

## LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

By Capt A. R. McDougal

In the Glasgow *Forward* Capt McDougal has been in controversy with Mr Joe Duncan, the Secretary of the Scottish Farm Servants Union, who reviewed the pamphlet *The Real Cause of Agricultural Distress\** and in opposition to the author had pleaded for "land nationalization." Capt McDougal's reply was in the *Forward* of 22nd May, from which we take the following extract. It was entitled:

### Who should Own the Land?

Mr Duncan asks why I have not challenged the prevailing assumption *re* the existence of Distress and what it means. If he will look at page 16 he will see that I say: "There is a sufficient income from farming to yield to all parties concerned a reasonable return, if fairly divided in proportion for services rendered."

#### STATE AS LANDLORD

Briefly, the whole tenor of my pamphlet is to the effect that the distress of farmers and workers is real enough, but that it is not due to low prices but to *high rents out of all proportion to the low prices.*

The landlord and tenant system means, whether the State or an individual is the landlord, that the land and all its equipment of buildings, drains, fences, plantations, etc., belong to the landlord and must be supplied and maintained by him.

The folly of such a system is that it is the occupier alone who really knows what is wanted and who can supply it best and cheapest, and whose farming improvements are always thwarted by fear of increased rent or loss of such compensation as the law may allow him to claim. The tenant's needs for improvements are almost always answered with a "No" and the little done is never satisfactory.

I cannot see that the State would be better.

Purely as a farmer, wishing to see the land developed to its best, I am against any landlord system at all, but favour the occupying ownership, *duly controlled and safeguarded.*

#### CONTROL

My attitude is certainly that the farmer should be an occupying owner with *full control over all his means of production*, but further the State should exercise control over him by:—

- (a) Making mortgaging of land illegal;
- (b) Making a good wage, a good house, good conditions of labour first charges on the land;
- (c) Taxing Land Values;
- (d) Taking land for public purposes at its agricultural value or at the value at which it is assessed for the Land Values Tax;
- (e) Seeing he does not waste and misuse his land.

These would prevent the occupying owners throttling the community.

#### OTHER COUNTRIES

The occupying owners in other countries are badly off because of *unlimited mortgaging*, which is as bad as *rack-renting*.

I still maintain that excessive rent and bad tenure conditions are the real cause of our distress, and I cannot understand how Mr Duncan evades the rent issue or why he does so.

If the land were nationalized to-morrow and the State were landlord, distress would still continue unless *rents were halved.*

\* By Capt A. R. McDougal, price 6d. from our offices.

If land is nationalized the only sane policy is to make agriculture a State service with all its staff civil servants.

That is an arguable policy.

For the State merely to become landlord is a foolish, futile policy, which will leave untouched most of the fundamental evils of landlordism.

As a practical man, I think that the best results will be obtained from a system of controlled occupying ownership as outlined above.

Anyway, no worse system than the present one of landlord and tenant could be devised.

The Socialist Party (Capt McDougal is writing to readers of the *Forward*) would be well advised to consider in all its implications as to whether (a) the workers and farmers would be better off; (b) the land would be better and more humanely developed; (c) enterprise and ability would be encouraged and not thwarted by either of the following systems:—

1. Controlled occupying ownership accompanied by taxation of Land Values as outlined;
2. Nationalization of land followed by the State acting as landlord and letting farms under the same landlord and tenant system as now; and
3. Nationalization with the land farmed by the State.

Finally, the terms of nationalization must be more clearly defined.

As at present stated, it would appear that the State would have to pay the landowners a price *including* the capitalized value of derating, subsidies, etc. Surely this is wrong?

Why should the public be taxed to buy back its own gifts?

## LIBERAL PARTY CONFERENCE

The first annual assembly of the reorganized Liberal Party was held at Buxton, on 28th and 29th May.

On a resolution dealing with the Distressed Areas, Miss Alison Garland, on behalf of the Hendon Association, moved the addition of the following clause: "The Liberal policy of taxation of land values will greatly facilitate the carrying out of these plans." The taxation of land values, Miss Garland said (*Manchester Guardian* report), would lower the rates. The factories which were springing up around London ought to be springing up in the distressed areas, but in some of the distressed areas the rates exceeded 20s. in the pound, while in some of the districts round London they were no more than 7s. 9d. to 9s. in the pound. If land value were taxed land would come into the market much more readily, and it would have to be used. A tremendous source of revenue was being neglected. Land in the neighbourhood of London which was once worth no more than £100 per acre was now worth £1,000 per acre, entirely because of the activity and enterprise of the community. Fabulous private fortunes were being made in this way. She was informed that there was land in Liverpool which had reached the value of £320 per square yard and that the rating of land values in that city would bring down the rates by 4s. in the pound.

Mr Atholl Robertson, for the Finchley Association, seconded the amendment.

Scottish Liberals asked for the addition of words which would de-rate houses, and this was agreed to by the mover of the amendment.

The resolution with these additions was adopted.

LAND-VALUE RATING. Theory and Practice. By F. C. R. Douglas, L.C.C. Cloth, 2s. 6d.

THE TRUE NATIONAL DIVIDEND. The Pros and Cons of Social Credit. By W. R. LESTER, M.A. 3d.