

affairs, said: "The Soviet's land law, which aims at equalising the value or area of farms, had failed. There are still rich and poor in the purely peasant class. The better-off peasants must therefore be taxed; and the only way to tax them is to take a proportion of the yield of their farms."

This makes an interesting item of news. The Socialist conception of society will allow no place for the law of rent. It tries to overcome rent, tries to "abolish" it. As well try to shut out sunshine or stop the rain. The law of rent asserts itself after all. On one piece of land the same application of labour gives a greater return than on another piece of land of like size. If both must be occupied, the one labourer immediately has an advantage over the other. How unfortunate it was that the Soviet's land law was not based upon that principle, so easily perceived and so universal. But Marxian socialism was their philosophy—utter ignorance of and even contempt for any natural order. They "nationalised" the land, made it State property, tried to administer and control it so that the value of all farms should be "equalised." The new discovery that Nature cannot be treated so is a lesson that may yet be learned. The Soviets can apply it, as Tolstoi would have done, to make all land common property, and to establish the equal right of each to its use without foolishly attempting to interfere with Nature's laws. All that is necessary is to take the rent of land for public use and trust to freedom assuring to each the full reward of his labour.

An Omission.

By a regrettable oversight the names of Colonel Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., Mr. P. Wilson Raffan, M.P., and Mr. Sydney Arnold, M.P., were omitted in the brief review we made last month of the Election results. They deserve special mention as supporters of the Taxation of Land Values in the new Parliament. Mr. Raffan was the Secretary of the Land Values Group in the last and previous Parliaments, and Mr. Wedgwood one of its most active spirits. The strength and vigour both have contributed to the agitation in the House of Commons from the first day they entered its precincts will not, we are sure, desert them now, although the ranks of their colleagues are so sadly thinned. They who are in Parliament to fight land monopoly will have ample opportunity to make good their case as the land and housing schemes of the Government take shape. A few determined men will not so easily allow the interests of the common people to go by default. We hope to see the Land Values Group reformed, however few it may be in number. It will be the nucleus of a mighty and overwhelming force later on.

Elsewhere we report the results of the Penistone election, where Mr. Sydney Arnold was returned as an Independent Liberal.

THE HOUSING QUESTION

Castles in the Air and Hard Facts. The Case for Bradford

By FRED SKIRROW

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Public and private enterprise have so far failed to solve the housing question, and they are not likely to succeed until they adopt root remedies. Many people appear to think it unnecessary to look for causes and then remove them. And those who do so are very liable to be called "theorists," "faddists," etc. Most social reformers are more inclined to suggest either public or private charity as a means of helping poor working men to get better housing and other conditions.

What is the housing question? The well-to-do people had no housing problem in pre-war days. But with poor working men it was, and is, different. The problem is always pressing for solution. All that is needed for the building of castles in the air is a little leisure time and a vivid imagination. But to build suitable houses for working men to live in other things are needed—land and labour. These are absolutely essential. But with the aid of cranes, carts, horses, barrows, picks and shovels (capital) they can be built at a less cost of labour, and therefore cheaper than without such aids.

But labour and capital are utterly helpless without building sites (land) and building materials, which again can only come into existence when labour and capital get access to land. If the housing problem be due to scarcity of land, or labour, no Government or municipality can any more solve the problem than can private individuals. In pre-war times—and it will be so again unless we amend our vicious rating system—it was no uncommon thing to see eligible building sites and good stone-bearing land unused, whilst men able and willing to work walked the streets unemployed. Had builders, quarrymen, and others been able to acquire land on just terms labour and capital would have been employed in solving the housing problem.

From this employment of labour and capital beneficial results would naturally follow: (1) The unemployed men would get jobs. (2) With the absorption of the unemployed and the increased production of wealth real wages would rise. (3) The housing problem would be solved in most satisfactory manner—viz., by giving labour and capital access to land; without which access labour must starve and existing capital go to waste, in spite of all that housing experts can do.

The Bradford housing problem is not going to be solved by any scheme Bradfordians are able to devise until they have a more equitable system of rating. According to a Government Return published in 1913 (House of Commons White Paper 119 of 1913) Bradford with a population of 288,458 had a total area of 22,843 acres. Of this total acreage, 14,534 acres were classed as agricultural land and paid only £3,520 to the rates of the city. The remaining developed or built-upon land, 8,309 acres (a little over one-third of the total acreage), paid £600,906! Here is the evil—the primary cause of unemployment, low wages, bad housing, and economic poverty. If our unjust rating system were so amended as to discourage the holding of land for speculative purposes, and, at the same time, rates were taken from houses, shops, factories, and other forms of property, we might face the future with a good deal more hope than thoughtful men are able to do at present.

For, with rates based on publicly-created land values we would have not only a perfectly equitable system of rating, but the most effective method of keeping the land of the country free, and thus within the reach of those who desire it for productive purposes of all kinds.