of land induces land monopoly, the standing barrier to the solution of the poverty problem. It checks production at its source and in itself constitutes a permanent lock-out of labour and capital.

Three years ago this seemed to be recognised by Liberal leaders, and on a thousand platforms, landlordism in all its nakedness was ruthlessly exposed. There was no talk then of a beggarly "ninepence for fourpence," and as for a Minimum Wage Act for miners out on strike for a living wage, why such a thing was incredible. Verily it is altered days since we were looking for the thaw that was to come in the spring, when the frozen feudal sources of monopoly were to vanish before the rising sun, and the children of the people enter into their inheritance from on high. To-day this looks like a dream. Monopoly is still as strongly entrenched and Land Values Taxation has given place to legislation arising out of the reactionary backwash of the Poor Law Commission inquiry.

Six years ago the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith, then Chancellor of the Exchequer,) asked the municipalities for time to find out how best to tax land values. "We are all agreed," he said to a Municipal deputation on the 26th February, 1906, "that as a preliminary step there should be a separate assessment of land values," and that this would secure "a more satisfactory and more permanent result if we allow ourselves a little time and patience for the consideration of this problem than if we were to introduce a comparatively small and piecemeal instalment of the reform we all desire." This was six years ago, and all we have got is what Mr. Asquith said we did not want—the "piecemeal instalment;" and as for what we were all "agreed upon having," the separate valuation, well, that is due in 1915, and when it comes it will be just six years out of date and therefore useless for purposes of local rating.

Meanwhile, the Land Values Group in the House of Commons continue to bring forward their Bills and their Resolutions on Land Values, Housing, and Labour Unrest, but there is never one sympathetic word of encouragement or support from the Liberal leaders. When the Taxation of Land Values is debated in the House of Commons to-day the Government is dumb; it has sent the question to a Treasury Committee of experts and has no opinion of its own on the subject. What does it all mean? And what are the Members of Parliament fully pledged to the Taxation of Land Values going to say to their constituents when they return to the hustings with their cargo of Dead Sea fruit? Scores and hundreds of them have advocated the Taxation of Land Values as the cure for unemployment, bad housing, and as a method of land reform which the Government were pledged to carry.

Ten years ago the Liberal Party emerged out of much obscurity with the Taxation of Land Values as one of the foremost of the tasks they would set their minds to and overcome. It was one of their chief planks at the 1906 election, and three months later the Second Reading of a Bill on the subject was carried in the House of Commons by a vote of 319 to 61. It was the Land Clauses of the "People's Budget" that saved the party from defeat at the polls in the 1910 election, and incidentally paralysed

the House of Lords. The Taxation of Land Values has served the Liberal Party better than the party has served it. The driving power in the country for this reform has stood the test, and the treatment it has received at the hands of those who have exploited it for meaner ends can be regarded as one of the despairing chapters of modern Liberalism. For such a betrayal a day of reckoning must come sooner or later, and the sooner the better. In the words of Mr. Lloyd George himself:—

"A rational land system lies at the very root of national well-being. Liberalism will commit one of the most fatal blunders of its career if it allows this question to rest until it is settled. The real meaning of the enthusiasm aroused by the Budget is that the country has risen in revolt against the land monopoly. It has impoverished our rural districts, it has driven old industries away from our villages, and has prevented the establishment of new ones. It has cramped the natural, healthy growth of our towns. Streets which might have been filled with real homes, affording ample breathing space to restore the energies of our labouring population, in all ranks of life, have been crushed into airless blocks of unsightly buildings which are the eye-sore of our great cities and a danger to civilisation. Traders, manufacturers, professional men, business men, builders and workmen in town and country, have long been smouldering with disaffection against this oppression of landlordism, and with the Budget their discontent has burst into flame. **IF LIBERALISM LEAVES THE MATTER THERE AND DOES NOT SUBSTITUTE SOME MORE RATIONAL SYSTEM, IT MUST INEVITABLY SUFFER FOR ITS LACK OF COURAGE AND FORESIGHT.**"

THE LOSS OF THE "TITANIC."

The terrible disaster to the "Titanic" on Sunday, 14th April, which has caused such a shock over the whole world, has quite overshadowed every other event of public importance during the month. It has been the greatest calamity that has ever taken place at sea, and we wish to join in the universal feeling of deep sympathy with the bereaved, as well as in paying tribute to the heroism with which crew and passengers alike went down to that awful and sudden death. Man has not yet conquered Nature. He builds ships which he boasts are "unsinkable," and in one short hour all the fruits of his genius are utterly destroyed. Nature demands obedience, and the elaborate precautions which Governments and Shipping Companies are now making against a similar loss of life are an expression of man's observance of the Law. This disaster suggests many thoughts, but these have already found full expression in the country and in the daily and weekly press of the country and throughout the world.