

these measures would at once place at the disposal of the State a large part of the communally created values. The levy on capital might result in the State acquiring a proportion of the land, and part of the capital in many industrial concerns.

By this process the poor man, the wage-earner, and the man of a limited income would enjoy a greater, not a less immunity from taxation. Only thus and by maintaining complete freedom for imports, it may be possible to support the period of high prices which will necessarily follow the war.

(b) *The Second Challenge is to the Land Monopoly*, which not only preserves communal values in private hands, but endows private individuals with the power of dictating the use of land, and so of commanding the lives and fortunes of their fellow-countrymen.

The breaking of the land monopoly must be a conscious aim of the policy. Land must pay to rates and taxes according to its real value, so that no owner can afford to refuse the use of his land either in town or country. Nor must the user of land be any longer burdened by taxes on houses and improvements, which are just as vicious as taxes on foodstuffs. The land may gradually pass to the community; but when it does so it must be after the land monopoly has ceased and when the prices of land have been reduced to a minimum by every acre being put to its best use. The landlords must not be bought out in the old style on the basis of the present inflated and unsocial values.

If land becomes easily available for all men and all industries the danger of unemployment will be infinitely less. We can then face as a manageable problem the provision of a full subsistence allowance for the temporarily unemployed and all the measures which will result from the break-up of the present poor-law system.

(c) *The Third Challenge is conveyed in the Demand that the workers in the industries of the country have a predominant right to decide the conditions under which they work, and to enjoy the results of their labour.*

To secure these ends, the war control of the nation over railways, mines, and shipping will have to be maintained and developed into state ownership. Where private employment continues, employers will have to admit the workers to a full share in the settlement of hours, wages, and general conditions. A national minimum of wages and conditions will have to be established by law in all industries. Hours of labour will have to be rigorously restricted.

There are other supremely important questions, such as education and housing. But it is useless to talk of a million new houses if the land monopoly continues, or of democratic education up to the university, if our revenue has to go to pay the interest of war-debt, or the manufacture of armaments.

The chief note of the new policy must be thoroughness. For the time of compromise, of the slow and patient evolution to a better social condition, has passed with the war. No reversion to pre-war programmes of a 25s. minimum wage and a moderate taxation of urban sites and educational facilities will satisfy the new demands. Our lives have been spoilt by compromise, because we tolerated armament firms and secret diplomacy and the rule of wealth. The world-war has revealed the real meaning of our social system. As imperialism, militarism, and irresponsible wealth are everywhere trying to crush democracy to-day, so democracy must treat these forces without mercy. The root of all evil is economic privilege. The personal problem which faces so many of us is that we cannot waste the rest of our lives in half-measures against it. Where

shall we find that political combination which will offer us resource in its strategy, coherence in its policy, and fearlessness in its proposals?

### THE FUNDAMENTAL REFORM

Mr. Charles Trevelyan has done a public service by the letter which appeared in the *NATION* of February 2nd. under the title "Can Radicalism and Socialism Unite?" He has there set forth succinctly and with convincing logic the position which confronts that great body of the electorate which has always called itself Liberal. Before the war the ægis of Liberalism covered almost every class of reformer. Enthusiasts of many varied types acknowledged some kind of allegiance to a powerful political organisation, or at least they realised that the Liberal Party as a party was the only one on which reliance could be placed to stem reaction and further the cause of progress. Before the war, in spite of grievous disappointments, reformers, and in particular the Land Values group, had no alternative but to maintain a connection with the Liberal Party. To sever all ties with it was to go out into the wilderness and abandon hope of early legislative action. No doubt even in early 1914 some were looking to the Labour Party, but in those days the Labour leaders with all their ability and influence were not within measurable distance of challenging the Liberals and the Conservatives as the ruling parties in the House of Commons. Therefore up to 1914 the hope of the supporters of the taxation of Land Values, as far as practical politics were concerned, lay in a more enlightened, vigorous and straightforward leadership for the Liberal Party.

Now the position is entirely changed. We have a Labour Party which is the only party in the State with a constructive policy. We have a Labour Party that is broadening the basis of its appeal to the country from a narrow class to a universal brotherhood of workers by hand or brain. We have a Labour Party that will be prepared when the next General Election comes in six months or less to challenge the supremacy of the older caucuses. Under these circumstances, as Mr. Trevelyan says, "Many Radicals are already openly joining the Labour Party. Others are hesitating, uncertain whether the reconstruction of the Labour Party means only a finer electioneering machine for registering discontent and class irritation in Parliament or a much bigger thing—i.e., the force which, utilising the best intellect of the country, will rally men of all classes to a broad policy of internationalism and economic revolution through law." It is to the realisation of this latter hope that all our energies should be bent; we must strive for the formation of an organisation that will unite all the forces of democracy throughout the country and carry them on to a triumphant period not of re-construction of the old rotten fabric of the State, but of construction of a new and immeasurably better community.

