

### "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.

### LABOUR UNREST AND SYNDICALISM.

The Government is holding an inquiry into labour unrest. It is not lightly to be presumed from this, that the inquiry will proceed very far in the direction of tracing the basic causes of the trouble. The probability is that the Committee will seek such evidence as will enable them to throw some sop to the discontented workers of this country. There are already such ideas in the minds of men as those of Boards of Arbitration, Minimum Wages, Labour Co-partnerships, and similar palliatives, which will not palliate, and the inquiry may bring out other methods of "how not to do it." The Leader of the Opposition brought forward at Glasgow on May 21st the proposition—unique in its absurdity—that discontent with the conditions of labour is more marked in this country than anywhere else. Mr. H. Bonar Law is noted for the inaccuracy of his statements, and his latest "bloomer" need not stagger anyone.

The unfortunate thing about the whole business is that he is only one of many blind guides. He sees that the Budget of 1909 has come, but the New Jerusalem is, like Royal Charlie, "lang a' comin'." It would be a good thing if he would also note that his pet panacea has not only come, but it has gone so far as this country is concerned. Further, it is going, so far as other countries are concerned, for the signs of discontent are no less marked where Protection reigns supreme than they are in our so-called Free Trade country.

Such a phase of the discussion may be dismissed with the contempt it merits, and we may well devote our attention to the newer and untried proposals. Syndicalism has been very much to the front. We are not told that it is a new doctrine, but we are assured that it got a big push forward at Limehouse. So far as we are able to judge, it would be a good thing to have a reprint and a redistribution of the Limehouse speech. At the moment Mr. Lloyd George shares the honours with Mr. Rogue Riderhood, of having a connection with that neighbourhood.

Syndicalism is older than Limehouse by about sixty years. "There were giants in those days," and their influence is being felt now. The workers—not of this country—but of all countries, were called on by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to unite, as they had "a world to win, and nothing to lose but their chains." The call to unite is being answered to some extent now, and we need only be sorry that the actions taken are not guided by a clearer perception of the means necessary to attain the desired object.

Syndicalism not only challenges the present industrial system, but it is capable of challenging any industrial system, even that of Socialism. Its methods are destructive rather than constructive. By its doctrines a State may be promoted within a State. It works on sectional lines now and its object is to arouse a class consciousness. With the attainment of its present object it hopes to begin the class war and capture the workshops.

What it proposes to do after it has captured the workshops is still a mystery. It knows how to stop production and no doubt it is the business of others to solve the problems which make such a movement possible. Like the Trusts and the Kartels, it seeks to withhold labour until it can secure a certain fixed price. We are not over-rating its harshness and its tyranny. Being at war it uses the methods of war, and does not proceed by the pelting of confetti or rose-leaves. It is useless to complain that its exponents are outlawed. They would be equally so in any State which had to determine that production was to be permitted to go on. Further, it is useless to make comparisons between the statements of irresponsible aristocrats and lawyers who are not to be taken seriously with the statements of those who are being taken seriously. There are certain kinds of volunteer revolutionaries who are no menace to any State. The only danger of their shouldering a rifle would be to themselves.

Labour unrest has its roots deep in present civilisation. Philosophers like Mr. A. J. Balfour may question if the Syndicalist can guarantee us a production of goods equal to the present, or a progress in industrial development such as we have witnessed. If he has no remedy for the distress, he is every bit as destructive in his philosophy as the Syndicalist. The fact is, that the present system is declaring its bankruptcy; it is richer in "friction" than in "progress." Until the better methods are forthcoming the evil methods must hold the field.

Meantime we can say that a withdrawal of labour is not such a comfortable thing as the withholding of other things. There is a wrong appreciation of the position as between the parties concerned in the distribution of the present product. A landlord who holds or withholds land just as he likes, and who occupies the comfortable position depicted at Limehouse, cannot be copied successfully by a labourer. There is a story of a landlord—an Irish landlord named Murphy—who put himself on the retired list, and did very well. He went to bed and stayed there for some years. Although perhaps a little awkward, he managed to pursue the pleasures of drinking wine and playing cards there. Being a landlord, he had no other functions to perform except those of pursuing his own pleasures, and his scheme was a practical one. He did not starve nor did he want for any necessary thing, and this is accounted for solely by the fact that his whole interest was that of a consumer.

A worker is in a different category. When he stops producing he brings himself to the position of a non-consumer. Even if he could permanently improve his position by such a step it can be urged that the method is rather costly. In addition, the people who suffer most by a stoppage of any kind of work are the workers themselves. Four weeks of a coal strike made very little difference to the consumption of the very rich. Even with prices raised 100 or 200 per cent. they were able to get the fuel they required. At the other end of the social scale there was a different story to tell. It is unnecessary to again go through the harrowing details which demonstrated themselves in soup kitchens and other adjuncts of our civilisation.

If the Syndicalist method was necessary, we could see the force of pursuing it, however regrettable its consequences might be. Being unnecessary, it is also insane. The way to get wages raised is not to take the people out of work who are now employed, but to put the people into work who are unemployed. When we propose this alternative to Syndicalism, we get back to the land question. In the vain regrets expressed by politicians at the difficulty of trying to elevate the working classes, we see the existence of the old determination to do everything for the working people except get off their backs.

We have been hearing a considerable amount lately of the land robberies of the past. What concerns us is the landlord robberies, and worse than robberies, of the present.

