

"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 MISSION OF THE SINGLE TAXER.

Tory papers are endeavouring to embarrass Liberal politicians by disregarding immediate proposals for the Taxation of Land Values and proclaiming that what is aimed at is the introduction of the Single Tax. Consequently it will not be out of place to review the position of Single Taxers in relation to the politics of the day. Single Taxers have always suffered under the fact that the instrument and not the aim is denoted in the term; from which it appears that revenue is the object, whereas the establishment of Liberty is the goal. The Single Taxer has a vision that takes in the world and all its peoples: to him there is no mystery in the decline and fall of past civilisations, nor doubt as to wherein lies the sole hope for the present and future generations of man. He proclaims that the denial of individual Liberty has brought to the dust the states and empires of the past, and that to the same cause is to be attributed the forces which to-day are making for the destruction of civilisation. Liberty, he sees, cannot be established merely by proclaiming all men equal before the law as administered in the Courts, for the first essential of Liberty is the maintenance of economic justice. In the private ownership of the earth he sees a fundamental wrong which reduces the mass of mankind to slavish conditions: he seeks to establish Liberty by the mitigation and final overthrow of this wrong. It is the proclamation of this great central truth by Single Taxers that is going to affect the future of mankind, that will restore the ideal of Liberty, and inspire the people to seek escape from bondage. The Single Taxer's mission is to proclaim the evangel of Liberty, and hence the ravings of the Tory on behalf of privilege, the sneers of the Socialist on behalf of a future State with mankind in servile regiments overlorded by bureaucrats.

If the establishment of Liberty by the overthrow of monopoly and privilege were an impracticable ideal, those urging it would cause no concern to those associated with the maintenance of the existing order of things. But the Single Tax, the bringing of all men equally into ownership of the earth by taking economic rent by process of taxation, is an ideal easily realisable, and the first step towards which is the most difficult. So the Single Taxer cannot be disregarded as an impossibilist, however urgent the need to exhibit him in that light. Such tactics will not succeed, in the first place because the Single Taxers have been trained in the practical affairs of the world, and secondly because the immediate task before them is the eminently practical one of a readjustment of the incidence of taxation demanded by public opinion. So while keeping the ideal of ultimate justice before the people, they are free to enter into the arena of present-day

politics, and lay the foundations of economic justice in the full assurance that this accomplished the superstructure will be reared in due course.

The Single Taxer in Britain comes to a task that has been more than half accomplished, thanks to the labours of those who in bygone days demolished Protection. The outer wall, that with its host of defenders bids defiance to Single Taxers the world over, has been razed to the ground in Britain, and the defenceless condition of their citadel has frightened the lords of the land into an endeavour to rear the tariff wall again. Long since the stronghold would have fallen had politicians been minded to undertake the attack. We now have in office a party with a traditional creed that must bring it by natural process into conflict with monopoly. Liberalism connotes the establishment of Liberty, and the Single Taxer can take his stand as a Liberal and demand that the party go by way of its faith, which is his faith.

The Liberal party has been concerned with the extension of equality of opportunity in the political sphere and the task is now well-nigh accomplished. It has inherited the task of keeping inviolate such liberty as was won in the economic sphere by Cobden, and its immediate duty is the extension of the Free Trade principle. The Single Taxer demands that exchange of wealth having been made free, the production of wealth shall cease to be restricted by monopoly and penalised by taxation. So that politicians may not be able to disregard principle by denying the practicability of its application, Single Taxers have aided in the task of framing that definite programme known as the Memorial on Rating and Taxation Reform. To its support they seek to rally public opinion and for the purpose have entered the arena of political controversy. So Single Taxers have become the exponents of Liberalism, pioneering the line of advance, which they know full well the rank and file of the party will follow. They do not stand for party, but for a vital principle, failing adhesion to which the Liberal party can have no firm and enduring place as an instrument of human progress.

It is as well that this attitude of Single Taxers should be understood in official circles for it may obviate trouble that is otherwise likely to arise. There is a disposition in some quarters to regard the Single Taxer as an interloper, and his demand that industry shall be freed and monopoly attacked by way of the Taxation of Land Values as an attempt to pledge the party to an extraneous doctrine. The sooner this illusion is dissipated the better. The Single Taxer in the ranks of the Liberal party is there to maintain and extend Liberalism along the lines of its basic principle of equality of opportunity. He is no interloper. He has his place in the temple by years of well-directed effort and by a public opinion, the magnitude and strength of which has world-wide recognition. His practical faith is daily voiced and contended for by every Liberal organ of repute throughout the land. The speeches made, and the resolutions carried for his practical policy on a thousand Liberal platforms, at local and national gatherings

these past twenty years are his credentials. Within its walls he intends to preach the doctrine of emancipation, which is Liberalism, and not he, but those who do not wish to hear, must pass out. This is the reply to Tory talk about the emergence of land value taxation being certain to result in a split in the Liberal party. No Liberals will leave the party on this issue, since no one can oppose and be a Liberal in more than name. For every one who leaves there will enter a thousand Liberals in faith, who have stood outside the party because it lacked Liberalism. So it comes about that Single Taxers in Britain are in the ranks of the Liberal party, advocating practical and immediate reforms along the lines of their faith as being the application of the principles of Liberalism in the economic sphere; and they are there by right, however it may be with others.

R. L. O.

THE RATING OF MOTOR 'BUSES.

