

LAND & LIBERTY

Published by THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE
TAXATION OF LAND VALUES.

Thirtieth Year. Established June, 1894.

3d. Monthly. By Post 4s. per annum.

United States and Canada, 1 Dollar.

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COAL, POWER AND FREE TRADE

We are often asked by newcomers with and without party attachments how it comes that the land values question with its fine record of achievement is kept in the background. Where is the driving power that one would expect judging from the news given each month in *LAND & LIBERTY*? A correspondent wants to get the hang of the position. If the present Parliament, he remarks, contains 221 members pledged to the Taxation of Land Values, what are they doing to promote the cause? Another affirms: the people require to be educated a lot more on the question; and the latest comment on the situation is to the effect that politics are in a changing mood and that nothing big may be looked for until a more settled condition is assured.

It would take more time and space than we can afford to do justice to these questions and opinions. They are all very appropriate and betoken an interest without which the movement would be poor indeed.

In bygone days, when the man in the street was talking land values and the man in the workshop arguing the case and both singing the "Land Song" at nights in their clubs and at public meetings, the practice was not begotten out of any special steadfast support from the Press, or from those who figure in its columns as recognised authorities in the field of political action; and it was ever the same. If those who believe in the Taxation of Land Values want to see the reform carried in their day let them at this juncture look to themselves and to the machinery they can claim as theirs. What is wanted to reveal the public approval of the land values policy, now or at any time, and now more than ever, is a considered development of our publicity campaign. There is no other method. The driving power may be latent but it exists, and with proper equipment can be speedily brought out into the open. If our politics are in a changing mood it is the opportunity to reach out to a foremost place in the new alignments. The public opinion that is ours counts for something, and the legislation it stands for is big enough to meet the requirements of the most ardent advocate of social progress.

In 1909 Mr. Lloyd George told the royalty owners that he heard their bark as he challenged their unjust exactions and that their day of reckoning was at hand; and now, fifteen years after, we have in his latest pamphlet, *COAL & POWER*, a new and revised version of this overflowing exposition.

In essence it is but one more item of Liberal floundering on the land question—Limehouse emasculated.

The proposals are to *buy out* the royalty owner, who in former days was described as one of a class "who is getting something he never earned, that he never produced and that by no law of justice or fairness ought ever to belong to him." The somersault is performed to the music of the usual denunciation of the class who contribute nothing to the production of coal and who can therefore be eliminated without any injury to the community, with the same old "sob-stuff" on the overcrowding and shameful condition of a great part of our mining population. In the Limehouse epoch all this was to be put right by the bursting of land monopoly.

Ten years later the Coalition Government, with Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister, tore the Budget to pieces and paid back to the landowners the money the duties had levied on their unearned incomes. Reconstruction was the order of the day and everything purchased, including land, was to be paid for at its market value. The hardening process set in, land prices were boosted up and land speculation brought its unemployment and the rings round the house.

In *COAL & POWER* we are told by Mr. Lloyd George that Mr. Asquith has perused the book and fully approves of its recommendations. A year ago, before the Liberal Party became united, Mr. Asquith was for the opposing policy to land purchase. The main plank of the crusade was: "The Taxation of Land Values with a view to the best use of natural resources. The Liberal plan is to attack the system, because at so many points the land monopoly penalizes and restricts enterprise and so closes the door to many new developments of industry that would absorb the labour of so many unemployed." Mr. Asquith himself emphasised the need for Free Trade and Taxation of Land Values. In his speech at Paisley, 7th June, 1923, he declared: "There is one topic which in a sense may be said to dominate the whole of the separate compartments in the field of industrial policy—I mean the Taxation of Land Values. Until we have a Parliament and a government that is courageous enough and far-sighted enough to grapple with that problem, and grapple with it wholeheartedly, drastically and without injustice to any human being, you will find you are constantly brought up, as it were, against a stone wall, a bar to progress in every sphere of social reform." Hundreds of speakers, including Sir John Simon, Sir Donald Maclean, and the chief Liberal whips were engaged in this campaign.

Then came the General Election, and land purchase, to the surprise and dismay of the rank and file of the party, took the place of Land Values Taxation in the Liberal Manifesto to the electors. A Parliament was returned with a majority for the land values policy but never a word in support of it comes from the Liberal leader. The "stone wall" as a bar to progress is no longer recognised, and the Liberal speaking campaign in 1924 is given over entirely to Fabian welfare schemes of security to the worker against unemployment on the principle that the unemployed acre has no connection with the unemployed man. It is a record, but not just the kind to inspire the rank and file in the

country brought up, so to speak, on the promise of radical land reform as the outlet to production, industrial peace and good will. A Newcastle-on-Tyne Liberal, a loyal party man with years of faithful service to his credit, writes: "It is pitiable to listen to the Liberal campaign speakers up this way trying hard and failing to interest their audiences on the past record and triumphs of Liberalism, while any chance speaker on land values gets the crowd." Similar comments reach us from all parts of the country. But the lament is the concern of the Liberals, not ours.

