

LAND-VALUE RATING

The advocates of rating reform ought to feel a debt of gratitude to Mr F. C. R. Douglas, M.A., for the work he has just published,* for it is a brilliant exposition of our policy as a practical proposal, capable of immediate application to this country. The author is a member of the London County Council and is Chairman of the Finance Committee of Battersea Borough Council of which he has been a member for many years. Always keenly interested in questions of rating, he is particularly well qualified to deal with this subject which to most people seems so intricate.

His explanation of the broad details of rating practice and how the present objectionable system could be replaced by one, at once more just and more expedient, will appeal with special force to those concerned with rating administration. It ought to be in the hands of every member of a town council, county council or other administrative body.

But it should appeal to a much wider constituency still. In these days when the annual howl at the enormity of the rates is getting louder and louder, such a book should be widely read and one could wish it were possible to distribute it much more widely than it is likely to be bought at 2s. 6d.

The chapter on "Definitions" is an excellent, concise statement, and should be read again and again by those who wish to grasp the fundamental principles underlying this reform. Correct definition on this subject is so important that we could have wished this part to be even more fully treated. It does seem as if the ordinary man had great difficulty in grasping the restricted, and at the same time extended, meaning of the words "land" and "rent" in the discussion of economic questions. Yet on a correct appreciation of this depends whether a man is going to stand for freedom based on the recognition of natural rights, or the denial of these rights and the subjugation of everyone to the State.

The chapter in which objections are dealt with is admirable. All these, even to our old friends the widows and orphans, are answered in a succinct and devastating manner.

We cannot see how anyone can read this book and fail to be convinced of the justice and wisdom of the land-value system of rating. Certainly this is a book to be treasured by the earnest reformer and one which he can ask any of his friends to read, for it deals pleasantly with a subject which the uninitiated usually avoid as dry.

JAMES F. HAXTON.

THE PATH TO PROSPERITY†

Mr Gilbert M. Tucker has made a notable contribution to Single Tax literature in his book *The Path to Prosperity* which is written in a fresh, vigorous style. For some generations Mr Tucker's family have been conspicuous in the field of agricultural journalism, and he has knowledge at his fingers' ends that others discover only towards the end of a lifetime. His father was Editor of the *County Gentleman*, and Mr Tucker himself, since his graduation from Cornell University, has been associated with that journal, and on the practical side has engaged in farm management. He is a keen follower of Henry George, none the less zealous because his understanding has been clarified by business experience. It is a pleasure to watch him handle facts and figures, clothing them in living tissue, thus giving

* *Land-Value Rating*. The Hogarth Press, 2s. 6d.

† *The Path to Prosperity*. Gilbert M. Tucker. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London. \$2.50.

dynamic force to arguments that otherwise would be dull.

For the reader in Great Britain *The Path to Prosperity* has a valuable story of the N.R.A. efforts of the U.S.A. Government to improve the welfare of the Nation by the destruction of wealth within the States, and by the prevention of wealth entering from other countries. All nations at the present day are engaged in this form of insanity. Government officials are paid high salaries to organize comparative famines throughout the country by means of tariffs, licences, quotas and restrictions of all sorts in order to exalt prices. The average trade unionist is blind to the fact that by these means wages are being steadily reduced, and that owing to lessened effective demand for commodities there is more unemployment except for bureaucrats.

It is in America that the measures of national dishonesty have been so thoroughly carried out in broad daylight, and students of political economy in Great Britain can find in Mr Tucker's book all the details of currency "management," and of how governments plan prosperity. It is not sufficiently realized that governments to-day are only carrying out the choice panaceas of the State-Socialists, and it is easy while we see the mote in our brother's eye to ignore the beam in our own. Some of the tricks of our National Government have been more skilfully executed under the guidance of our modest Mr Walter Elliot than similar acts of the N.R.A. administration. The latter has aroused the opposition of the Supreme Court, but Mr Walter Elliot's name is scarcely known even to the man in the street so cleverly has he escaped hostility. Americans have a secret admiration for the methods of the gangster. They like to be robbed grandly by force, while we prefer the softer methods of the pickpocket.

