



LAND & LIBERTY

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PEACE AND INDUSTRY

The cause of International Peace in its orderly steps towards general disarmament continues to be the subject of much public discussion. Open diplomacy has taken the place of the secret kind that in the bad old days provoked war and planned for the day of affliction. The public now know what is going on behind the scenes; the rest we are assured is a matter of time and patience. In this optimistic mood the Five-Power Conference to be held in London next month counts for so much progress. It might stand for more, if the spirit of invention could be arraigned, or persuaded that in future it must exercise its gifts for the uplift of the race and not for its downfall. But such a reflection may be more suited to some other occasion.

The Conference stands in the first place for fewer instead of more battleships. It is a step in the right direction and an alert, if not a fully instructed, public exists prepared to carry the conversations beyond the limits of the agenda. In a word the Conference, in however sensitive a manner, represents a growing opinion that the time has come for the nations to consort together for peaceful ends; or go to perdition, one after another, as civilizations have gone before.

In its pursuits of peace and goodwill through an international union of forces the Government still earns and receives the moral support of the people. But Parliament is again in session; home affairs come under review, and measures must be considered in accordance with urgent needs, not to mention election pledges. In the final analysis industrial anxieties at home shape and mould the thought that speaks for higher ethical standards.

Business depression still persists; and nowadays there are no leading bankers to scan the Heavens from their elevation, and give assurance of the early return of the rising sun of national prosperity. But perhaps this is just as well, for it was those omens, along with their own safeguarding excursions,

that more than anything else put an end to Mr Baldwin's Safety-First Cabinet. A new Parliament is now master of the situation and as with the one that passed out in May last, unemployment in all its degeneracy continues to fret the public mind. Winter has come and despite the provision of millions of pounds sterling voted by Parliament, for so much development, there is no abatement in the pitiless struggle for work and wages.

We are often admonished that for social reform it is not land but money that is of primary importance. In the Housing debates this was the plaint and after ten years of it the London County Council, to take only one public body, in respect of housing, has a debt of £30,750,000, while 156,000 persons are on its doorstep pleading for decent housing accommodation. In a wider survey the National Housing and Town Planning Council report that in Great Britain there is overcrowding in two million houses.

Post-war reconstruction schemes involving great expenditure and increase in the public debt were fashioned on the same patent fallacy, the fallacy that land is a minor factor in industry and enterprise, and that the public purse is equal to the exactions of land speculation at any time, or place. But the importance of the land question can only be brushed aside by words without meaning. In practice, land monopoly remains the stubborn obstacle in the path of the reformer. As Henry George observes:—

Just in proportion as the interests of the landholders are conserved, just in that proportion must general interests and general rights be disregarded, and if landholders are to lose nothing of their special privileges, the people at large can gain nothing. . . . For one of the elements of the present market value of land is the expectation of future increase of value, and thus to buy up the lands at market rates and pay interest upon the purchase money would be to saddle the producers not only with the payment of actual rent, but with the payment in full of speculative rent.

This illuminating and relevant passage from *Progress and Poverty* (Book VII., Chapter III.) sheds light on the true and unchanging obstacle to employment and social progress.

The Lord Privy Seal, apart from his captivating chase after what he takes to be some of the causes of unemployment, has not been allowed to forget the land blockade. In reply to a question in the House of Commons as to when the new legislation for dealing with the acquisition of land and the unearned increment would be introduced, Mr Thomas said:—

The Government have fully in mind the importance of this question in relation to the unemployed problem. I desire to say I am consulting the Law Officers of the Crown at the moment with a view to speedy legislation. When it is remembered that I have sanctioned scores of schemes—at least thirty Bills must pass this House before municipalities can get on with the work—the emergency will be admitted.

The emergency is admitted; but it is not a thing

of yesterday. It has confronted all previous Parliaments bent on reconstruction and why it has been allowed to remain will be seen later on—when the Taxation of Land Values is again the subject of debate! The Cabinet Committee on Unemployment has not yet through its spokesman given out much hope of an early easement of the position. And if the translation of these thirty Bills into Acts of Parliament depend upon the Law Officers of the Crown fixing the amount of "unearned increment" to be taken, and how, the emergency is likely to last through the winter months.