Not only is corn withheld, despite the Scriptural injunction, but corn land is withheld. The margin of cultivation is pressed down, to use the language of the older economists. People have to cultivate poorer qualities of agricultural land, that the better land may be held for sport. When we have found the physical margin of building land in the towns we have to go further afield for housing accommodation in order that speculators may put their blighting hand on the desirable building land within the community. If we want clay, coal, iron, timber, stone, or anything else, we have to pass beyond desirable quantities, as permission cannot be got to work them on reasonable terms. As Henry George says, it is like a man having to swim a river in order to get a drink of water.

Now all labourers, whether they realise it or not, have to work on land. If they are farmers or labourers they need land. Should they be brickmakers they are in the same plight. The bricklayer cannot find employment till the would-be employer can profitably secure some building land. Let there be ever so much capital seeking investment in mining, the work of miners will be restricted by the withholding of seams of coal or the demand for exorbitant royalty rents. The moulder, the turner, and the fitter need land just as truly as does the agriculturist.

All men are employed on land, and the limitation of land brings a limitation of employment. This produces an unwholesome competition—not to do better than the other man—but to secure his job. Wages are brought down by this method to a subsistence level, and even if you raise the money wages, you cannot guarantee that increased prices will not absorb all the increase. There is no inquiry needed into industrial unrest. Charles Bradlaugh long ago defined Socialism as the cry of hunger. As a definition it represents Syndicalism and labour unrest even better. A hungry man has a right to cry, and it is the duty of those who are not hungry to increase the volume of sound.

We want more Limehouse speeches, not less. The present danger is that democratic leaders will be taunted into becoming conventional or, as our opponents would describe it, respectable. At this stage they will be no use to the democracy. So far as landlordism is concerned, "the writing is on the wall." It is not the function of the man with his hands on the plough to look backward—

"Though the ploughshares cut through the flowers of life to its fountain,

Though they pass o'er the graves of the dead and the hearths of the living."

Let us have less inquiry to find out what we already know. What we want is action. Upheavals can only be prevented by removing the cause of the trouble. The cause of labour unrest is low wages brought about by land monopoly, and this monopoly can be broken by a direct tax on land values.

W. R.

### "LOOK AT THE LAND QUESTION."

The people are getting too halting in the application of their principles, and many politicians too are afraid of their principles. Gigantic problems are waiting settlement, but Parliament is afraid. All parties seem to be affected with this nervous prostration. Even the Tories are afraid of their principles. (Laughter.) But what about the Liberals? Now I am at home I mean to talk freely. Look at the land question. Up to the present they had dealt with it as if they were handling a hedge hog. . . . I am one of those on the look-out for icebergs ahead.—MR. LLOYD GEORGE at Swansea, 28th May.

These words are not taken from the leading article of the May issue of LAND VALUES; they are taken from the speech delivered by Mr. Lloyd George at Swansea

on May 28th. Some good friends of ours in the Liberal camp thought we were rather severe on the Government last month in our criticism of its land policy. We just wonder what they think of this view of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject.

Perhaps Mr. Lloyd George has been reading his May LAND VALUES: perhaps not; but in either case, in this Swansea speech, he has taken sides with us in his scathing reflection on the ineptitude of the Liberal party on the land question. Like all other parties, he says, the Liberals are affected with nervous prostration, and that up to the present they have dealt with the land question as if they were handling a hedgehog. This indictment is especially true of his own partial and discriminating Budget land taxes and the water-logged valuation now drifting its way like a derelict through the sea of politics at once a menace and an obstruction to land reform.

What Mr. Lloyd George is really saying is that the Liberal Party, pledged to a radical solution of the land question, is about shipwrecked on the ocean of its own ignorance. The party is pledged up to the hilt on the Taxation of Land Values, and all the Government has succeeded in doing with the question is to mix it up and muddle it up so that no man with a knowledge of the question can see the way out.

In one of the Budget debates, Mr. Lloyd George declared that not one of his taxes would have the approval of Henry George. He was quite correct in this statement, but it would have been better for the Chancellor to-day and what is more important, better for the country if he could not have made this empty boast.

There is only one right way to tax land values, and that is Henry George's way. His advice to the politicians was that they should gradually relieve industry of the burden of taxation, while substituting the value of land as the true standard by which to measure the citizens' contributions to the public revenue. This is a plain, straightforward course to steer. It does not discriminate as between one landlord and another, nor as between one form of land value and another; it simply decrees that land values, as such, shall contribute towards the needs of the State and that correspondingly, taxes on industry and on enterprise shall be removed.

Mr. Lloyd George says he is now on the lookout for icebergs ahead. Well we are just a trifle suspicious about the kind of marine glasses he has equipped himself with for this particular duty. But even if they are of genuine make, what then! Are not Mr. Sidney Webb and his Fabian Officers still in command of the ship?

What is wanted is an authoritative statement as to what is the attitude of the Government in regard to the Taxation of Land Values. The Memorial of the Land Values Group in the House of Commons asks for a national tax on land values and for powers to local rating authorities to rate land values for local purposes. What is the reply of the Government to this demand? The assumption is that the Government favours this policy and that they will put a direct tax on land values at the earliest possible moment. If this is so, when, may we ask is the country to get a lead on these lines. If the assumption is without foundation surely we are entitled to know this without delay from those who can speak with authority.

Why cannot Mr. Lloyd George himself make a plain statement on the question? Is he determined to pursue that will-o'-the-wisp the future unearned increment tax, the reversion duty, and the equally impossible undeveloped land tax, or is he big enough and strong enough to scrap the lot and go for the straight and direct tax on all land values? This is the question that is really being put to him and to the Cabinet by the Land Values Group and their supporters in the country. Next to keeping a good lookout for the icebergs ahead, and we frankly admit their existence, is to know where not to look for them.