

jeeringly points to the Communism and the Dictatorship already usurping the place of ordered progress.

In origin, character and incidence the problems facing society are economic and not political, and unless, and until, this truth is recognized the mere exercise of voting strength, however it may be directed, will not alter the situation. Poverty cannot be financed out of the way so long as the economic cause of it is at work. There is manifestly no solution in subsidies, or evil housing conditions, unemployment and bad trade would by this time have shown signs of improvement. The poverty that springs from a denial of the right to work for a living may be mitigated by the make-shift of grants-in-aid; but if the source of the disorder is to go unchallenged, what hope is there of any escape from the prevailing and growing discontent? The unrest and the suspicion that are engendered in economic inequality create the friction that keeps the boat from going forward.

The World Economic Conference, the international bankers, and the International Chamber of Commerce have had their conversations on the use and the abuse of the tariff walls of Europe. These barriers to Economic Democracy have been surveyed and condemned by these bodies but so far nothing has happened; yet, as one of the chiefs of this halting crusade said to the members of the Paris Chamber of Commerce, last month: "With trade and commerce unshackled, Europe would rise up from the disasters of the great war more powerful and prosperous than she had ever been." This is the free trade principle and in the hands of our free traders, limited, it is impaled on walls that in the opinion of the bankers are slowly strangling Europe. There is no immediate solution, we are told, except what is to be found in time and patience; fatalism speaks for leadership and the legal obstacles to general prosperity are tolerated in the interest of established greed and indolence.

There is an immediate solution. It has been brought before the various bodies named above by the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, only to be contemptuously cast aside as a policy that could have no countenance from them. Evidently our conventional free traders want a cure that will hurt nobody's feelings nor lessen the pressure of the monopoly that holds trade and commerce to ransom. Let us not delude ourselves. In the stream of events to-day the principle embraced in the right to economic freedom is about as far removed from the platform of organized privilege as the right to vote was a century ago. But thought is on the wing, and the idea that the bounties of the Creator must continue to be hired out for private gain is seen to be slipping from its moorings into the open sea of opinion, not so much for the purpose of abstract argument, but rather for judgment as a habit of thought that is at variance with the moral law of progress.

Political democracy, if it is to be made safe for the world, must express itself in economic freedom; in bondage to the vested interests nothing but chaos and ill-will can come of its efficiency. It

seems a hard lesson to learn but an unjust land system can only induce an inequitable distribution of wealth and power, and what is wanting in our statesmanship is the simple recognition of this elementary truth. The value or rent of land is a communal value and its confiscation by private persons and classes means the enrichment of them and the corresponding impoverishment of the community. No industrial equipment, no human ingenuity, can better the condition of things while land monopoly and land speculation exist to mop up the surplus, and to force millions of citizens to search in vain for employment.

There is no limit to the beneficence of nature, and the crime of poverty lies with the institution that in all countries narrows the field of human endeavour. The land value principle and policy stands for the fullest measure of freedom to produce as well as to exchange goods and services, and it can be put into operation at once, in all lands. It will reveal to each country a knowledge of its own economic and financial resources, and incidentally show the folly of maintaining expensive and irritating barriers to outside trade. The land value policy will bring people of all nations together in international amity and peace. It is the essential first step to Economic Democracy and without it there is nothing for society but the law of the jungle.

J. P.

THE LIBERAL INDUSTRIAL INQUIRY

A book of 498 pages dealing with "Britain's Industrial Future" was recently issued as a report of a committee named "The Liberal Industrial Inquiry." The recommendations have been submitted to a special Liberal Convention held in London on 27th to 29th March, and the general scheme of things has been approved by that gathering. It appears that industry is to be managed and instructed by super-men, and shown its shortcomings with the help of statistics and accountants. The book is a veritable catalogue of solutions "that cannot be easy or simple," outlining legislation that would take generations of Parliaments to accomplish—and near the end, on a solitary page, some few words are said about the "rating of site values," proposing to transfer to the site value "a fair share of the rates now imposed upon the composite value of the land and the buildings which it carries." This transfer, however, of the obscure "fair share" is to take place only after the local rate-burden itself has been considerably reduced by relief provided out of the National Exchequer at the expense of the general taxpayer. In effect, the share of the public revenue obtainable by this site value rating, that has to wait upon the new burdens imposed on business or trade by the Treasury, would be limited indeed.

As to the bulk of this bulky document, we must let some reflections stand over. It would be a weary task to look at, much less examine, all those projects that have so little relation to the facts of the case—that industry is not free; that now, as always, before the war came to afflict Europe and the world, or cause disturbance in foreign markets, "every permanent improvement of the soil," as the late Professor Thorold Rogers wrote, "every railway and road, every bettering of the general condition of society, every facility given for production, every stimulus applied to consumption, raises rent; the landowner sleeps but thrives; he alone,

among all the recipients in the distribution of products, owes everything to the labour of others, contributes nothing of his own." How, then, if this is true, can there be any hope of an industrial future for the working people of this or any country from new business efficiency, organization of public boards, economic general staffs, commissions to examine Trade Union law, joint industrial councils, ambitious (and costly) plans of national development, and all else for which new committees and ministries are to be established?

