

## LAND VALUES

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### "OUR POLICY"

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—*Henry George.*

### THE REAL DANGER AHEAD

He believed that prices and costs would come down much more rapidly after the war than most people imagined, but he saw stormy days ahead. The principal dangers were: (1) The difficulty of deflating currency and credit without destroying confidence; (2) the tendency to maintain Government control, with all its deadening effect on enterprise; (3) an attempt to place in the hands of some international authority the task of dividing up the raw materials of the world among all competing industries. The international jealousies engendered by such a system would be quite sufficient to kill any League of Nations they might have hoped to form; (4) Labour unrest, due to false hopes held out of a new heaven and a new earth after the war. The disillusionment would be very bitter when it came.—*Sir A. Booth presiding on July 17 at the annual meeting in Liverpool of the Cunard Steamship Co., Ltd.*

Those who would reconstruct the society of the United Kingdom after the war, or of Europe and the world for that matter, are face to face with this major problem of unrequited labour, of labour seeking the opportunity to produce and enjoy its earnings without toll or tribute. Labour unrest will not arise so much from false hopes as from the knowledge that these opportunities are being withheld and that work is being done only to enrich those who take no part in industry. The solution of this problem, the freeing from monopoly and privilege of all the opportunities to production that Nature provides, predisposes the solution of all other problems, financial and commercial, vast as these are. There is, for instance, the seven thou-

sand million pound debt whose annual burden of many hundred millions menaces the safety and security of every industry in the country, unless taxation is fundamentally reformed. And its load will become all the greater when prices fall, as they are bound to do, as labour is diverted to producing goods to pay for goods which in the past four years have so largely been paid for with paper money and war-loan scrip. The liquidation of the debt as speedily as possible will test the courage of the future Chancellor of the Exchequer determined to overcome the powerful interests which will strenuously oppose any idea that everyone shall subscribe to the cost of the war in proportion to his fortune. We leave that task, meanwhile, to him.

But even if the debt did not exist at all, and if there were no changes in money values to complicate the issue, the major problem would still arise. Whether there will be prosperity or depression will depend on other causes. The economic forces that will operate when war gives way to peace will have precisely the same effect as a sudden incursion of labour and capital into a new market seeking employment. Millions of men, accustomed to be fed, clothed and housed by the State or by those from whom the State has borrowed, will have to begin at once the provision of their own needs. The means of transport and numerous other forms of capital, which had been withdrawn from serving productive industry, will be placed again at its disposal. The entry of this additional labour and capital, with the enormously increased facilities for production they will bring, will have one certain and abiding effect. They will increase the value of land; the success in obtaining employment, which does not simply displace others, will depend entirely on the terms on which access to land is available. This is admitted and acknowledged by land-owners themselves. It has been so after every war. The defenders of the land return to find the land-owners' price raised against them. It has been so wherever population has grown and wherever invention and discovery have added to productive power. Unless radical steps are taken to deal with land monopoly, speculation in land will intervene with disastrous effects on industry and employment.

Already we see the process going on. The Corn Production Act is a weapon to forestall the equal right of all to the use of land. Schemes of land settlement have been rendered abortive. Failure is written across every Act of Parliament to obtain ground for small-holders and for discharged soldiers and sailors whose destiny at present seems to be the picking up of any odd jobs they can find in the cities. Housing reformers, of that school which

has so obstinately held the opinion that only "money" was required to build houses, have at last made the discovery that ground is essential; and in conference after conference, held since the Government promised the housing grants, have passed resolutions calling for emergency legislation to cheapen the price of land. The Labour Housing Association, for the first time in its history, only last month put a tax on site values in its programme with that end in view. It wanted only a few examples, such as several local authorities have had, to teach the lesson that the grants will not build houses but will make land dearer. In Newton, for instance, it was reported that at the meeting of the Urban Council, on July 16, the Earl of Devon wanted £3,000 for a site of 25 acres whose assessment was not more than 10s. per acre. "It was useless to negotiate further."

Such is the state of affairs now, and it will be exaggerated tenfold and a hundredfold when the great return to industry takes place. Stormy days are indeed ahead if monopoly remains in possession. The elemental issue will be the rights of the people versus monopoly attempting to make the country and its trade a close preserve. There are, besides the inevitable workings of economic forces, dangerous political forces now gathering strength to plunge the country back into the worst reaction, the direct descendants of those which so successfully robbed and ruined the country after the Napoleonic Wars. Protection raises its head in ever-growing agitation, coupled with "anti-dumping" legislation, the cornering of raw materials, Government encouragement of manufacturing combines free from control, Imperial Preference and the rest; and the demand is made that the provisions of the Corn Production Act shall be made permanent instead of temporary, to be followed by a Land Purchase Act on the lines of Mr. Jesse Collings's Bill, while any idea of fair rent and fixity of tenure is rejected. Almost official sanction is given to these proposals by the fact that they are made by duly appointed Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee and the Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy. They can be countered, and certainly will be, by political action. But we are less concerned about their importance or about the domestic and international developments that Sir A. Booth rightly fears, than we are about what is much more fundamental to social well-being and progress: the emancipation of industry from land monopoly. We might stave off the attack on Free Trade, we might carry Free Trade further and build a lasting League of Nations on its foundations, we might discharge the debt and all its incidents. But what would all that count for if nothing had been done to settle the land question?

A. W. M.

If the Protectionist issue, under the guise of Colonial Preference, is to be raised at the General Election, as would appear from Mr. Long's statement that a policy on these lines has been settled by the Cabinet, the prospect of an agreed election recedes from view. In the absence of a compact between political parties a General Election may do infinite mischief in impairing national unity at a critical stage in the war. Are not our Protectionists in their zeal to exploit patriotic emotions for tariff-mongering here and now forgetting America and President Wilson?—Daily Papers, July 26.

### FREE TRADE

On every sea, in every port,  
Our British flag's unfurled;  
Our ships, in countless thousands,  
Go beating 'round the world.  
They sell our goods o'er all the earth,  
In every shop and stall;  
And they say "These are English,"  
And Free Trade has done it all.

There are men so short of vision,  
There are men so full of greed,  
They would sell their souls for ever,  
Could their passing plans succeed;  
They would put a price on Paradise,  
And, as the coin was told,  
Would find their present heaven  
In the chinking of the gold.

So they cry: "Free Trade's a failure!"  
And would copy other lands,  
Which have tried in vain to meet us  
With the labour of their hands;  
The nations we have driven  
From the fair and open field,  
To prey on their own populace,  
Behind Protection's shield.

Who can call Free Trade a failure,  
But the blind that lead the blind,  
God send us many failures more  
Of such another kind.  
It's a failure that has stood a test  
Two generations long:  
It's a failure that succeeded,  
And has made us rich and strong.

It has flourished like a British oak;  
Its top the heavens keep,  
It has strengthened with a hundred storms;  
Its roots have stricken deep;  
It has been our pride and profit,  
From the morning of its birth;  
It has grown, until our commerce  
Has o'ershadowed all the earth.

On every sea, in every port,  
Our merchant flag's unfurled;  
Our ships, in countless thousands,  
Go beating round the world.  
They sell our goods o'er all the earth,  
In every shop and stall;  
They just say: "These are English,"  
And Free Trade has done it all.

BERTRAND SHADWELL.