

"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.

PROGRESS.

We refer our readers to the report of the Glasgow Conference. There is much satisfaction to be derived from a review of our position now as contrasted with our position in 1899 when a Land Values Conference was last held in Glasgow. We stood at that time on the threshold of the South African War and were suffering to the full limit the so-called blessings of a Conservative Government. The Conference just held took place in the midst of labour wars and rumours of more wars. Sixty years ago the "workers of the world" were asked by a prominent writer "to unite" as they had "a world to gain and nothing to lose but their chains." In the interval of 12 years between the two Conferences to which we have alluded, we have seen the workers of the world disunited, and we have seen them united in pathetically futile attempts to improve their position.

It was a Single Tax poet who wrote that

"The billow bursts on the rock bound coast
And then goes hissing home.
But the only trace of its savage might
Is a sheet of flashing foam."

Labour has still to learn that all its outbursts of fury are fated to exhaust their energy on the rock of monopoly.

The workers of the world must do something more than unite. Except they have a definite attainable object in view their efforts will be worse than useless. The time and money spent in promoting organisations which must finally split on the rock of land monopoly, if properly directed can win the world for the worker in real truth. So long as landlordism continues to be a thriving and prosperous traffic, so long will labour be casually employed and underpaid. Industry and monopoly cannot thrive together in the same country, and the only real Social Reformers are those who seek to remove monopoly.

Believing that we have not only the best but the only rational remedy for present-day ills, we can survey with some satisfaction the progress made between the landmarks we have mentioned. Not that we would pretend that all or any of us are satisfied; people who follow an ideal are difficult to placate in matters of partial attainment. The spirit of our movement in regard to the rate of progression can be gathered from the remarks of the various speakers at the Conference.

We were not sorry to see that our people were keeping a watchful eye on the situation and were ready to offer criticism and suggestions. Criticism can be both helpful and hurtful. Those who point to a bad move are doing

a good turn to the propaganda, but the danger of being urged to take a hasty and false step has to be avoided. The movement is passing through a critical phase, and loyalty demands that no ill-considered or half-considered action shall be pressed forward.

Whatever degree of satisfaction may be derived from the immediate outlook there is certainly much to be thankful for in the progress already made. One year after the first Glasgow Conference of 1899 we had a General Election in which blind passion held sway. The outposts of the Empire got all the attention; the heart of the Empire witnessed the decay of the Empire builders. This decay was due to the absence of three things which are easily obtainable, if we but remove the obstacle of land monopoly. Sunshine, air, and food have a high use value, and Nature intended that they should have a low exchange value. Landlordism has thwarted the decrees of Nature in these matters, and made such things difficult to obtain. The 1900 General Election saw little attention given to real troubles. We were opening up opportunities for labour abroad—"pegging out claims for posterity." Later we made the discovery that it was indentured Chinese underpaid labour for which we had provided. The soldier crossed the sea to get the expansion for industry that the tax and rate-collectors could easily have obtained at home. The only sop held out to the workers was a promise of Old Age Pensions, which the workers afterwards learned were to come out of their own pockets if they were to be paid at all.

Six years later a vast difference of opinion was noticeable in regard to the needs of the Empire. We had a Premier who talked of making the land "a treasure house for the nation instead of a pleasure ground for the rich." When Old Age Pensions came to be considered in earnest, it was seen that the landlords would require to be invited to contribute, or else the scheme was doomed to disaster.

Just at the time when Tory reactionaries thought the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in a dilemma between increased expenditure and the maintenance of Free Trade finance, they discovered that taxation on our lives was ripe for settlement. Our opponents did not bow before the inevitable. They set themselves to make a change in taxation from industry to monopoly as difficult as possible. The original attempts to get a valuation of land were frustrated, and recourse had to be made to a more cumbersome attempt to reach our object.

It would have fallen in with the programme of Land Value Taxers if we could have passed a Bill through both Houses of Parliament for the valuation of land. As we could not do so, we had to accept another method. Fortunately the Constitution was elastic enough to prevent our being completely overwhelmed by the forces of reaction.

The valuation on which we put so much store has been obtained through the Budget of 1909. Its operation was delayed for a year by our friends—the enemy. Ten years after the first Glasgow Conference valuation was provided

for; eleven years from the same date it was begun, and at the date of our other Conference—or after an interval of twelve years—the valuation is not yet completed.

From such facts our amount of satisfaction—such as it is—has to be extracted; and from them also our disappointments may be learned.

