

LAND VALUES.

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"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 sacred to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—Henry George.

THE COMING STRUGGLE.

A GLANCE AT THE PAST.

"COME with me; there are in England women and children dying with hunger—with hunger made by the laws. Come with me, and we will not rest until we repeal those laws." These noble words, addressed by Richard Cobden to John Bright, whom he found sorrowing over a new made grave, reveals the spirit which animated the heroes of the first great struggle against those vested interests, which flourish on the starvation, on the poverty, and degradation of the people. Inspired by Cobden, the nation took the first step toward freedom, toward true Free Trade. The immediate pressure was relieved, industry and commerce flourished, and, most important of all, for the first time for over a hundred years, wages took an upward tendency.* The first step was taken, and the path planned out for further progress. But the movement fell into degenerate hands, unworthy of its great leaders, and incapable of comprehending their policy, or being inspired by the spirit that animated them. Hence it was that, as Henry George expressed it †:—"The doctrines of free trade have been intertwined

* See "A Tragedy of English History." From this Office, One Half-Penny, or 2/6 per 100, carriage paid.

† "Protection or Free Trade." Post free, Paper 1/-, Cloth 1/6.

with teachings that throw upon the laws of nature the responsibility for the poverty of the labouring class, and foster a callous indifference to their sufferings." Hence it was that learned Economists who claimed to voice the doctrines of the new school of thought, whilst protesting against restrictions upon the exchange of wealth, "have ignored the monstrous injustice of its distribution, and have treated as fair and normal that competition in which human beings, deprived of their natural opportunities of employing themselves, are compelled by biting want to bid against one another." On the other hand, the advocates of Protection, of Preferential Tariffs, and such like nostrums, we mean remedies, constantly profess to be animated, and in many cases are undoubtedly animated by the desire to improve the conditions of the labouring classes—who feel themselves wronged, and who know they do not get a fair return for their labour—and boldly avowed their intention to make use of the power of government, or of taxation, to this desired and most desirable end.

THE PRESENT POSITION.

To-day Cobden's words are again true. To-day, again, there are in Great Britain women and children dying with hunger—with hunger made by the laws. To-day over seven per hundred of our fellow citizens are living in destitution, and over one third of the whole population are existing on or about the poverty line. To-day unhealthy conditions of life and industry, overwork, bad housing, and insufficient food, are undermining the physical, mental, and moral stamina of our race. To-day, sufficient food, sufficient clothing, aye, even sufficient of fresh, pure air, are the privileges of but a small minority of our children. Small wonder, then, that men are growing increasingly discontented with the fruits of the prevailing social laws and institutions; that some radical change in our national policy is universally felt to be urgent and necessary; and that a remedy for the existing state of affairs is the avowed aim of all who venture to appeal for the support of the labouring classes, who feel themselves wronged, though unfortunately, they may have yet to learn the source and cause of their sufferings.

PROPOSED REMEDIES.

Apart from those who advocate mere palliatives, and who would otherwise leave things much as they are, amongst which must be classed the rank and file of both the Conservative and Liberal Parties, two opposite and opposing schools of political thought are endeavouring to gain the ear and support of the nation. The one is voiced by Mr. Chamberlain, who, for reasons known only to himself, has thought fit to make himself the serviceable tool and mouthpiece of the most ignorant and reactionary of his former opponents. The other is voiced by a school of social reformers which during the past twenty years have found representatives and

co-workers in every part of the civilised world. The one would have the nation return to worship at the altars Cobden and Bright pulled down, and find social salvation in imposing restrictions on the exchange of wealth. The other would have the nation boldly push forward on the path indicated by these great heroes of the past, and find social salvation in removing all existing restrictions and hindrances to the production of wealth. In the eyes of one the enemy of labour is the foreigner, who would exchange services and commodities with us. In the eyes of the other the enemy of labour is to be found within our gates, in those who to-day prevent us from employing ourselves and producing for ourselves from those natural sources, forces, and opportunities, which nature has so lavishly placed at our disposal, but the use and control of which some few of our fellow citizens now claim as their sole prerogative, property, and heirloom. The cry of the one is for Protection. The cry of the other is for Land Reform. The immediate demand of the one is for the taxation of the people's food, under the guise of Preferential Tariffs. The immediate demand of the other is for the taxation of privilege and monopoly or, briefly, for the Taxation of Land Values.

