

such as food, houses and coal. Poverty is a lack of wealth.

There is only one of two possible reasons for unemployment and poverty: either there is not enough land, or else men are prevented from producing the things they want. In our own country there are many millions of acres of land lying idle or misused which are suitable for the production of food, buildings and minerals—upon which all the other industries depend—but legal barriers shut out the idle men from Nature's Storehouse. They can be broken down by the Taxation and Rating of Land Values. When that has been done and men are free, individually or co-operatively, to produce and enjoy all things necessary for their sustenance and comfort, the horrors of man-made poverty will disappear. * * *

This able article by Mr Weller has appeared in the *Southport Guardian*, the *Stockport Express*, the *Clitheroe Advertiser*, the *Bacup Times*, the *Middleton Guardian*, the *Cotton Factory Times*, and the *Warrington Examiner*. It ought to be issued in leaflet form.

UNEMPLOYMENT

By Wm. Noble

(From a letter in the *Stockport Times*, 23rd August)

The Boards of Guardians have an impossible task. Poverty and unemployment are made by our unjust laws and no Guardians can cure those evils. If the Poor Laws of this country were administered by the Archangel Gabriel and Sir Galahad, they would be a disgrace to us—not because our Poor Laws are not better than those of most countries, but because the very phrase "the poor" connotes injustice.

My critic asks five questions. To take them seriatim:—

1. What should be the aim of each individual in this world?

Answer: Justice; and the first essential of justice is that each shall demand for all access on equal terms to the storehouse of nature.

2. How should the country be governed?

Answer: Justly; and that is impossible so long as the value of land, which is created by the community as a whole, is not taken for communal needs, but is allowed to go into private pockets.

3. Under what conditions should commerce and industry be carried on?

Answer: Just conditions; and just conditions are impossible where land is treated as private property, for there will be found idle men, some forced to sell their labour for bare subsistence and others not able to do even that, but having to exist on poor relief.

4. How should the selfishness of mankind be controlled or eradicated?

Answer: By justice. When human beings sit down to a well-filled table, there is no jostling and pushing. Each sees to the wants of his neighbours before tending his own. This country is a well filled table, but a few, called ground landlords, insist that it is theirs alone. They and their friends have more than a glutton would ask, some others are allowed a share on condition that they work for the ground landlords or their friends, and the great majority go short.

5. Is it possible to avoid the unequal distribution of wealth?

Answer: It is possible to avoid the *unjust* distribution of wealth. All that is necessary is to make all land available to labour by putting a suitable tax on its value. That would make such a demand for labour that unemployment would disappear, and once we get to the stage that there are more jobs than workers, wages will rise to the full amount of what each worker earns.

I am not afraid of the human element that my critic beseeches me to consider. Human nature is good in spite of our inhuman laws: how nearly perfect it can be we never shall know till we abolish the most inhuman of all laws, that which makes the land the private property of the very few to the exclusion of the very many. My critic says that the land values policy is no better than it was in 1910. Of course it is not; nothing which is based on truth can be better or worse with the passage of time. The essence of truth and justice is that they are unchanging and unchangeable.

How landowners "turning their landed estates into Limited Companies" can make any difference to any government who intend to tax land on its value I fail to see. Land cannot be hidden nor its value camouflaged, and a tax on land value whether the land is held by a duke who is not trying to dodge death duties, or one who has made a Limited Company of his estate for that purpose, will force that land to be put to its best use.

STOCKPORT

Consideration of the housing question led to a discussion on land value taxation in the Stockport Town Council, reported in the *Stockport Express* of 6th September.

Councillor Bowyer said the health and general well-being and the morals of the people—as the Police Court often showed—were being affected in Stockport through the Council's neglect to tackle this great problem of housing. He expressed his disapproval of the attendance of Aldermen and Councillors at sales bent on buying parcels of property for profit without any regard for the health and comfort of the people. Private interest in property lay at the root of the Council's apathy.

Councillor Helen Henderson: Again and again have ground landlords, by the high prices they asked for land, made it impossible for the Housing Committee to proceed. The only remedy seems to be the taxation of land values, then much of the difficulty besetting the housing problem would disappear.

Councillor W. Stanton said they had to aim at the building of houses at a reasonable rent, and to do that they had to get the houses built at a reasonable price and get the land at a reasonable price. They had inquired about desirable land, and had been asked £400 or £500 an acre. If the owners had to pay rates on that value they would soon get the land at £150 an acre. They could get houses built at a reasonable price, but the trouble was the price asked for the land. He hoped he would live to see the day when the landowners would be compelled to disgorge the land for purposes like this.

Councillor W. A. Downham said he wanted to emphasize what Mrs Henderson had said about ground rents. In Reddish higher prices than had been mentioned had been asked for land.

Alderman M. M. McGregor said they were not moving at a pace commensurate with the need for houses, but there were people trying to get unreasonable prices for their land, and there was a limit on the number of houses to be built per acre.

Subscribers to our Sustention Fund who gave special contributions this time last year are earnestly asked to renew their support for 1928. Will friends concerned please take this as an urgent personal message from the Editor on behalf of the Journal? It is a word also to all interested in "Land & Liberty."