

maintain that private persons are entitled to confiscate any portion of it?

It is this unsettled question that has given rise to the Labour party, with its claim that the rights of labour should be its primary concern and that without it nothing would be done by the other parties to put the worker on his feet. And just as the Labour party assumes proportions and takes hold of government, another party is evolved with a more daring and reactionary programme. It must be met and answered, or worse will follow. Not one man of standing in politics dare utter the word that would make clear beyond peradventure that land monopoly stands athwart the people and their economic emancipation. Our politicians are free to declare once in a while in a tentative way that they favour the Taxation of Land Values, but they cannot agree that the policy contains within itself the solution of the unemployed problem. They refuse to allow nature, or natural opportunity to take part in the argument, and continue to talk as if nothing could be done outside the limits of their own evolution and narrow vision. Their question seems to be: how can we make the most of the country and the people? When they learn to put it the other way about, and ask: how can the people make the most of the country? they should get an encouraging glimpse of the realities of the case and some much needed guidance in democratic thought and philosophy.

It is a waste of time, and so much vexation of spirit, to indulge in the manufacture of pettifogging schemes that do nothing, and lead nowhere. The teaching of Adam Smith, Richard Cobden, Henry George and Campbell-Bannerman has not been in vain. The Taxation of Land Values with all that it stands for in relation to free trade, housing, employment and the betterment of the lot of the people is the alternative positive policy to either negation or reaction.

J. P.

## A FURTHER STEP IN DENMARK

The Danish Socialist Government, which took office as the result of the general election on 11th April, included the Taxation of Land Values in its declared policy. In *LAND & LIBERTY* of July last we reported that the Government intended to introduce legislation in the autumn, and we are now glad to be able to announce satisfactory action taken in fulfilment of these pledges. A Bill was introduced in the Lower House on 25th November by Mr. C. N. Hauge, Minister of Home Affairs, with provisions for a comprehensive reform of the system of local taxation in Denmark. The Bill takes a further step, and in a straightforward direction, in the levy of taxation on the value of land apart from improvements, with the concurrent remission of taxes on industry and production. The intricacies of Danish local taxation are a matter of special study in view of the many sources of revenue involved and the peculiar incidence in a number of cases. The intention of the Bill is that in future there will be three main sources; the real estate tax, the personal tax on incomes and fortunes, and what is called the "old tax," which will be a consolidation of a number of previous burdens and charges.

In principle the Bill imposes the local real estate tax on the value of land apart from improvements and permits, within limits, the replacement of the other taxes by a land value tax. The local authorities are required to levy a given minimum tax on land values and may if they so decide levy a higher tax up to a given maximum. These limits in the towns are 7½ per 1,000 minimum, and 15 per 1,000 maximum, the equivalent respectively of 1·8d. and 3·6d. in the £ of selling value. The local authorities are free to exercise their option as stated, subject to the condition that during four successive periods covering the next 14 years the amount of land value tax levied on a given property shall not be more than 5 per 1,000, 7 per 1,000, 9 per 1,000 and 12 per 1,000 of the established assessed value of land *plus* improvements.

As to the taxes in the counties and parishes, the limits provided for in the Bill are not stated in definite figures, but the object is that a large part of the real estate tax in the country shall fall on land value, and the local authorities can decide to increase the land value tax by taking less revenue from the other taxes, exercising in that respect a much wider option than the town authorities can exercise.

There are sundry other provisions such as the exemption of new houses from taxation, and the option given to local authorities to impose also an annual supplementary tax on all increases in the value of land between one general valuation and another.

We are not able at the moment to give more than a hurried and inadequate outline of the Bill. Mr. Berthelsen, to whom we are indebted for a copy of the text, writes to say it is a triumph for the Danish movement, and we agree. The mandatory provisions in the Bill make the application of the principle, quite an encouraging instalment of it, universal over the whole country. The optional provisions enable the local authorities to extend the principle in obedience to public opinion in its favour—and there are towns and communities in Denmark that will carry the policy as far as the law will allow. Many local authorities, chief among them Copenhagen, have continued year by year to petition Parliament for just the kind of legislation that has been introduced.

Denmark with its previous steps in our direction has encouraged great hopes. The national tax on land value imposed by the Act of 1922 secured periodic valuation in 1924, 1927 and thereafter every fifth year. It made possible the progressive development contemplated in the new Bill which further applies the just principles of taxation through a recognition of the rights of the people to the land and to its communal value.

A. W. M.

"Grant that we behave like men of an enlightened age and not fossils belonging to a far-gone geological era, and grant that we get ourselves taxed on land values alone and our buildings and improvements set free altogether from taxation, and soon the farmer will find himself much better off than he is to-day, and finally blessing the pioneers whom he is at the moment mainly bent upon criticizing."—*T. Atholl Robertson, in an article "A New Bill for Farmers" in the NINETEENTH CENTURY, November.*