

LAND & LIBERTY

(Incorporating "LAND VALUES.")

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Editorial Offices:

11, TOTHILL STREET, LONDON, S.W.1.

All communications to be addressed to the Editor.

Telegrams: "Eulav, Vic, London."

Telephone: Victoria 7323.

Here are two simple principles, both of which are self-evident:

I.—That all men have equal rights to the use and enjoyment of the elements provided by Nature.

II.—That each man has an exclusive right to the use and enjoyment of what is produced by his own labour.

There is no conflict between these principles. On the contrary, they are correlative. To secure fully the individual right of property in the produce of labour, we must treat the elements of Nature as common property.—*Henry George: "Protection or Free Trade," chapter 26.*

LAND AND LIBERTY

With this issue we begin the twenty-sixth year of publication, and the event provides occasion for a change in the name of the Journal, which we believe will bring it more into line with the new forces and aspirations making for social justice and freedom. The name changes, but the principle and policy advocated for a quarter of a century remain. The name LAND VALUES was adopted seventeen years ago to suit the requirements of that day, when the question of taxing land values passed hurriedly from its more academic haunts to a foremost place in the more imposing field of practical politics. We had to get alongside the municipal movement in its well-sustained campaign to obtain from Parliament powers to levy a rate on land values. We had to develop opinion on the question and to familiarise the public, including the politicians for and against, with the meaning of the term, what it meant, and what it did not mean. It was in these circumstances that the name LAND VALUES was evolved, just as the new name LAND & LIBERTY is held to be more in keeping with the trend of events to-day.

The step has not been taken in haste. It has been urged for long enough mainly because of a conviction held by readers, constant and casual, that the former title conveyed to the uninitiated, to the man on the boundary line, that the Journal was more the mouth-piece of a real-estate agency than one standing for the appropriation of the communal value of land.

As in the past, we shall faithfully uphold this standard and continue to collect and provide the data so necessary for our writers, speakers and parliamentarians. Four years ago, on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of LAND VALUES, we received a generous measure of commendation from representative Single Taxers. They gladly acknowledged their indebtedness to the Journal, and in words

overflowing with enthusiasm for the work, called for a continuation of the service rendered, as long as the need for it prevailed.

Who is there in all our widespread movement that holds the contrary opinion? During these four years of anxieties and shattering illusions the need for our propaganda has become even more imperative. This is in the nature of the case. In normal times, and not so long ago, land monopoly was unearthed as the bottom cause of hard times and the chief obstacle in the path of those who came with gifts and plans for the betterment of the downtrodden part of the community. In some circles where pedantry held commerce with vested prejudices, and where the practical policy of first steps first was at a discount, the power of the land monopoliser was in dispute, or seemed to be; but the plain citizen out for fair play and no favour caught the music of the Land Song, and on two separate occasions voted the Liberal party into place and power, fully pledged to go to the root of the matter. How the pledges were treated as mere scraps of paper is on record as the most shameless betrayal in the political history of our time.

But the land question itself cannot be voted out of position nor can any party, try they may never so hard, succeed by trumpery makeshift measures to crush out the demand of the people for a share in their natural inheritance. The war that played such havoc with our politics, to say nothing of the politicians, brought the need for land into even greater prominence than before. All through the swaying fortunes of the battlefield when the nations were hurling arsenals and iron foundries at each other, and preparing in their respective home spheres to go one better, land for cultivation, for housing and for all kinds of settlement schemes was canvassed with all the old-time zeal and enthusiasm. The public conferences held under the auspices of the United Committee in war time were equal in importance and in enthusiasm to those held in pre-war times and in some respects excelled all previous demonstrations of the kind.

The land legislation introduced by the present Government is based on the principle that the land and the value attaching to it through the presence and needs of the community belong of right to the land owners, and that the people are not entitled to any say in the matter; that if land is wanted even for the shelter and comfort of those who have just returned from the bloody fight in its defence, the full monopoly price must be paid. Instead of the land being liberated, it has been, and is being, consigned in ten thousand acre blocks to the land speculators who are there to traffic in it regardless of the claims of the people and their industry. In their Land Purchase Bills the Government has callously ignored the man of small means, raised the price against the community, passing on to the taxpayer the burden of a deficit that can only rankle in the minds of those affected as a piece of flagrant injustice, and worse.

The men who fought for their native land were promised a share in it, and as they appear in enforced idleness by the hundred thousand, THE TIMES newspaper announces in bold type that England is changing hands. The change is taking place, not at St. Stephen's, but at the public auction rooms, where the land is passing

at the bidding of the money changers. For the tillers of the soil the change is a change of masters franked with a warning by the Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Agriculture that if any would-be soldier settler on the land "thinks he is going to have a 'cushy' job, he will make a very grave mistake."