We have not yet got the Taxation of Land Values. In our present stress to obtain money for Education, Main Roads and Poor Law, such taxation is urgently needed. Our industrial concerns, if they are to be prosperous, will require to be emancipated from the burden of local rates, and a change is necessary in our system of financing local needs. There is therefore a crying necessity for Land Value Rating, but we have not yet obtained Valuations on which we can rate or tax. For this our opponents can take the amount of satisfaction they care. They have stop-gapped Valuation Bills, they delayed the Budget, they were successful in preventing the landlords from valuing their own land, and now they are "fussing" and "fuming" at the way the Government Valuers are making the Valuations.

Small houseowners who are paying twice as much in local rates as their land is worth are being told that they are to be robbed, by a system which in its most extreme form will only charge them half what they are paying now. It is good for every reason that a move should be got on, in the matter of Valuation. If the big landowners are not satisfied with the system of valuing supported by themselves, we invite their co-operation in securing a speedier, a cheaper, and a more accurate Valuation. As soon as we get Valuation completed their discomfiture will be complete and our "joy will be full." It will end controversy as to who is to lose and who is to gain.

So far as the ordinary Social Reformer is concerned, his hope is in our movement. If he helps us to tax Land Values, the monopolist will be helpless. A landowner will be called on to pay whether he lets the land for productive use, keeps it for sport, or allows it to lie idle. This will touch him in the pocket, his most sensitive spot, and he will hold on to less sporting and less idle land.

Every piece of land which comes into use will mean employment for somebody, and this will be the first solid step in improving the condition of labour.

As soon as unemployment diminishes, wages will rise, and it will be a real rise which will not be invaded by rates. More important still, the rise in wages will not be invaded by rent, for when men cannot hold on to land it will be let at more reasonable terms.

Higher wages, no rates, and less rent would mean the biggest step forward that the worker has yet accomplished. We have tried to show how near we are to and how far we are from such a consummation.

W. R.

SIR EDWARD STRACHEY'S LATEST PROPOSAL.

One of the charges made against Single Taxers is that they are theorists, and that practical remedies are wanted for the immediate future. For this reason many people who favour our propaganda will be tempted to "lend an ear" to the latest proposal of Sir Edward Strachey, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, noted in another column. There are some peculiar practical people; they forget nothing and they learn nothing. So far as their certificates are concerned they usually supply them to themselves. They are like the good lady who claimed that she ought to know how to fetch up a family when she had buried seven of her own.

The number of schemes for rearranging who shall own the land of the country have been quite plentiful. They have all, however, been as useless as they have been numerous. We put out one set of landlords and put in another, only to find that by unforeseen circumstances our object has been defeated.

A peasant is given the position of landlord on condition that his whole future shall be mortgaged. Thinking to escape from the landlord and rack-rent, he flies into the arms of the money lender and other troubles he has not anticipated. The trail of the financial serpent is over all such schemes, and no modification of them, not even the one proposed now, is likely to mend matters very much.

The latest proposal is to make the County Council the landlord. It is a body usually experienced in that business. We have had landlords serving on County Councils who refused to carry out improvements urged by the Council. No doubt we shall have some who can teach the County Councils how to buy land at a profit to the landowners. We have yet to learn that ownership has any productive value, and as practical people we urge schemes to get land used rather than to change ownership.

According to this latest proposal the Valuation of Land is to be useful in deciding how much the community are to pay to the landlords. Our interest in Valuation consists in seeing how much the landlords are to pay to the community. It is not necessary for the ratepayers to "stump up" in order to get land used. If we on the value of his land make the landlord pay he will hurry his land into use. One of the tempting baits of the County Council ownership scheme, is that the tenants are to have compensation for improvements. We know that kind of compensation as we have seen it before.

Let us look at the matter squarely. The County Councils have not vaults containing a hoard of gold. A County Council is not the Bank of England. If the landlords are to be compensated first, as they must be under the scheme, who is to pay the piper? Manifestly it must be the ratepayer, and the charges will be assessed on these improvements which are to be compensated for, after they have been wiped out by rates. The proposal is largely an admission of the failure of County Council administration, particularly in respect of the Small Holdings Act. Six new Commissioners have been appointed to jogg things along and there is practically nothing to justify the additional appointments after ten weeks have elapsed.

According to Sir Edward Strachey, the great landlords had been selling and were still selling. This was to be expected. People usually sell when they expect a slump in the near future. No doubt these great landlords will feel a greater sense of security now. If they are to be bought out by County Councils instead of being taxed on their monopoly they will have some substantial reasons for holding on. The effect of all purchase schemes is simply to strengthen the "strangle hold" which the landlord has on land.