In the January issue of *LAND VALUES* (p. 195), I called attention to a motion, then and still standing on the Agenda Paper of the London County Council in the names of Mr. Stettauer and Sir John Williams Benn, in favour of the rating of "heavy motor traffic." Sir John has recently spoken, and the progressive papers are writing, in a way that seems to show a serious intention of advocating some such policy, although the Progressive whip has stated that no such proposal is [yet ?] on the Progressive programme. The motion has little chance of being discussed for a long time to come. It is 33rd in order after a motion by Mr. Frank Smith, which has been on the agenda for, I believe, about three years. It was natural, under the circumstances, to suppose that the appearance of this reactionary proposal had reference to the approach of a County Council election, and adumbrated one of the planks in the coming Progressive programme. A friend on the Council, to whom I wrote about it, could only surmise that it was one of Sir John's "jokes": "if you rate our tram lines, we'll rate your motor 'buses." Even so, it is eminently the sort of bad joke that calls for an explanatory footnote after the manner of the late Artemus Ward; and, anyway, to put the Council to the expense of printing it every week for three years or so, seems to be carrying a joke too far. Moreover, it needs a very special sense of humour to appreciate the jokes of the Progressive leader.

Unfortunately it appears that two of the Progressive candidates lack this rare sense. They have rushed into print with a series of election leaflets, setting forth a programme of seven items, two of which are:—

2.—RATING OF THE GREAT GROUND LANDLORDS—who draw twenty million pounds of unearned wealth from London every year.

7.—RATING OF MOTOR 'BUSES—to pay for the costly roads they spoil.

No. 2 is, it must be supposed, a bad shot at "Rating of Land Values," by two gentlemen who don't know what it means. Perhaps this makes No. 7 somewhat less surprising.

In support of item No. 7 a special leaflet is issued. It runs thus:—

WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES OUR ROADS SO BAD? and not only bad, but costly. . . . Well, very largely, it is the Motor 'Bus. Our best roads are paved with wood . . . laid on concrete and made into a fine smooth road at your cost and mine.

Then comes the Motor 'Bus. Useful and handy in many ways but not an improver of the roads. Not one 'bus, but fleets of 'buses, and from early morning, throughout the day and far into the night they tear along. The hardest wood pavement soon shows signs of wear. And how much does the 'Bus Company pay? NOTHING. Each tramcar pays about £120 a year to local rates, beside helping to keep the roadway. The 'bus pays £45 to the Imperial Government, and nothing whatever to the local funds. No wonder profits increase and

'bus shares rise. HELP US TO MAKE THEM PAY THEIR SHARE.

This is an amazing opening of the great campaign for the recapture of London for "Progress," and is still more amazing in that it comes from a pair of Progressive candidates who apparently think they are advocating the Rating of Land Values. Our trams are rated, therefore let us rate motor 'buses. The motor 'buses wear out the roads. But so do horsed 'buses, where they still survive, and hansom cabs, and costermongers' barrows, in their degree. The Paddington candidates clearly demonstrate the usefulness of the motor 'bus. On their own clear showing, they afford an abundant means of locomotion at all hours when folk wish to travel. On some routes they are the only means of travel. If, on some other routes and under present absurd conditions, they unduly compete with the municipal electric trams, the remedy surely is to unrate the trams, and not to rate the motor 'buses. Sir John Benn's motion does not specify motor 'buses but "heavy motor traffic." He has not yet answered the question I put to him nine months ago: "At what weight does a motor-car begin to be 'heavy'?"

The fact is that the arguments used would have their logical issue in the restoration of toll-gates with a differential tariff for all vehicles according to their weight. Perhaps, as there is so much insistence upon weight, and elsewhere so much talk about the declining birth-rate, perambulators with rubber tyres might be put on the free list!

For the proposal to rate vehicles is evidently absurd.

The one advantage of our present rating system is that the subjects upon which rates are imposed at least stand still while they are being rated. It is true that a house may be "here to-day and gone to-morrow"; it may be pulled down or burnt down. But how are we to rate things that run about on wheels? A motor 'bus is here this minute and gone the next. In what rating area is a motor 'bus to be assessed?

The advance of mechanical traction has enabled the omnibus routes to be greatly lengthened. Many of the routes not only pass through a number of Metropolitan Boroughs, but extend into adjoining counties. The problem of rating a motor 'bus that runs from Hammersmith to Seven Kings, or from Victoria to Sidecup, or from Camden Town to Croydon, is likely to give rise to some warm controversies between local authorities; for, wherever they go, they "wear out the roads." There is no precedent—even under a rating system which can find a precedent for almost any absurdity—except the rating of a railway by the troublesome and costly process of determining the number of train-miles run within the rating area. A jolly business this for a Progressive Council to engage in!

For, look you, my Progressive friends. Your trams run on fixed lines which determine their route. But there is nothing to fix the route of the motor 'buses you dislike. They run wherever there is a chance of making a profit by serving a public convenience. A new line of motor 'buses recently began to run past the end of the road in which I live. (Incidentally, they have served the public convenience by compelling you to speed up the notoriously slow and irregular tram-service between Stamford Hill and Holborn.) At first they ran from Wood Green to Aldwych—"wearing out the roads" in the Urban Districts of Wood Green and Tottenham (County of Middlesex), in the Metropolitan Boroughs of Hackney, Shoreditch, Finsbury, Holborn and City of Westminster (County of London). After a few days, the route was altered, and, passing through Chancery Lane, the 'buses began to wear out roadways in the City of London. The route has been altered again—from Stamford Hill, I think, to Stockwell. The Middlesex roads are now safe, but some of the South London Boroughs are suffering. There is nothing to prevent a change of route every week. For the motor 'bus, there is no meaning in municipal boundaries. There is no obligation even to keep to "main roads." (The Metropolitan Borough of Hackney could probably say a good deal about the wear and tear of side streets, never expectant of "heavy motor traffic," used by the motor 'buses which have their stopping place at the "Birdcage," Stamford Hill. The street is too narrow to permit of the big 'bus turning round at its stopping place except by extending its journey into a side street.) Some of the longest routes are only used on Sundays. So every motor