

"HOW TO SOCIALISE"

But though the Land-Taxer may go thus far to meet the Socialist in order that a united front may be presented against a common enemy, it is not thus he would meet the difficulty arising from monopoly undertakings were its solution entirely in his hands. For his objective being liberty, he sees in the State control of millions of men a menace to freedom. It is clear that once the railway-workers and miners become State employees, either they will control the State, or the State will control them. If they control the State they will be able to establish themselves as a privileged class and infringe upon the liberties of the rest of the community. On the other hand, if the State controls them, as is more probable, their liberties will be infringed, for to strike will be treated as sedition, as has happened in France, Italy, Spain, and Australia. The after-war probability is that the State will retain control of the railways and the mines and use them to obtain revenue in the most pernicious and unjust manner. To levy taxation by way of freights and the price of coal is to tax the poor and the rich on the same basis and to hamper industry. From the proceeds of this robbery the State will be able to bribe its servants into acquiescence and attach them as a bodyguard when seeking to impose coercive measures upon the community. Divide and rule is going to be the guiding principle of the vested interests in meeting the revolutionary conditions of the aftermath of war, and already the process of sectioning off the workers has begun. These menacing alternatives presented by State control of railways and mines causes the Land-Taxer to hesitate. Along the lines of his principles the problem would be solved by the State resuming possession of the land, of railways and mines by taxation and leaving the operation of the railways and the production of coal to the workers in free association, concerning itself with control only so far as to ensure that the workers did not seek to secure through their operation of monopoly undertakings a return above the wage ruling outside for equivalent service. It would then be to the interest of railwaymen and miners to secure that the wage ruling outside, and determining their own, should be the just wage—that is to say, one representing the full value of the workers' product. Thus the danger of the sectioning off of the workers and of State control would be avoided. This conception is put forward in order to indicate what is in the mind of the Land-Taxer when confronted with these projects of nationalisation.

While the State operation of the railways and mines only infringes upon the basic principles of land taxation if unnecessarily and injuriously land-value is incidentally acquired by purchase, to a larger project which some Socialists urge uncompromising opposition must be offered. Land nationalisation entails the purchase of the land by the State, the bondholder is to be substituted for the landholder, and the rent paid for the use of the land is to be appropriated for interest and redemption service of the debt. The right of the community to the communal value of the land which it has created is therefore denied, and the community has to buy itself out of bondage to the landholder at a price determined by the measure in which he has been able to appropriate the results of labour. The Socialist who advocates this flagrant injustice is generally driven to do so incidentally because of his belief that the State control of the use of land is essential, and can only be established by the State ownership through pur-

chase. Now the ownership of land, including what labour has effected thereon, is not essential to such control over the use of land, as it may be deemed advisable that the community should exercise for general benefit. But the State ownership of land is essential for the control of the community by the State, for there would then be no means by which the individual could maintain existence except at command of a State official. To achieve that supremacy for the State it is proposed to buy out the landholders, to compel the slaves to compensate the slave-owners so as to substitute one bondage for another. Surely this is not what those Socialists desire who for three years, against overwhelming odds, have maintained the fight for individual liberty against the State. For land nationalisation by way of purchase they may well be expected to substitute land socialisation by way of taxation, leaving to the future to decide what measure of State control is essential as regards the use of land.

It might have been supposed that the war had rendered superfluous any criticism of land nationalisation, and yet we find delegates from trades unions meeting in conference and passing resolutions for land nationalisation as if nothing had happened to alter previous judgments. The proposal now is to create a new debt to bondholders of thousands of millions and add to it the debt to other bondholders that war has created, or will create, of perhaps £5,000,000,000. It is a proposition that provokes amazement that those who have stayed at home should support as regards themselves. But what a proposal they have in store for the millions who have joined the colours. To those who return they will have this to say: You have endured the sufferings and the horrors of war and have saved the land of Britain. But we have decided that the land of Britain rightfully belongs to the lords of the land. A value of many thousands of millions has been given to this land by the community, but we hold that that value does not belong by right to the community. You have no claim upon it, though, but for you, ground rent would now be payable to the German Exchequer. Therefore we have decided to buy out the lords of the land, that you shall set to work, if permitted, and sweat and toil as slaves to the bondholders to whom we propose to pawn Great Britain. As Nero fiddled whilst Rome burned, so, with equal unconcern, do some men play the old tunes with the world in conflagration, and propose that when it has burnt itself out their fellow-men shall garner from the ashes tribute to land monopoly.

It is anomalous, too, that land nationalisation should be urged and land taxation derided by those who contend that the product of labour is allocated to rent, interest, and wages, and that rent and interest are unjust deductibles from the wage fund and should be restored to it.