THE REAL QUESTION AT ISSUE.

This, then, is the real question at issue. "We must broaden the basis of our taxation," was the oracular utterance of the nominal leader of the Unionist Party. The demand for a Preferential Tariff is the response of the small but powerful group of Tory reactionaries of which Mr. Chamberlain is the temporary mouth-piece, on the one hand. The demand for the equitable Taxation of Land Values, is the necessary response of those who would remain true to the traditions of the great struggles for freedom of the past, on the other. Whether they desire it or not, into one or other of these camps the logic of facts will force all who would play any part in the politics of the immediate future. Under divers pretences, pretences which can only deceive those who wish to be deceived, the one party would make the food of the people the basis of the taxation of the future, well knowing that by so doing they may be able to save their own class privileges from taxation, and regardless of its effects on the condition of the labouring classes. We, on the other hand, would make the land of the people, or rather the values which their presence, necessities, and activities give to the land on which they live and work, the basis of the taxation of the future, well knowing that by so doing we shall strike a deadly blow at the real enemy of labour—Land Monopoly—and help to free the landless masses from the deadly coil of those class privileges which flourish on their poverty and degradation. We know that freedom to produce wealth, which is now denied us, is of infinitely greater importance than any freedom to exchange it after it has been produced; in other words, that Freedom of Production is of infinitely

greater importance than Freedom of Exchange. And we know that Freedom of Production will be secured by that simple but effective and far-reaching measure known as The Taxation of Land Values. Either the progress toward freedom will be maintained and extended, or the landless masses will again find themselves the helpless bond-slaves of the landocracy and plutocracy of the country. The future of Britain, though fortunately not the future of our race, is in the balance. As in the momentous struggle of 1842, on the one side will be ranged the advocates of privilege, the upholders of monopoly, of "the sacred rights of property." On the other will be found the advocates of justice, the advocates of righteousness, of the still more sacred rights of man. The struggle may be a long and a bitter, aye, even a bloody one; but we have no doubt which side will ultimately prevail.

L. H. B.

THE AIM OF PROTECTION.

Consider, moreover, how sharply the theory of protection conflicts with common experience and habits of thought. Who would think of recommending a site for a proposed city or a new colony because it was very difficult to get at? Yet, if the protective theory be true, this would really be an advantage. Who would regard piracy as promotive of civilization? Yet a discriminating pirate, who would confine his seizures to goods which might be produced in the country to which they were being carried, would be as beneficial to that country as a tariff.

Whether protectionists or free traders, we all hear with interest and pleasure of improvements in transportation by water or land; we are all disposed to regard the opening of canals, the building of railways, the deepening of harbours, the improvement of steamships as beneficial. But if such things are beneficial, how can tariffs be beneficial? The effect of such things is to lessen the cost of transporting commodities; **the effect of tariffs is to increase the cost of commodities.** If the protective theory be true, every improvement that cheapens the carriage of goods between country and country is an injury to mankind unless tariffs be commensurately increased. The directness, the swiftness, and the ease with which birds cleave the air, naturally excites man's desire. His fancy has always given angels wings, and he has ever dreamed of a time when the power of traversing those unobstructed fields might also be his. That this triumph is within the power of human ingenuity, who in this age of marvels can doubt? And who would not hail with delight the news that invention had at last brought to realization the dream of ages, and made navigation of the atmosphere as practical as navigation of the ocean? Yet if the protective theory be true, this mastery of another element would be a misfortune to men. For it would make protection impossible. Every inland town and village, every rood of ground on the whole earth's surface, would at once become a port of an all-embracing ocean, and the only way in which any people would continue to enjoy the blessings of protection would be to roof their country in.

It is not only improvements in transportation that are antagonistic to protection, but all labour-saving inventions and discovery. We maintain a tariff for the avowed purpose of keeping out the products of cheap foreign labour; yet machines are daily invented that produce goods cheaper than the cheapest foreign labour.

The aims of protection, in short, is to prevent the bringing into a country of things in themselves useful and valuable, in order to compel the making of such things. **But what all mankind, in the individual affairs of every-day life, regard as to be desired is not the making of things, but the possession of things.**

From "Protection or Free Trade," by Henry George; p. 32-29.