

PEACE IN OUR TIME

By Chapman Wright

It is the common man who bears the brunt of war and its evils. Yet the common man is a quiet law-abiding citizen. Foreign common men are much like ourselves. But along comes one of our "uncommon" men and tells us that the foreigner is going to take the bread out of our mouths by claiming land thousands of miles away. We must therefore conscript, arm to the teeth and set out to mutilate, blind, wound, and kill as many foreigners as possible. So there is no Peace in our time. But is it the foreigner who takes the bread out of our mouths, or is it our own unjust laws which bring so many to unemployment and near to starvation?

It is a curious thing that man is the only animal that is content to starve in the midst of plenty. Consider the rabbit. Rabbits may not be specially "brainless," yet they seem free to eat and burrow to their hearts' content. Suppose they adopted our system and allowed a few rabbits to own the field as a monopoly, would they not speedily be afflicted with the same evils as ourselves, paying tribute for permission to live, with overcrowding and sem-starvation; and blaming "foreign" rabbits in the next field as causing their troubles! Even rabbits avoid this. Those of us who "have more brains than a rabbit" should use them for tracing effect to cause.

Let us face facts. Land monopoly results in millions having a constant struggle to live. The men who suffer do not realize the basic cause of their misery, and therefore are easily deluded by the "patriotic" cry of "Down with the foreigner." Thus no entreaties, no prayers, no efforts of Peace Associations, or Leagues, will secure Peace in our time while there remains the fundamental iniquity of land monopoly.

There is a method of dealing with this land problem which will end the withholding of land for mere speculation or sport yet cause no disturbance to those who put their land to appropriate use.

This is the reform: "Let the State call upon all landowners to contribute to national and local revenue according to the value of the land they own, whether the land be used or kept idle."

It should be borne in mind that the value that attaches to land is due to no individual effort or enterprise, but solely to the growth of the community. Thus sites in New Street, Birmingham, reach an annual value of £20,000 per acre. This land value is renewed every year merely by the proximity of a million inhabitants. Land Value is the *just fund* to provide national and local revenue.

By collecting this new Land Value revenue, we can *un-tax* earned incomes, food and other necessities. We can also *remove the rates* from houses and shops. The small owner, putting his land to appropriate use, would find that the saving by the removal of other rates and taxes would far more than compensate him for his small land value tax. As long as this tax is paid he will remain in full undisturbed possession of his land.

But no one would retain land *except* for appropriate use. Who, indeed, would lose money every year by retaining idle or half-used land when once the State began to collect a contribution levied according to its value if fully used. *Land Monopoly* would be ended. Tens of thousands of vacant building sites, and millions of acres of labour-starved food-producing land would be open to appropriate use on fair terms. The effect would be like the discovery of a new colony at our own doors, opening up avenues for every kind of industry. Intensive and scientific cultivation of our labour-

starved soil would produce vast food supplies, making the nation largely self-supporting. In exchange for this agricultural produce there would be the finest market in the world for our town goods. It would no longer be men hunting jobs, but jobs hunting men. Wages and salaries would rise accordingly. These earnings would be spent and further increase the demand for labour. *All anxiety about getting a living would disappear*, and industry, freed from rates and taxes, would boom.

What serious cause would there then be for war? It is not the foreigner who takes the bread out of our mouths. It is our unjust land laws which permit a few to monopolize the bulk of the land where all must live, move and have their being. These laws can be speedily changed. Taxation is imposed every year in the Annual Budget. To obtain an instalment of the reform it is only necessary to levy in the next Budget a tax on the annual land value of, say, four shillings in the pound, and to remove other taxes *pro rata*. The Budget, being outside the control of the House of (Land) Lords, the reform would be in partial operation within twelve months. Additional instalments of the tax could be levied in future Budgets until the total annual land value made by the people was collected yearly and used for national and local revenue. The land will then be national property in accord with the dictates of justice.

WHEN IS LAND NOT LAND?

A Ratepayers' Association and a Subtle Distinction

THIS WAS the conundrum put to delegates at this week's meeting of the Federation of Ratepayers' Associations of Middlesex, when the London County Council's Bill for the rating of site values was referred to.

It was recommended that all associations should interest themselves since, prophesied the Rev. T. W. Oswald-Hicks, of Winchmore Hill, this was likely to become a "burning question" in the near future.

When a delegate suggested that Foram arrange for an address on the subject of taxation of land values, several delegates hastened to point out that Foram was non-political and that such a subject was political, while others pointed out that there was a difference between "taxation of land values" and "rating of site values."

No one, however, appeared to know what the difference was, which prompted Mr E. A. Warren, of Southgate, Foram's popular "wag," to put his conundrum.

Mr R. W. Buss, of Hornsey, was not impressed by the suggestion of political implications.

"Is there ever any question in local government or parliamentary affairs which is *not* political?" he submitted. "If ever there were a time when the community should take up the question of land values or site values—there is not much difference from a political standpoint—the time is now."

The feeling of some delegates was that the London County Council's proposed rating of site values was but the "thin edge of the wedge" towards taxation of land values.

It was finally decided to arrange for a speaker to give an address on the rating of site values—*not* taxation of land values—and such speaker to be made aware of the fact that F.O.R.A.M. was non-political.

[We give this report as it appeared in the *Wood Green Herald*, 17th February.—EDITOR, *Land & Liberty*.]