According to Mr. Lloyd George's COAL & POWER propositions, the minerals that are actually leased out by the owners acting on their indisputable legal rights (let no loyal Liberal think of Limehouse) are to be purchased at a valuation of the same kind as is habitually made for probate purposes calculated to be approximately £70,000,000; the sum to be paid in bonds not in cash, less 10 per cent. to be paid into a Welfare Fund for the improvement of the amenities of mining districts. Minerals which are known or suspected to exist are also to be purchased if a claim be lodged by the owners within the stipulated period, say of five years; but minerals whose existence is unsuspected, and in respect of which no claim for compensation has been put forward are to be confiscated. As the pamphlet says: "It cannot be said that the unsuspected existence of such minerals has added to the selling value of the land, and, therefore, it is reasonable that no compensation should be paid for the minerals," and, in the next sentence, it is allowed that "the landowner will, indeed, obtain quite sufficient return from the increased value of his land which will arise from the presence of an industrial population, however stringent the precautions taken against his abusing this opportunity. All such minerals are deemed to be the State's as from the passing of the Act without payment of compensation." What Bolshevism is this? or is it merely a piece of dressing for the radical corner of the window?

But that is by the way, the point to be noted by Liberals who are out for compensation, for taking the land and paying for what is taken, is that the line is drawn at unsuspected mineral land; such land falls into the category named confiscation. And those Liberals who stand for the Taxation of Land Values, no land grabbing and therefore no compensation will duly observe that "the increased value of the land which will arise from the presence of an industrial community" is not to go to the relief of industry, but to be earmarked for the express benefit of the royalty owner who was "robbed" of his legal claim to the minerals " unsuspected " when the precious Act was passed.

But the coal will not be affected one way or another by this new Liberal digging, and as for the power it is known to be steadily drifting into other hands. The people can't be fooled all the time. It is taking them too cheaply to advocate the relief of industry by levying upon land values one year and the next to drop the proposal in favour of one which would pay ransom to the non-producer and leave industry to carry the burden. And it is adding insult to injury to urge that the owner of the confiscated potential coal, when it appears, is to have his loss made good by a promise of the value of the land

that the presence of the new mining community will ensure. COAL & POWER requires more than a mere perusal by Mr. Asquith before he gives it official sanction if he has any regard for his own uncompromising statements on the Taxation of Land Values.

It is refreshing and stimulating to turn from this piece of reactionary amateurish writing on the land question to Mr. Snowden's thoroughgoing speech at the Cobden Club as given in our last month's issue. Cobden pointed unmistakably to the land monopoly as the barrier to his Free Trade expectations, and clearly expressed his conviction that the liberation of the land would count for more for the country than anything he and his friends had accomplished. But up till now the fuller explanation, the linking up of Free Trade with freedom to produce has been ignored by the Cobden Club and its school of politicians where Free Trade means no protection, nothing more. The insufficiency of Free Trade, limited, as a cure for social problems, has long been realised, and so long as the principle is held in submission to the vested interests, just so long will the belief in protection prevail.

The way to industrial freedom is the way to the ideal co-operative commonwealth. Free Trade carried to its logical conclusion means the removal of all obstacles to the production and exchange of commodities, and this, as Mr. Snowden declared, means the destruction of all monopolies which enriched individuals at the expense of the community. This is the true and enlarged Cobdenite principle, and we trust the members of the Club will profit by the lesson.

There are other monopolies besides land monopoly, but it is on land monopoly that all other species thrive and have their being. The overthrow of the fundamental monopoly will weaken the power of the offshoots, whereas any nibbling at these lesser hindrances will but profit the greater incubus. Its overthrow will realise new opportunities with unsuspected benefits for all. The Taxation of Land Values is the next logical step in the direction of Free Trade. It strikes at the fundamental obstacle to industrial progress; it will expand the field of employment to all enterprise and industry, and provide the unemployed man with wages out of new production and not, as at present, at the expense of the wages of his neighbour.

It is monopoly from first to last that conditions the status of the workers. Its abolition should be his concern and the concern of those who presume to speak and act in his behalf. In its final analysis, the labour problem is the poverty problem, the enigma of our time, a standing menace to all intellectual and spiritual growth. And the question is, shall monopoly, the abiding cause of the trouble, be tolerated to the undoing of the State, or shall the freedom of trade as a step to full economic emancipation be the prime consideration?