The breakdown of the Cabinet Committee has been widely canvassed during the past month and a cry (feeble as yet) has been heard calling for a national effort to deal with the problem. The idea takes the form of a three-party Conference, Labour, Liberal and Conservative—a sort of coalition to rally, in a losing battle with the established agencies responsible for idle men and idle capital. The Liberals have offered their services and the Prime Minister has said he is willing to consider the proposal if the opposition parties are prepared to co-operate. Mrs Philip Snowden, who first made the suggestion, in an interview with the *Daily News*, said:—

The problem is so big that it is beyond the power of any man, no matter what his party, to solve it. I suggested to the Lord Privy Seal, that he should state this in the House of Commons, and make his appeal to men of goodwill on both sides of the House to co-operate with him in attacking what is a national and not a party problem.

It goes without saying that it is not the fault of the Lord Privy Seal that he has failed to bring order out of chaos, in his special department. But whether the problem be scheduled for Party ends or given National status does not by a hair's-breadth alter its disposition, or lighten the task of its solution. We have now before us the concrete proposals of the Cabinet Committee on Unemployment. The question is, how would this programme differ in essence from that of the proposed All-In National Council?

A coalition to grapple with the problem suggests the failure of the Government before its plans are fairly under way; suggests defeat before the fight begins. But that is their concern. On the question affecting the claims of the land monopolist, or the capitalist combine, to hold the public to ransom the House of Commons is a house of conflicting interests. It will not help to look at this hard fact and pass by on the other side of the street. The goodwill the Government can command for its measures in the Commons will be found in the division lobby, or not at all.

In a further Press interview, Mrs Snowden, referring to the growing support for her proposals, urged among other items "the setting up of an industrial Cabinet to be composed of big business men responsible to the Government." But how could such a Cabinet be blessed with more knowledge than the Government themselves possess? If such a Cabinet could do better than the Lord

Privy Seal's Cabinet Committee, well and good, but first let us have a look at the new proposals. When the late Lord Oxford was solicited by a deputation to consider a Business Men's Cabinet, he replied that when he was in practice as a barrister half his time was occupied in rescuing business men from the disastrous effects of their own folly. We do not recall the composition of that deputation, or what afterwards happened to it.

It will not do to blame the want of goodwill for the delay in framing up the Lord Privy Seal's thirty Bills, designed to set the municipalities free to get on with the work. Goodwill has its own place in human life and aspirations but it never can be a substitute for the equal rights of all mankind to the free gifts of the Creator. Accept the prevailing partial and legalized distribution of God's bounties as this is done in common thought and speech and it would seem to follow that not even a Committee of Angels from Heaven itself could solve the unemployment problem. On occasion we are derisively told, there is no one cure for unemployment. The men with many cures, thirty or more, are discovering at first hand that there is *one* obstacle to their advance, in any direction. This is so much gain. The *one* obstacle to industry having been glimpsed there is hope for that *one* cure—later on.

In the jargon of the day, business men and working men, so defined, are urged to work hard, or the industrious foreigner will successfully invade and capture the markets for our export trade. But if hard work is the remedy for this menace why the conspiracy of silence on a system of land tenure that daily and hourly drives willing workers into idleness? Land monopoly is the *ca' canny* rule that privileged persons can observe with impunity. It is the very source of the habit, and it must be examined and exposed if hard work and general prosperity be the cure for unemployment. It is the land monopoly at home and not the foreigner that is responsible for bringing the plans of the Lord Privy Seal to a standstill.

An after-dinner orator, the other day, gave it as his opinion that you cannot get more out of industry than is put into it. This is the hard work theory in another dressing. It is not in dispute, in the abstract. But the bothersome question remains: how some people who put nothing into industry and who are not prepared to put anything into it, can still get so much out of it? This leakage must be stopped, if the gospel of hard work is ever to have any influence in field, factory or workshop. Its persistence amid so much discussion and research probably can best be explained on the principle of "that mental habit which makes anything that has long existed seem natural and necessary."

In a very real sense there is no international problem to solve. Ships of war are not built on international ground. They are built and launched from the various home fronts, and the industry in all its branches provides a living wage to millions of workmen.

Sir Allan Smith, Chairman of the Engineering Employers' Federation, refusing the claim of the

trade unions for an increase in wages (*The Times*, 28th November), said:—

The question of disarmament was one of great gravity. Disarmament extended to the land and air forces as well as to the navy. All branches of the engineering industry were concerned, directly or indirectly, in the production of armaments and disarmament would have a very serious effect.

The peace talk that ignores the question of alternative employment for the workers concerned in a reduction of armaments is one that can accomplish little or nothing of its aim and object. The dread of unemployment, like the thing itself, bars the way to international agreement. It is argued that money released from the production of armaments can be turned into peaceful industry. That means no relief to the taxpayer, and so long as there is a million unemployed the unwanted armament maker has no guarantee that he will get one of the new jobs. Trade union leaders have already sensed this truth and, like Sir Allan Smith, have sounded the alarm.