Every one of those schemes, like the abortive post-war reconstruction plans, would be strangled at its birth, or if it lived, and deserved to live, the benefit would go to that dominant interest of which Thorold Rogers speaks. But deaf to all the experience of the past, the prophets of the industrial future go on building their castles in the sand.

There is more than futility in the report. Two concrete proposals are put forward that every Liberal worthy of the name must repudiate, although both have been endorsed by the organized convention in London. One is that receivers of mineral royalties should be compensated in bonds issued by the Treasury. The gift would amount to £70,000,000 according to the estimate made in *Coal and Power*, a document moulded in the same foundry as the report under review, and adopted by the Party to the undoing of many sweeping radical resolutions that in the past have declared the Party's aims and intentions to be in a different direction.

The coal trade is in the throes of a great crisis; tens of thousands of miners are out of work; they are denied access to the natural resources where coal could be produced in plenty if monopolists did not stand in the way, protected by the law in their claim that the coal is private property; every ton of coal produced must pay its toll to parasitic interests whether the mine makes a profit or a loss. The colliery may offer less than a living wage and the worker may be for days or weeks on the dole or be helped out by the Guardians; it does not matter. The royalty must be paid to the self-styled owner of the coal, even if it comes indirectly out of unemployment insurance funds and the poor box. The royalty is a rent which should swell the public revenue and take the place of taxes on trade and enterprise. But the Liberal reporters would not have it so; they would perpetuate this filling of private pockets with public funds; they would collect taxes from all the rest of the people for an indefinite time to provide the interest on the Treasury Bonds and make landowners privileged pensioners on the industry. How hollow is all the expert-looking stuff about the "reform of the national accounts," coming from people who appear not to care a whit about the morality of the transactions! Let the books at the Treasury be intelligible, is the plaint; then industry will flourish. Curiosity will be satisfied and all will be well when "payments to the mineral royalty account" are shown properly balanced by equal sums raised no matter how from the taxpayers. Such is the new Liberalism undisguised and unashamed.

The other concrete proposal of the Liberal Industrial Inquiry is that local taxation should be reduced in bulk by transferring more of the cost of certain services to the Treasury, apart from the money now paid out to the local authorities in subventions and grants-in-aid, which is already more than £80,000,000 a year. The additional sum thus to be taken annually from the taxpayer instead of from the ratepayer is estimated at £55,000,000. Nothing is said of the new taxes it would be necessary to levy for the purpose, excepting that the expenditure on roads should be reconsidered with a view to throwing a much larger proportion than at present on an augmented road fund—which simply

means that in this section of the Liberal camp it is considered right to maintain and increase the taxes on transport, taxes that should be swept away altogether by a sane people who know that free communication is the essence of civilized life. There is the saving clause that in addition to the duties on vehicles there should be "betterment" taxes to appropriate "part of that increase in site values of the land adjoining these roads, which follows automatically from their development"—a halting recognition of the fact that roads create land values, but without the vision that the benefit of the roads and of safe and speedy traffic upon them is reflected in land value at the stopping places as much as along the frontage, and that the advantage goes to the owners of sites in every city, town, village and parish. Without the service of those arteries no business could be done; no workshop, farm or factory could exist. The betterment, so-called, cannot be isolated on this or that section of a road. The idea is but a concession to a thought; in this report it has neither shape nor substance. In any case how much would the tax on betterment provide toward the £55,000,000 that is wanted annually for the projects in hand?

These projects include the taking over by the State of the cost of poor relief, and subventions generally for payment of what are called local administrative services, in the belief that the general principle of grants-in-aid of local taxation "have been a proved success," and ought to be greatly extended. In fact, the proposal trades on the misdirected outcry about "the high burden of rates" which is now moving the Conservative Government to take action "when it has the money." The outcry is misdirected because it implies that local sources of revenue are dried up, because it renounces the right of the community in every district to its public revenue abounding in the value of land, and because it is not turned against the iniquity of placing any burden at all on buildings and improvements. It is significant to see people calling themselves Liberals blundering themselves into such a false position. Consider the values that escape local taxation just because rates are levied on the use to which land is put; the "golden mile" of land value that is to be found in the midst of every city; the exemption now given to the under-used land and to that speculative belt called "agricultural" and rated as such that surrounds every hard-pressed municipality. Herein is to be found the cause of industrial depression, the inability to expand against the rings of land monopoly or make any improvement that is not penalized by increased rates duly assessed and imposed. Herein lies the reason for the stoppage of production and the resulting poverty that segregates itself in the distressed areas and the slums, condemned largely to find its own poor relief and raise higher the taxation so harmfully thrown upon the very industries that might give employment.