Tariffs and subsidies cannot foster trade, they can only enrich monopoly and injure trade. To stand for Free Trade and subsidies at one and the same time is like trying to go north and south at one and the same time. Let industry first be relieved of the exactions and control of monopoly and then judge what nourishment from public funds, this that or the other branch requires to keep in the service. That is what the principle

of Free Trade demands and it cannot be given away to suit any emergency, not at least without damage beyond repair to those who try the experiment, as some politicians of our day can tell. What is required most at this time of changing mood in our politics is a clear and emphatic assertion of the merits, the justice and the expediency of real Free Trade; and a publicity campaign to demonstrate how the policy harmonises with all genuine methods of advance. Let this be done in letter and in spirit of fair play to industry, and the driving power will not be far to seek. Give land monopoly the chance to speak for itself, and out of the debate will come the long delayed and overdue measure of land reform.

J.P.

NATURE AND MAN

"Look on yonder earth:

The golden harvests spring; the unfailing sun
Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony and love . . .

Yon sun,
Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch
Than on the dome of Kings? Is mother earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood . . . ?

SHELLEY; *Queen Mab*, iii, 201, etc.

The MELBOURNE ARGUS, 17th May, reports a deputation from the West Australian Federal members to the Prime Minister (Mr. Bruce) with a request for the abolition of the duty on bananas, and a deputation of Queensland members on the urgency of maintaining the present protection.

The "swindle" won't work on bananas.

Few books have been more happy in the time of their appearance than LAND-VALUE POLICY by James Dundas White, published by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, 11, Tothill Street, London, S.W.1. Price two shillings, net. The British Labour Party occupies the centre of the stage. Its budget is one of the party's principal achievements and the promise of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to include land values taxation in the next budget is the outstanding feature of the fiscal situation.—TAX FACTS, *Los Angeles*, June.

By J. DUNDAS WHITE, LL.D.

LAND-VALUE POLICY. A new Treatise and Handbook.
Cloth, 2s. See advertisement on inside back cover.

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BETTER PLAN. 1d.

From our Offices.

NOTES AND NEWS

Addressing a Liberal garden party meeting at Earby (SKIPTON PIONEER, 4th July) Mr. Fred Skirrow gave it as his opinion that if the Liberal Party had a Campbell-Bannerman and a Richard Cobden they would not be the third Party in the State, but would be in power. At a further meeting held indoors Mr. Skirrow gave a rousing address on the injustice of English land tenure, the root cause of all unrest.

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We learn from a memorandum giving particulars of the Mozambique Portland Cement Company issued by Arthur Wheeler & Co., Leicester, that the company has the advantage of "low-priced fuel and adequate cheap and efficient labour. The company's coal cost 12s. 9d. a ton delivered, whilst efficient native labour cost about 1s. per day"; and that, "the government of Mozambique have recently increased the duty on imported cement from 10 per cent. *ad valorem* (6s.) per ton to 45s. per ton." These items should make an informing item for the free trade speakers engaged in the great Liberal rally now in progress.

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Mr. Oliver Baldwin, son of the late Prime Minister was adopted as Labour candidate for Dudley, 5th July. The first problem, he is reported as saying, was the redemption of the land for the people.

* * *

Speaking in the Market Square, Wolverhampton, on 27th June, Mr. R. R. Fairbairn, ex-M.P. for Worcester, said that land was the source of all wealth. It did not matter what one had, or wore, or ate, or did—it all came from the land. Now she was the mother of all wealth, and labour was the father, so that on them all wealth depended. Their Socialist friends wanted them to nationalize land. By this process the country would have to pay over to the people who owned the land an agreed figure per acre, and they would then go away and live comfortably on the proceeds. Was it fair? asked Mr. Fairbairn. Was it fair that the people who had improved the land and made it worth what it was should be called upon to pay for it? The Liberal remedy was much the better plan. Liberals proposed to tax land values, and so call upon the landlord to pay his proper share. As an act of common justice this was indisputable.—EXPRESS AND STAR, 27th June.

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THE HOLLAND (LINCS.) BY-ELECTION.—In his election address the Liberal candidate, Mr. Pat Winfrey urges that the farmer must be helped by . . . providing Government credit for the erection of bacon and sugar beet factories. He says he would go even further than that and introduce a land purchase scheme whereby tenants could purchase their holdings on a fair and reasonable basis.—WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, 24th July.

Mr. Lloyd George, in a letter to Mr. Winfrey, says: "I sincerely hope that the electors of the Holland-with-Boston Division will return you to the House of Commons by a triumphant majority."—WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, 26th July.

The new Liberal policy of boosting land speculation and handing over millions of public money to the monopolists is taking shape. What have the advocates of Land Value Taxation in Liberal ranks to say to this surrender?

* * *

The Government says it believes in the taxation of land values. Its belief does not seem strong enough to produce any action. Yet such taxation would solve half our social difficulties. Incidentally it would force farmers to farm and also cure agricultural apathy.—JOHN BULL, 5th July.