In the early days of post-war reconstruction general prosperity was held to be the cure for unemployment. This was like saying that if there were no unemployment there would be none. The reflection was a comfort to some politicians and they made the most of it. But the prosperity still keeps its distance and judging by the pro-poverty measures recently passed it tends to get completely out of sight. The belief that it is the solution of the unemployment problem that will bring along the general prosperity has now become popular. This marks progress. There is a majority in the Commons for land value taxation; what is lacking in this strength is a recognition of the relationship of the policy to unemployment and hard times.

In the public discussion of the subject it has been openly said that there is not enough work to go round. This means, if it means anything, that there are not enough opportunities to work. It is not only not true—it is blasphemous as well. If there is not enough work to go round it is because the openings to work are made scarce and dear by selfish interests. The taxation of land values would remove this disability and for this reason it is closely related to the problem of unemployment. The policy, as we never tire of reminding our good-natured critics, is not everything, but without it what can they accomplish?

Mr MacDonal in making his friendly offer to co-operate with the Opposition leaders on the question of additional employment said the responsibility of the Government must always be safeguarded. What exactly this connotes is a trifle obscure, for it should not be difficult to realize that if this new Council fails, as fail it must, the responsibility of the Government will follow as a matter of course. And worse still their supporters in the country will be faced with the taunt that after all there is no distinct or separate Labour cure for unemployment. The economic force that will not stand still to enable the Lord Privy Seal to work his own way is not likely to be at his command when he engages Mr Lloyd George and Mr Baldwin in the struggle.

It is blatantly proclaimed that as we mobilized

for war so can we mobilize for new life and hope in industry. The conception is alluring; but a collection of resemblances is not an analogy. The enemy on the bloody battlefield of 1914-18 was strong enough on all counts, as some who won the war can tell, but he was not just so formidable as the law of rent. If the combined forces of Europe were to be mobilized for the salvation of industry and commerce nothing would come of it, so long as land monopoly endures. J. P.

THE MANCHESTER MUNICIPAL CONFERENCE

Representatives of 120 local authorities in Lancashire and Cheshire met in the Town Hall on 3rd December at the invitation of the Lord Mayor, acting upon a resolution passed by the City Council to consider the question of the Rating of Land Values. The Lord Mayor presided. A resolution was adopted by 65 votes to 23 giving general approval to the policy, without, however, committing the bodies that were represented. A committee of seven was appointed to consider further steps. The *Manchester Guardian* of 4th December, gives an extensive report of the proceedings, which we hope to reproduce next month. The calling of the Conference was due to the initiative of Councillor Weller, who moved in the matter in the Manchester City Council in July last. He is to be warmly congratulated on the result.

The remedy for all economic ills is in the removal of their causes. But effects are often mistaken, for causes and measures are consequently taken which only change the form or the place of the disease. The salvation of the agricultural industry in America and elsewhere can be found only in freedom—freedom from the depredations and restrictions of the landlords and tariffmongers. In our own country the electorate has once more rejected Protection and its aliases, but the “robber that takes all that is left” (landlordism) has yet to be disposed of. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is pledged to begin this great task by a Budget tax on land values.—From the October number of the *Porcupine*, monthly bulletin of the Manchester Land Values League.

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Yet another Henry George abridgment has been produced by Mr Will Atkinson, of West Virginia. It is a small pamphlet edition of *Protection or Free Trade*. Important passages of the original work are quoted *verbatim*, and are linked together by Mr Atkinson's condensation of the remaining matter. Copies are obtainable from our offices, price one penny each.

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We have been pleased to receive the attractive souvenir programme of the Henry George Dinner held in Sargent's Banquet Hall, Sydney, N.S.W., on 23rd September. It contains notable statements by Prof. John Dewey, the Rt. Hon. Philip Snowden, C. B. Fillebrown, of Boston, and others, and quotations from Henry George's writings. The speakers at the Dinner were Mr C. R. Swan, President of the New South Wales League, and Alderman J. R. Firth, Mayor of Strathfield, who delivered the Commemoration Address.

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Dr J. J. Pikler, of Budapest, writes:—“Can I have more copies of the Municipal Manifesto, issued by the United Committee? It is a fine piece of work and could be helpful to me here as well as in Prague, where I am addressing meetings.”