A subvention from the Treasury in aid of local taxation is like the rain "that falleth on the just and the unjust alike." It might give temporary relief to harassed householders and tradespeople who are groaning under the burden; but it also would be an immediate and permanent gift to the rent receiver and to the interests that lie in wait for any and every advantage that will raise the price of land. The Liberal Industrial Inquiry has to admit this is so, with the allowance that: "Steps might be necessary to secure that the various reliefs recommended should accrue to the occupier and not to the landlord; in the long run the introduction of the principle of rating site values should prove an important safeguard; but to meet the immediate problem it would be necessary to make certain express provisions." No "might be" will suffice. What effective provisions against the endowment of the landlord are conceivable

except the land value policy? And what sincerity can be credited to those who would relegate local site value rating to the last stage of the process after every obstacle has been put in the way of its adoption?

The Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer is looking round for the money to do precisely what the Liberal Industrial Report in principle recommends should be done. The territorial landlords are expecting their share of the plunder in the removal of all rates from agricultural land. The proposals now put forward in the name of the Liberal Party justify their expectation. Yet in one of his last speeches in the House of Commons the late Lord Oxford, the Liberal leader, opposing the Agricultural Rates Bill on 11th March, 1923, said:—

This is a direct and absolute subsidy. It goes without any possibility of interception straight into the pocket of the agricultural landlord. . . . I regard this as a flagrant violation of the rights of a taxpayer in the interests of a small and limited class

from which I cannot see that anybody has pointed out that any real advantage is likely to accrue to the community at large.

No one can gainsay this judgment of the case nor dispute its general application. It is reported that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has the prospect of receiving from French taxpayers £8,000,000 in interest on war loan to France. That windfall would give him the wherewithal to comply with the demands of the National Farmers' Union; and like all moneys taken for such purpose in the past from the British taxpayers, this also would go straight into the pocket of the British landlords. And every subvention that in effect takes a burden off the land, call it relief of rates or by any name, will go in the same direction. It is to commit social suicide by giving the rein to land speculation which, unchecked, will drag the State to sure and certain destruction.

A. W. M.

TOTTENHAM, MIDDLESEX

Land Prices and Rateable Values

We are indebted to the Treasurer of the Tottenham Urban District Council for a copy of the striking tabular statement as to the prices paid for land acquired by the Tottenham Council during the past 25 years. A parallel column shows the figure at which the parcels of land or the properties were rated previous to purchase. The statement was obtained by instructions given to the Finance Committee on 22nd July last and was reported to the Council on 21st February.

Tottenham is in Middlesex. Its population is 149,200 and the rates are 19s. in the £, a grievous burden on buildings and improvements but never touching the valuable land held idle or in speculation.

The table is given below with a column we have added comparing the purchase price with the previous rateable value.

In the aggregate 73 parcels or properties have been acquired at a total purchase price of £90,016. Of these properties 57 had not been valued separately and 16 had been valued at an annual rateable value of £473. The total price was equivalent to 190 years' purchase of the rateable value.

Property Purchased	Aggregate Purchase Price	Particulars of Rateable Value before Purchase	Price as number of years' purchase of rateable value
Marshes, Downhills Park extension, Belmont Recreation Ground, Land at Downhills.	£ 24,174	Three Parcels not rated or not rated separately. Three Parcels rated at £113 in all.	£ 214
Cedar Cottage (Central Library Extension) and Cissbury Road Library Site.	2,300	Cedar Cottage £35. Other not rated.	66
Bruce Grove, Hale, and Lordship Lane Convenience Sites.	860	Not rated.	Infinite
Land for Housing Estates at White Hart Lane and Bromley Road.	24,033	Three Parcels not rated. Remainder rated £100.	240
Land for Permanent Allotments.	4,612	One Parcel not rated separately.	200
Various forecourts and Land for Street Improvement and Depots.	10,029	Two Properties rated £23.	119
School Sites and Playing Fields.	24,008	Coombes Croft House rated £84. None of the others rated separately.	203
		Ten Parcels not rated, or not rated separately. Two Properties rated £118.	

At the meeting of the Middlesex County Council on 26th January reference was made to the price of £4,000 being asked for two acres of land for a site for a secondary school at Wembley. The matter had been referred back to the Education Committee and it was stated that this land, for which £1,000 an acre was demanded from the Council, had been bought not long since at £90 an acre.—*Wood Green Weekly Sentinel*.

do not intend to make them public, as speculators at once try to buy the land and put an artificial price upon it. It is stated that much land that could be bought for £5 an acre to-day would cost those who wished to save it from falling into the hands of builders £50 an acre if the speculators got to hear of it.—*Daily News*, 27th February, 1928.

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The Society of Sussex Downsmen is launching a special appeal for funds to enable the society to put down a deposit immediately any downland comes into the market. The society points out that many of the most famous beauty spots in Sussex are likely soon to be put up for sale. They have a full list of these, but

By ten votes to five, the Town Council of Clydebank agreed to drop negotiations for the acquisition of 68 acres of land at North-East Boquhanran, which was offered at £325 per acre, for a housing scheme. The Council later unanimously agreed to purchase 61 acres of land on Parkhall, which is close by, at £140 per acre.—*Glasgow Herald*, 18th February.