

TIME AND TIDE

There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune. This is surely much more than a poetic metaphor. It has been verified as a fact repeating itself all through human history. It is part of the life-experience of individual men. It is evidence of an all-embracing law of rhythm—ebb and flow, systole and diastole, inbreathing and outbreathing—a law which seems to govern all the ceaseless changes in things inanimate and animate including the mind of man, and the sum-total of which we designate by the word Nature. Practical wisdom has always been found to lie in a timely adapting of our movements to this swing of events and in compelling that mysterious law to serve our ends. Had our race been endowed at the beginning of its career with sufficient wisdom to "take it at its flood," this constantly-recurring high-tide in our affairs might have brought us incalculable benefits. But, to complete the classical quotation—*Omitted, all the voyage of our life is bound in shallows and in miseries.* The most cursory retrospective survey of the centuries behind us reveals the melancholy fact that our record is one of a constantly-repeated "missing of the tide."

There are many indications that we are approaching a position in our National and International relationships analogous to the idea of the flood-tide. There is ample evidence that the world is weary of "the shallows and miseries" in which it has been floundering. The "stand-pat" attitude of the apologists of the past is steadily weakening. Enlightened opinion as to the true cause of our miseries is increasing in volume and force, notwithstanding that it has still to contend with much error and wilful misunderstanding. If it be true that the times are out of joint as never before, it is equally true that we are more vividly conscious not only of that fact, but of the utter futility of the methods that are being employed to remedy those dislocations and maladjustments. Further, and despite all appearances to the contrary, we know that the moral sense of the whole world condemns both the internal economy of the separate nations and the external relations of the nations to each other. And, finally, even the sense of humour comes to the reinforcement of this volume of opinion in regarding the present alignment of economic and other social forces as grotesque, fantastic and absurd. With such a consensus of feeling and opinion are we not justified in likening it to a high or rising tide which, if utilized wisely and cautiously, will float us off the shoals and rocks on which we are threatened with destruction.

One of the most significant indications of this rising tide of public opinion is in the adoption by the London

on the incidence of local rates, by which it has placed itself in the forefront of the municipal agitation for the land value policy.

In recent years more than 230 British local authorities have passed resolutions calling for this reform and urging the necessary legislation. Our Governments have hitherto turned deaf ears to these requests, but with London now at the head of the movement public opinion cannot be ignored indefinitely. For London stands as representative of the cities and citizens of the Empire not only in virtue of its size but because of its importance as a centre of finance, industry, science, literature and culture generally. We may therefore hazard the suggestion that a Government that would "turn down" so reasonable a request by so august a body, would imperil its own existence.

But the great Public whose opinion has, we believe, been focussed or brought to a point by the resolution of the L.C.C., must always be reminded that the legislation asked for is not to be thought of as merely a simpler and better way of raising public income. It is that, indeed, but very much more. When the legislation is granted it will mark the beginning though only the beginning, of a practical reform the full fruits of which only the imagination can deal with. It will re-direct into their normal channels the flow of those economic forces and tendencies which have become deflected and distorted as a result of the existing system of taxation. It must never be forgotten that the taxation of land values means the untaxing of labour values, with a resultant fall in the cost of commodities and a consequent liberation to that extent, of purchasing power. It means also the opening-up of every opportunity for self-employment that has hitherto been kept closed through the lack of a tax upon its value. It means, indeed, the liberation of all human effort from the economic shackles that now hamper it and limit its productiveness. In its final results we believe it means the abolition of unemployment and poverty, and the establishment of an upward tendency in the remuneration of all honest toil whether of head or hand—a tendency that shall be natural, spontaneous and unforced. We claim, indeed, that by this simple method of removing an injustice and restoring to the people their equal rights to the land and its rental value, we shall have heard the last of that ghastly paradox "Poverty amidst Plenty."

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