The retiring President of the Board of Agriculture (Lord Ernle), for once in a while giving his conscience a chance, told a meeting of agriculturists the other day that: "If all industries were to be secured against risk as were the farmers, then God help the taxpayer."

Lord Ernle also asked his audience, out for further liens over the taxpayer, if they were not overdoing it, and at the very moment when public opinion was of the utmost value to the farmers? This is clearly the language of a man with a guilty conscience. It says in effect: we know that we are getting something we are not entitled to; what we have secured has been under duress, and if we insist in taking more the victim may be roused from his trance and with disastrous results to you and me.

"The consumer," added his Lordship, "was responsible for the condition of the farmer because he insisted on cheap food." This piece of question-begging is a fair sample of the kind of clap-trap that to-day passes as current coin in the senate, as well as in the market place. Verily, "the demagogue usurps the part of the statesman; gold weighs in the scales, and in high places sit those who do not pay to civic virtue even the compliment of hypocrisy."

The pretentious housing schemes of the Government are framed on the pattern of the Corn Production Act. The same calculated intention of fleecing the public is openly confessed, though criticism, now that the crisis of the war is at an end, meets the grafters with some degree of sanity. The parliamentary papers on the subject explain the yearly loss there must be on each house built, and the monopoly cost of the sites is passionately denounced at the local town councils affected.

The Finance Act 1909-10 was expressly designed to free the municipalities from the plunder of landlordism. The scene changes, and, staggering with a burden of debt he can neither weigh nor measure, the taxpayer is held to further ransom. He is bluntly and brutally told that the community he resides in must have additional and better houses, and that to those who own and control the land to be requisitioned he must prepare to pay the full market price—a price that has been deliberately swollen by the advent of the Government as universal provider.

These are the halcyon days of the vested interests, and if he would enter the kingdom the taxpayer must shed his vested prejudices, especially those he may have assimilated when Limehouse was first discovered as an important asset in the fortunes of the Liberal party.

Ten years ago the cause of land reform roused the country from end to end and raised high the hopes of those who saw in its promise the dawn of a better day. The policy boldly advocated carried new strength and dignity to representative institutions. It silenced the vendors of not a few shallow schemes that made for the establishment of some brass-faced economic deity. It sent the philanthropists attached to monopoly howling through the streets: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians, so that the city was filled with confusion." It modified

the ruthless passions of those who, tired out with Fabian tactics, had turned to doctrines born of despair and hatred.

In the picturesque language of one of its adherents, the land policy of the Government raised the curtain on a piece that was going to have a good long run, and all round the world the democracy were moved by the picture. It was the great strike against privilege, the sympathetic strike, par excellence, and not for so many additional shillings a week, nor for a reduction of the hours of labour. It embraced these humanities, and more, but in essence it was a new charter of liberty based on a recognition of the fundamental right of the people to their share in Nature's bounty. The failure to make good lies at the door of a set of pusillanimous, time-serving politicians. But the cause lives on even as the high-placed reactionaries turn in their tracks to lick the hand of the oppressor they once so fiercely and unsparingly denounced.

As we write there is an open revolt at our local Councils against the bare-faced robbery revealed in the terms of the Land Acquisition (Assessment of Compensation) Bill. The ten years' old Finance Act Valuation is abandoned at the bidding of the landlords and their firmly-entrenched political agencies, but another alternative to "market value" as the basis of purchase, namely, the value for which the land is returned for rating purposes, is openly proclaimed. This is but a timely exposure of the scandal that permits a landowner to hold two separate and distinct valuations, one, the lowest possible, to present to the rate collector, and another, the highest the traffic will bear, or what the local council will bleed for rather than go without.

Single Taxers should be free and ready to assist in bringing this piece of landlord insolence to the open forum of debate. But our chief task to-day is one that must find fuller scope in the wider field of argument and effort. These are times when liberty calls for service to the full principle of land restoration, and not to any half measures or side issues. Man is a land animal, and the liberty that has no relation to free land here and now has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. If that were not so the worship that liberty in the abstract has evoked and the literature it has called into being would have emancipated the race long ago.

The economic rent of land is a social product, and liberty will be fully recognised when and as this fund is earmarked for the uses of the people as a whole. This is what we are out to advocate. Does any one object that this bold stroke is not practical politics? Then let him look round on the red revolution that is stalking through Europe, and ask himself what this portends to a society like ours, so far removed from economic justice and freedom.

Political liberty which but the other day was wrung from the bourgeoisie, is now appearing as the liberty to search for employment. The idea still prevails that work is scarce, and as those affected discover the opportunities to industry the old-time belief in shorter hours gives place to aspirations of a more far-reaching character. With this stream of thought Single Taxers can go forward with renewed hope and confidence in their claim for the liberty the race must have to avail itself of the means of life.

J. P.