Before the war the evils to be combated were colossal enough to demand the concentration of all our energies. After the war, as Mr. Outhwaite has told us so impressively in his recent book, the difficulties will be so intensified that all the statesmanship at our command will be needed if the revolution that is bound to come is to be peaceful, and is not to degenerate into a riot of anarchy. But the difficulties ahead must not make us pessimists; they must only make us proportion our efforts to the task to be undertaken; and the programme which Mr. Trevelyan has sketched points out the only true line of action. He

formulates three fundamental challenges to the existing social and economic order; and each of the three challenges turns essentially on the land question. Mr. Trevelyan does not develop the dependence of the last challenge on a proper solution of the land question, but we are convinced that many of the difficulties which face industry will be solved by the creation of freer conditions by the Taxation of Land Values. When the land has been opened up the mass of unemployed and the consequent competition in the labour market which have enabled private employers to maintain their stranglehold on the lives of millions of their fellows will have disappeared. Under these circumstances we may safely leave the organised Trade Unions to assert their just rights to joint control.

But the fundamental land reform must be secured before we consider any of these subjects. It is because Mr. Trevelyan's letter emphasises that this fundamental reform must be placed right in the forefront of the programme of the democratic forces of Britain that it is so important. The next move lies with the Labour Party. How far will its leaders meet Mr. Trevelyan's demand? Time alone can show, but let us hope that no minor differences will be allowed to stand in the way of the formation of a great united, democratic *bloc* with the taxation of land values as one of its main rallying points, and, for our own part, let us work with all our power to bring into effective being such a combination of the forces of progress.

F. SCOPES.

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## THE RING FENCE OF LARGE ESTATES

Round some of our great manufacturing towns is a ring fence of large estates, which have been and are being converted from agricultural into building land. The owners of these estates have generally done nothing to promote the welfare or growth of these towns. They contribute little or nothing to the rates, but as the towns grow they can prevent expansion except on terms which impose for all time a heavy burden on the urban community. When trade is prosperous and the need for expansion becomes urgent, when new works and new dwellings are imperatively required, the owners, having a monopoly of the land necessary for the purpose, can fix rents permanently, either on long leases or grants in fee, subject to perpetual charges. When a period of depression follows these rents frequently become intolerable. The houses, often "jerry-built" to meet immediate needs, fall into disrepair. In many cases even the building societies which have lent money to finance the speculators who have erected the houses, go into liquidation, and the investors in the societies lose their hard-earned savings. The money drawn by the large urban landowners from many of our great towns is a heavy tribute which falls ultimately on the workers, who must live near their work in the dreary regions where there is nothing of beauty and nothing to interest in the dull, ugly streets, except the public-houses at the street corners. It would be no hardship if the landowners, when they obtain a great increase of revenue through their estates being turned into building land, were then compelled to set aside a certain proportion of the land so converted as allotments and open spaces. The local authority should have powers to regulate these allotments, which should be permanently used for the double purpose of enabling workmen to produce more wholesome food for their own consumption and of giving them healthy, useful recreation and more breathing space round their homes, and the opportunity of taking a real interest in them. Instead of actually setting apart so much land out of that which is sold for building, it would often be desirable to allow a money payment to a special fund, which the local authority could use for providing allotments in some neighbouring places where they could be more conveniently or profitably placed.—*Sir Alfred Hopkinson in the "Westminster Gazette," 21 January.*

But would it not be more to the point to make the land-owners pay their contribution by a rate on land values, a course which would soon stop speculation, and make it impossible for landlords to prevent land being used either for buildings or allotments?

Speaking at Keighley sixteen years ago, December 9th, 1902, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman said:—

"Why should we rest satisfied with our ring fences, which in the great centres of population are put round the town, beyond which people must go to have freedom to build. I have been speaking in the other hall about Free Trade, and the existence of overcrowding is to a large extent due to the maintenance of the same sort of restrictions and privileges at home as Free Trade has abolished in connection with our international commerce. Why should the owner of land gain by the exertions and industry and the enterprise of other people without any corresponding effort on his own part. Let him pay his share. Let his land be taxed and help in meeting the expenditure, and assisting the prosperity of the nation by which he profits. This seems to me in itself perfectly equitable, and it will have the immediate effect of putting an end to the immunity of the landlord now enjoyed, and the circumscribing of national expansion, and driving away from the towns industrial development. Nothing short, in my opinion, of taxation of land values will suffice to get at the root of this great matter, so vitally essential to the health and prosperity of the country."

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