

WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS SAID

Mr Ramsay MacDonald's Declarations Recalled

During the Woolwich By-Election in 1921, when Mr MacDonald was the unsuccessful Labour candidate, he wrote in reply to a question by Mr F. J. McAleer: "I agree that rating should be on the land, not on improvements upon it."—(*Land & Liberty*, April, 1921.)

We have to develop our own country. "Protect our home markets!" What an insignificant phrase that is alongside of the Labour Party's policy: Develop our own country! I wish, my friends, I could meet you oftener on tramp. I could take you into the open fields of any county, or stand with you on any hill-top, and, pointing to the wastes, say: "There is our case!"

Before I went abroad, I was looking at the home market. What did I find? I found evidence of ploughshares under the heather, foundations of ruined houses masked by broom and whin; villages where thousands of decent men of grand physique and magnificent character had been brought up, and which are now deserted—only a few cows and sheep, and beyond them silence. That is our case. . . . We are going to develop our own country, we are going to work it for all it is worth, to bring human labour into touch with God's natural endowments.—(At the Hotel Belgravia, London, 1st November, 1923.)

When a London Railway Company laid its lines through Buckingham and opened out wide fields upon which part of the population of London might spread itself, it put fortune after fortune into the pockets of the landowners and speculators. That was not done by the expenditure of the Railway Company's capital, because the company might have tunnelled Ben Nevis instead of the Finchley Hills and no new values would have been created. It was caused by the fact that there was a community ready to use the capital in the form of a railway and put itself in the power of the landowners who lay in wait for the exodus beyond Finchley and Harrow. The only just repository for such values is the communal exchequer. They are the natural sources from which the cost of government and the development of communal action ought to be met. . . . The community has created the values, and it needs them in order to continue a free existence. But to-day they are handed over to private individuals who are parasitical sharers in the national wealth.—(From Chap. III of *The Socialist Movement*.)

It is from the land that we derive all primary raw materials. It is the soil which the agriculturist needs; it contains the ores of all our vast mining, quarrying, smelting trades; upon it must be built our factories, our warehouses, our houses; it is still, with the exception of our high seas, the foundation of our transport industry. . . . The owner of land is thus in the position of a man who holds the keys of life, and he constantly can exact a maximum toll as his price. He does so. Rent, therefore, tends to absorb every social improvement that can be turned into an advantage in the exchange market.—(In *The Socialist Movement*.)

Come with me for a fortnight and we will start a walk across country, and we will use neither high-roads nor by-roads, but will make a bee-line. We will take a map in our hands and we will go straight, and will defy every piece of landlord's legislation we come across, but we will see our own country. We will see what our country is. We will see its capacity; we will see its neglect; we will see where it is developed, and we will see the use to which thousands and thousands of acres are put. When we have beheld with our eyes, we will lay our heads together and see if there is very much disagreement between us in the proposition that our country's resources are not being properly developed and are not being used in the way that they should be used.—(In the House of Commons, 24th July, 1928.)

Rent is a toll, not a payment for service. By it social

values are transferred from social pools into private pockets, and it becomes the means of vast economic exploitation. Of this injustice, urban land values are pure examples, and the practice of holding up land unpenalized by rates, and of valuation for rating purposes which is much below purchase price, are evidences not only of the political power exercised by landowners, but of the survival to this day of privileges to shirk public responsibilities claimed by them when they had the power, and continued by use and wont. . . . Rent is obviously a common resource. Differences in fertility and value of site must be equalized by rent, but it ought to go to common funds and be spent in the common interest. . . .—(From *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*.)

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Moving a resolution "against Tariff Reform," for the "repeal of indirect taxation" and calling for a "really substantial beginning with the Taxation of Land Values" at the Labour Party Conference, held at Portsmouth on 27th January, 1909, Mr J. Ramsay MacDonald said: "Tax the monopolies, tax the incomes that were received because those who owned them happened to own something which was absolutely essential to be used if production was to go on at all. The landlord did not help them to make things; the landlord stood by and said: 'My friend, if you want to make anything you must pay me to allow you to do it.' That was the nature of monopoly profits. The Labour Party said, that being so, the landlord was not entitled to his income at all."

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We suffer from economic parasitism, and a fine type of that is income derived from unearned increment of land values. A Chancellor of the Exchequer who taxes Land Values will deserve the gratitude of the country. A Labour Chancellor will do this.—(At the Albert Hall, 27th April, 1929, opening his General Election Campaign.)

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The Taxation of Land Values flew in the teeth of every principle in which the Tory Party believed. It was a recognition of the fact that what was socially made should be socially owned.—(London Times report, 2nd May, of speech delivered at Worksop, in the Bassetlaw Division, on 1st May, 1931.)

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If there is to be any partisan manœuvring, then I am not their man.—(Eve of the poll speech, General Election, 1931.)