

LAND VALUES

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"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.

THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE

A Manifesto to the Electors and Appeal for a
Campaign Fund

£25,000 Wanted

AFTER four years of violence, bloodshed, and tears, the task now faces the democracy, unfettered by war conditions, of resuming the struggle for liberty and justice in social and industrial relations.

A hundred years ago this country met a similar crisis. But in overthrowing the despotism of Napoleon the price was paid in the trampling down of popular rights and in the granting of a new lease of life to every landlord interest. Waterloo was followed by two generations of untold misery and degradation among the mass of the people.

Shall history repeat itself? It undoubtedly will if in the reconstruction now being planned the people are placed at the mercy of those powerful interests which are controlling their destinies, using the weapon of land monopoly to drive men into competition for a bare subsistence, declaring that only the few have the right to the land—the source of all wealth and capital—and making an enormous debt the instrument for ruinous burdens on industry.

Of all the legislation that was shelved when the war broke out, none was riper for enactment than that which, based on the land clauses of the 1909

Budget, aimed at destroying land monopoly. A valuation of the land, the essential step to the overthrow of land monopoly by taxation, was under way and nearing completion. The political truce silenced a determined agitation, and in the name of this truce land monopoly was left to flourish and has flourished. So sacred were land owners' privileges, while hundreds of thousands were killed fighting to save "our land," that the Chancellor of the Exchequer these past four years neither desired nor was permitted to look to the value of the land for the source of some of the enormous revenues he required.

Landlordism has been entrenched, and is to be maintained behind ransom prices for land, guaranteed by the Corn Production Act. Land for all purposes, it is now openly declared, is only to be obtained by purchase "at the full value" out of public revenues raised, as they will be, by means of indirect taxation, Customs duties, State-controlled trusts, and other levies and penalties upon production and trade. In the midst of this welter of shameless robbery promoted by politicians and committed by speculators and monopolists, the State is to be run by a horde of tax-gatherers, and dragooned by officials and controllers. Coercion grows and the hope of freedom vanishes.

It is evident, if the forces now striving for place and power are not defeated, that private property in land will still remain the Ark of the Covenant and access to land be denied, save on land owners' terms.

The United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values therefore addresses an earnest appeal to all lovers of freedom and justice to rally to the principle that the land belongs to the people, that all have equal rights in its use, vested interests notwithstanding, and that the public value attaching to land provides the natural revenues of the community. The privileges which make the countryside a close preserve, carve it into great estates, huddle the working population in towns, and exact tribute for the use of all natural resources, must be destroyed. Otherwise the nation can contemplate no reconstruction, no restoration of trade on a peaceful and prosperous basis; but only industrial strife and social disaster involving, perhaps, a worse catastrophe than the war itself.

The British people is a landless people. The limitless opportunities which Nature offers to this nation for the production of all its needs are in private hands. The war has not altered that fact.

The abuses of the private ownership of land will be aggravated by the demobilisation and the search of millions for employment. It will be revealed now as it never was before, that the workers have no alternative under existing conditions but to toil for long hours at low wages. The war for freedom finds the mass of the people still in a state of virtual slavery, subject to exploitation on every hand by want and fear of want, and deprived of all they produce save enough to maintain life. They are compelled to accept these conditions because, bereft of access to land, there is no alternative for them to-day, and there will be no alternative for them until all monopoly over natural resources is abolished.

The land must be declared and made common property by the appropriation of economic rent—the value of land—for public purposes, every holder of land being obliged to pay into the common fund the rent or value of the land he holds, whether it is used or kept idle.

To take the rent of land for public purposes there is no need to create new machinery. The machinery already exists. The machinery is taxation. The method is simple and easy. The valuation of the land must be completed, brought up-to-date, and published, every delay being avoided by compelling the assistance of landholders in the assessment of the value of their land.

Given the valuation of land apart from improvements, the overthrow of land monopoly will follow by imposing national and local taxation on the value of land. In that way every holder of land can be obliged to pay the rent of it to the community, and when he does so access to land on an equal footing will be established. It would not be possible to hold land as a means of obtaining tribute from others, since its rent could be appropriated by no individual. It would profit no one to hold land out of use, or withhold it from its best use, and continue to pay taxes on its value. The barriers to employment would be broken down. Countless opportunities would be made available, the exploiting power of the capitalist based on "the man at the gate" would disappear, wages would rise naturally, and each citizen would secure and enjoy the full product of his labour.

This is no new nor strange doctrine. The Colonies have already made a beginning with this use of taxation for the overthrow of land monopoly and land speculation. In the measure of its application in Australia, New Zealand, the Transvaal and Canada, the Taxation of Land Values has proved both practical in operation and beneficial in effect. The Taxation of Land Values has been brought

to the doors of the British Parliament time and again. Parliament must listen now.

The fundamental mistake has been in treating land as private property. On this false basis modern civilisation rests, and hence, as material progress goes on, is everywhere developing such monstrous inequalities as threaten its very existence. As without land man cannot exist; as his very physical substance, and all he can acquire and make, must be drawn from the land, the ownership of the land of a country is necessarily the ownership of the people of that country—involving their industrial, social and political subjection.

In these days such a condition is fraught with the gravest danger to society. The programmes of "reconstruction" set before the country by the political parties, ignoring as they do the main requirements for justice and freedom, must fail of their purpose. The numerous schemes now being advocated for speeding-up production, providing State assistance for industry and improving social conditions by way of public doles must, as long as land monopoly persists, have one certain and ultimate result, viz., to increase the rent of land. Such schemes will not benefit those who live by labour. They will benefit only those who live on the labour of others.

It is for the electors to make an independent stand for social and industrial emancipation, and to see that the candidates they vote for are firmly pledged to the direct Taxation and Rating of Land Values.

A Special Fund of £25,000 is required by the United Committees for the Taxation of Land Values to Maintain its propaganda and to carry the cause of "Land and Liberty" to an issue. We earnestly appeal to all in favour of the principles of Social Justice and Economic Freedom embodied in this Manifesto to give us now the fullest measure of their financial support and active interest.

THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES.

JOHN PAUL, Secretary,

WM. R. LESTER, Hon. Treasurer.

11, Tothill Street, London, S.W. 1.

December, 1918.

[The above Manifesto has appeared in full as an advertisement in "The Times," the "Daily News," "Manchester Guardian," "Yorkshire Observer," "Birmingham Gazette," "Birmingham Despatch," "Glasgow Herald," "Glasgow Evening News," "Edinburgh Evening News," "Dundee Advertiser," "Aberdeen Free Press," "Northern Echo," "Highland News," "Sheffield Independent," "Westminster Gazette," the "Herald," "Common Sense," and "Nation." Copies of the Manifesto can be obtained from the United Committee, free on application.]