Mr Tucker sees the connection between the intense growth of the protective spirit in exchange throughout the world, and the renewal of the armament race, and he understands that free trade cannot be fully beneficial without free production. In a book like Mr Tucker's it is unexpected to find him occasionally talking about taxing land instead of the values of land, and he is more concerned than he need be about the privilege of inheritance. The malignant aspects of inheritance will disappear when the value of land is vested in the public.

JOHN E. GRANT.

A RETROSPECT FROM THE YEAR 2000

Many years ago in one of our leading magazines a series of articles appeared in the form of a discussion between John Beattie Crozier and H. G. Wells on the question as to whether a science of society is possible. Mr Crozier argued affirmatively that such a science is not only possible but necessary, and may be built upon a few obvious postulates, such as disciples of Henry George would readily assent to. Mr Wells, on the other hand, maintained that because of the unpredictability of men's actions and the uncertainty attending future changes in the climate of opinion, no principles that may properly be called scientific can be laid down; and that therefore the best we can do is to dream dreams and see visions of what a perfected society ought to resemble, and work our way to such ideals as rapidly as may be possible. If memory serves us aright it was about this time that *A Modern Utopia* was published.

Since that forgotten date the dreamers and visionaries have not been idle, though the spirit of the age has favoured the view supported by Crozier. *News from Nowhere* and *Looking Backward* are still read with avidity,

and the human imagination still insists upon projecting itself into the future and painting pictures of "things as they ought to be." So long, however, as those flights of imagination are along the lines followed in *The Story of My Dictatorship* and by Mr Henry Ware Allen in his little book *Prosperity** we shall have no occasion to quarrel. The sub-title reads "Achieved by democratic steps" and these words at once arrest our attention.

The book takes the form of a series of conversations carried on from day to day between a grandfather of 85 and a grandson of 17 years respectively. These talks are supposed to take place in the year 2000, and the scene is laid in the transfigured City of Chicago which has now become as nearly as possible an Earthly Paradise. Even its physical features have been transformed. The stockyards and packing-house districts have been removed to many miles outside the city's precincts, and the city itself has been rebuilt in strict accordance with the approved principles of town-planning. Not only have æsthetic considerations obviously governed the process of rebuilding, but by the aid of science every building in the city is "air-conditioned" so as to provide uniform temperatures in summer and winter, and smoke has been entirely eliminated. But the chief change in the aspect of the regenerated city is to be found in the altered relations between its citizens. The violent contrasts between wealth and poverty have disappeared. There are no unemployed, no unmerited poverty, no slums; charitable institutions and police offices have been reduced to the skeleton proportions required; the old order has been abolished and the new is on its trial.

This is Mr Allen's dream, and what interests us in it is that he conceives of the great change having taken place solely as the result of a complete turn-over of opinion in the middle of the previous century in favour of the single tax on land values. No paternalism on the part of authorities is assumed. Every step in the process of regeneration has been democratic—spontaneous—in a word, Natural. The curiosity of the boy concerning the bad old days he has heard of, is satisfied by the prolonged explanations of the grandfather who obviously enjoys the telling of his story. The book should be an excellent one for putting in the hands of young people whose imaginations need stimulation.

ALEX MACKENDRICK.

An arbitration was held at Birchington, Kent, on 28th April, to determine the price of a plot of land acquired by Margate Corporation under a compulsory purchase order. The land had a frontage of 150 feet to the Parade and 18 feet to Canute Road. The owner asked £1,500 but the Corporation offered £750. Part of the land was bought in 1927 for £120 and the remainder in 1934 for £475. Reporting the evidence, the *Land Agents' Record*, 9th May, says:

"Col. F. G. Turner, District Valuer, gave it as his opinion that £750 was a fair and reasonable price for the land."

Questioned by the Arbitrator, Col. Turner said there had been a 100 per cent increase in the value of solid land in the area since 1924, but the value of the land would have increased very little since 1934, since there were very few plots available then.

* * *

The City of London has decided to buy a nine hundred acre site at Fairlop, near Ilford, Essex, for £600,000. This is at the rate of £666 an acre.—(*The City Press*, 8th May.)

* *Prosperity*. By Henry Ware Allen. Price \$1.50 net. Published by The Christopher Publishing House, Boston, U.S.A.

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