

ON WAR, THE LAND, THE WORKLESS

"CATHOLIC HERALD" INTERVIEW WITH MR R. R. STOKES, M.P.

THE *Catholic Herald*, 16th December, gives large space to an interview with Mr R. R. Stokes, M.P., and to his appeal to its readers, the persuasiveness of which can be judged by the following extracts :

"It is surely time," Mr Stokes said, "that we Catholics realized that there is a solution to this unemployment problem, that the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount can be translated into the social structure governing our everyday lives.

"People do not seem to realize that as it is they themselves who create demand, the solution of the poverty problem lies in arranging society in such a way that each may apply his effort to meet that demand—a demand which under a properly organized Christian Society would only fail to be met if nature proved niggardly. We know that nature is not niggardly, that God has provided in nature enough for us all.

"We should liberate the land from its present monopoly control. By this I do not mean the depriving of the present landlords of their ownership, but rather the reframing of our laws in such a way as to encourage the best use of all land in the interests of the people as a whole.

"Let the landlords continue to own the land, but let them pay over to the common fund that value which land derives, not from the exertions of the owner, but from its situation and from the presence and activities of the community.

"Consider the difference between a field in the country and a building site in the heart of the town. It is the position of the latter in the midst of a busy, thickly populated community which gives it its value—not the industry of its owner.

"So, in varying degree, is it with all land. Surely it is only reasonable to suggest that this communally created value, this economic rent, should be collected by the community and used, in place of to-day's crippling rates and taxes, to pay the nation's bills."

Obviously you have this, thinks Mr Stokes:—"That it is clearly wrong that our laws should be so framed that what was meant for all has now become the monopoly of a few, and the masses must pay first for the privilege of existence a toll to those who hold undisputed control over the natural resources and can even refuse access to those resources if they so desire.

"What belongs to the individual must be used in the best interests of the public good."

And is there any way to stop war?

"Yes," says Mr Stokes. "We can stop war by curing poverty, and we can cure at least enforced poverty by insisting that the resources of nature provided by God for all are made available freely for the need of all."

Here in seven brief points is the way Mr Stokes sums up his ideas on the whole matter of work, food, freedom and security.

"1. All wealth is produced from land by man's labour.

"2. As all men have an equal right to live they must all have equal rights to the use of land, whatever their race, creed or colour.

"3. What a man produces by his labour is his. It does not belong to the State or anyone else.

"4. The value which attaches to land is due to the co-operation of the whole community and to the public services which are necessary for the existence of the community.

"5. To allow land values to be appropriated by individuals involves a double robbery. It deprives the community of the values which it has created and obliges the State to confiscate individual earnings to pay for public services.

"6. If some men hold valuable land unused or badly used, others are deprived of the opportunity of making a living.

"7. In order to carry out these principles and to secure economic justice and equality it is essential to remove all taxes on the production, exchange and consumption of goods and to collect the whole annual value of land as public revenue for the upkeep of both local and central government."

Finally, an appeal to the intellectuals.

"It is specially needed," says Mr Stokes, "that those privileged people who have received leisure for mental work through the labour of others may understand the iniquity of the present system, and regardless of their personal advantage use their best endeavours to put it right."

In the House of Commons on 13th December, Sir John Simon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, replying to Mr Alfred Bossom, said that the Government would contribute £100,000 toward the cost of acquiring as an open space and for addition to Parliament Square the site of Nos 14 and 15 Great George Street which the Middlesex County Council bought a short while ago. The latter are willing to abandon their proposed building and make the site an addition to the Square, if, with themselves making a sacrifice, the London County Council, the Westminster City Council and the Government will make up the price paid. That was altogether £373,000 (equivalent to £1,477,080 per acre) and the property had formerly had a rateable value of £6,300 a year. If all do unite in saving the site, it will not be they who are doing something generous. It will be another fantastic ransom which in the interests of the land monopoly these authorities will take out of the pockets of taxpayers and ratepayers.

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A distinguished and honoured veteran in the Henry George movement, Bolton Hall, died on 10th December at Thomasville, Georgia, whither he had gone to get away from the winter in New York. A man of lovable disposition, he will be missed by a great fraternity of friends and associates. His activities as author and lecturer over a long term of years would require much space to record. Numerous books stand to his credit, such as his *Three Acres and Plenty*, *Free America?*, the *New Thrift*, the *Game of Life*, etc. He gave 70 acres to found the "Single Tax Colony" of Free Acres which lies about 5 miles from Summit, N.J. British friends will remember the able part he took in the Oxford International Conference 1923 and the inspiration of his address "I am only One Man." He was present also at the International Conference in Copenhagen, 1926. He was one of the three members of the Joseph Fels Fund formed in 1909 which in its time did such great work. Failing health compelled him, despite the protests of his colleagues, to resign his membership of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. Let us pay tribute to the memory of one who so liberally devoted his talents to the promotion of social justice and the welfare of his fellow men. To Mrs Bolton Hall and their daughter, Mrs Kerrick, we extend our sincere sympathy.