The Land-Nationaliser urges that the State shall purchase the land and pay interest on the debt created out of rent received from its tenants. The deduction from wages which rent is held to represent will therefore be maintained and be handed over to the bondholders, and labour will continue for this generation at least to lack its due. On the other hand, the Land-Taxer contends that rent is the appropriation by the individual of a communal value, he would take it in taxation, and in effect add it to the wage fund by relieving the workers of taxation and by rendering communal services free of charge. Therefore, the Socialist who urges land nationalisation proposes to perpetuate the very injustice which he denounces and which land taxation would abolish.

Nor is there any need to boggle over the question of interest on industrial capital. Interest follows capital, and when, as has been urged, a just wage system results in the workers possessing the capital they have created, interest will be payable to them. Or, as may be contended, the vast increase in the production of wealth which will result from labour having access to natural opportunities will tend to create a superfluity of capital and a consequent fall in the rate of interest to ultimate extinction. In the light of these economic considerations there seems to be no reason why the Socialist should not recognise in land-value taxation the first step along a sure way to what in the main and more immediately he seeks to secure. For the aim of those who call themselves Socialists is in the main to secure individual liberty and equality of opportunity.—*Chapter XI: "Land or Revolution." By R. L. Outhwaite, M.P.*

A CATALOGUE OF FUTILITY

Some Housing Acts

The failure to find a radical and lasting improvement in housing conditions is written large on the Statute Book. As reports of countless commissions and committees prove, the conditions are worse than ever, but still the cry goes up for more Acts of Parliament, for more machinery of inspection and control, and for more State assistance. What a waste of time, effort, talk, and public money there has been, while the benevolent friends of the "working classes" have sought to house them "in decency"! Of all the factors in this so-called problem, the very simplest have been overlooked. Why has not the occupant of houses a sufficient income to procure ample accommodation for himself? Why is there any difficulty in assembling the materials with which houses are built? Where do they come from? What causes the ground for houses to be so high in price when there is plenty of space in and around cities, towns, and country villages? Wherein lies the justice of taxing houses after they are built and occupied? Has the taxation of one necessary of life any different effect from the taxation of other necessities, such as bread or clothing? These questions are now being asked and answered in the teeth of the monopoly that so far has commanded silence where men have legislated. The fear of vested interests, the anxiety to leave as they are the relations of landlord and tenant, employer and employee, have been wonderfully illustrated in the shameful record of charity legislation spelled "Housing Reform." Labour has suffered no greater humiliation than this, and the sad thing is that there are those speaking in the name of Labour who would seek to perpetuate the pro-poverty legislation and agitate for more housing officials, more housing grants, and more thralldom under the State. Here is their lesson in two catalogues of Housing Acts long ago relegated to the scrap-heap of misplaced and misdirected energy.

The first catalogue is that published in the *BUILDING NEWS* of 16th January on the basis of information given "by courtesy of the Housing Committee of the London

County Council." The second is from Chapter XXIX. of the Report of the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland.

LONDON HOUSING

In 1851, the Common Lodging Houses Act and the Labouring Classes Lodging Houses Act.

In 1868 (after two years' inquiries), the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Acts, which were the first of a series known as the Torrens Acts.

In 1875, the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act, which was the first of a series known as the Cross Acts.

In 1879, an Act amending the first Torrens Act.

In 1879, an Act amending the first Cross Act.

In 1882 (after inquiry and report by a Select Committee), the Artisans' Dwellings Act, consolidating and amending Cross Acts, and the second Torrens Act.

In 1885, the Housing of the Working Classes Act.

In 1890, an Act, passed at the instance of the London County Council, consolidating previous Acts.

In 1891, the Public Health (London) Act.

In 1894 and 1900, two further Acts.

In 1903 (after inquiry and report by a Joint Select Committee), the Housing of the Working Classes Act.

In 1909, the Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act.

We do not think this is by any means a complete record, and any of our readers versed in the law can no doubt extend it.

SCOTTISH HOUSING

In 1855 the Dwelling Houses (Scotland) Act was passed. It was entitled "An Act to Facilitate the Erection of Dwelling Houses for the Working Classes in Scotland."

In 1851 Lord Shaftesbury passed through Parliament a Common Lodging Houses Act and Labouring Classes Lodgings Act, which, however, did not apply to Scotland till, by the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885, power was given to Local Authorities in Scotland to adopt said Acts. It is interesting to note, however, that, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission of 1884, Lord Shaftesbury stated that the Acts referred to had never been carried out, and that he thought he was the only Englishman who ever knew of their existence.

In 1856 there was passed a Nuisance Removal Act.

In 1850 an Act was passed dealing with sanitary conditions and public health in the burghs of Scotland, and in 1862 an Act, termed the General Police and Improvement (Scotland) Act, 1862, was passed. This latter Act was the forerunner of the Burgh Police Act of 1892.

In 1867 was passed the Public Health (Scotland) Act; and in 1868 the burghs of Scotland obtained the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act. This Act, which was amended in 1879, provided for the gradual improvement and demolition of the dwellings of the working classes and for the building and maintenance of improved dwellings.