

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.*

LAND GRABBING EXTRAORDINARY.

SMART FINANCIERS.

COMPLAISANT LEGISLATORS.

NEWSPAPERS come and newspapers go; business organisations flourish and business organisations decay; the latest means, methods, and machinery of production and distribution have to yield pride of place to still further improved means, methods, and machinery—but the land endureth for ever. It is, therefore, the ownership of land that alone can give a perpetual means of exploiting, a perpetual ownership of the men who have to live and work on it, a perpetual command of the fruits of their labour, individual and collective.

Some such thoughts must have been influencing Messrs. Harmsworth's minds when negotiating their latest deal. To obtain a constant supply of suitable paper, at the lowest possible cost, is a primary necessity of their widely extended newspaper business. Such paper is made of wood-pulp; and in their search for a supply of this raw material they or their agents

visited the fortunate or unfortunate Colony of Newfoundland. The Harmsworths were evidently prepared to spend large sums of money to establish the paper-making industry so necessary to their home business; and we can well understand that the Government of the Colony, being very anxious to see the money spent and the industry established in their country, showed themselves very desirous to meet the wishes of these enterprising capitalists from the Great Metropolis, the heart and centre of that world-wide Empire of which their island forms such an insignificant part. This gave these gentlemen the opportunity of a life-time, and evidently they were not slow to avail themselves of it. As a slight return or reward of their enterprise, they modestly asked, besides other valuable and important concessions, for some 3,000 square miles of land *for ever*. The temporary and transient administrators and rulers of the Colony did not say them Nay! in fact, they do not seem to have been able to refuse them anything. So, on January 12th of this year, a sort of contract or agreement was entered into, a contract containing conditions which we venture to say would not have been entertained for a moment by any other honest, responsible government in the civilised world, a contract handing over to these wealthy and enterprising, but politically irresponsible, men the unfettered ownership—in short the absolute government, the unrestricted and unrestrictable control of such an area in the heart of the most fertile district of the island.

Whether any such contract, full details of which we give in another column, is not in itself illegal and unconstitutional, we are not competent to determine, though the question should certainly be raised. In any case, however, it had to be confirmed by the local House of Assembly; and this was rushed through in such a manner as to leave little time for reflection, consideration, or discussion. On April 27th, resolutions confirming the contract were introduced by the Government. On the same day the Bill was read a first time. The very next day, on April 28th, it was read a second time. On May 2nd, the next sitting of the House, the Bill was committed. On May 3rd, it was reported, and on May 5th it was read a third time.

On May 10th a great public meeting of the citizens was held, which passed emphatic resolutions against the Bill. "It was a unique meeting," says *The Daily News of Newfoundland* of the next day, "composed of men of both sides in politics, of different class creed, and age, men representing large commercial interests, to protest against the bartering away of the heritage of their fellow-citizens." Nevertheless, so well had the ground been prepared that the Bill was sent on to the Upper House, or Legislative Council, where it was read a second time on May 12th, in spite of the protest and petition. On May 17th the Bill was committed and reported; on May 22nd recommended for a technical alteration and again reported;

and the third reading was set down for May 29th. On that date, however, for some reason or other, the third reading was deferred; and so this precious Bill has not yet reached this country to receive the necessary Royal assent; but the substance of the citizen's protest has been telegraphed to the Colonial office by Sir William Macgregor, the Governor of Newfoundland, and many questions apparently based thereon have already been put to the Government by some of the Liberal stalwarts.

Needless to add that we sincerely trust that this protest will receive the consideration it deserves; that the Royal assent to such a Bill will be withheld; and that it will be returned to the Colony for reconsideration. We know of no better means of bringing home to the minds of our fellow-citizens of the self-governing Colonies the value of the link that binds them to the Mother Country than the refusal to confirm any such iniquitous legislation. It will convince them, as no other action can, that the interests of the masses of their people are safeguarded by the more disinterested Government of the Mother Country, even though their own more simple-minded or dishonest, innocent or incompetent, imbecile or corrupt legislators may have been induced by specious reasoning, or other methods, to betray their trust, and to attempt to barter away, or rather give away, the inalienable inheritance of all the future generations of their countrymen.

Through the ballot box, however, the people can yet give expression and force to their determination not to be bound by any such usurpation of power. And if this Bill be temporarily passed into law, we trust they will speedily do so. We are not blaming the Harmsworths, or those associated with them. But we cannot find words strong enough to convey our opinion of the elected representatives of the people whose incompetence, imbecility, or corruption, have induced them thus to betray their trust.

And yet, and yet, so long as the people allow the temporary and transient government of the hour to usurp the power of attempting to dispose of the right to the use of the land for ever, or even for a term of years freed from its due contribution toward the necessary public revenues, so long will such proposals be formulated by ambitious financiers and be endorsed by imbecile or corrupt legislators. It is by such means that in all our Colonies forestalling and engrossing have preceded settlement; that the people have been deprived of the natural public revenues; that the normal development of the country has been warped and stunted; and that the workers of the present and future generations have been made the helpless and hapless wage-slaves of privileged monopolists and exploiters.

But let it once be enforced upon the Governments of all constitutionally governed countries that the land belongs in usufruct to the living; that it is the inalienable inheritance of this and all future gener-

ations; that *its use* only can be granted to individuals, and this solely on the condition that they contribute toward the necessary public revenues in proportion to its annual unimproved rental value: and the main cause and necessary basis of what is erroneously termed the capitalistic exploitation of the many by the few will be swept away, and the path will be cleared for the advance of the race to a nobler and more equitable civilisation, to a higher plane of individual and social life.

Justice, or association in equality, is the law of social progress, is the law of social life. Such association is manifestly impossible so long as the land, the element which gives control of all the natural bounties, sources, forces and opportunities, is made the property and heirloom of a privileged few. This is the fundamental social wrong of which "Capitalists" are ever eager to avail themselves to ensure their own enrichment and aggrandizement. This is the fundamental social wrong which in all countries to-day forms the basis of the exploitation and enslavement of the many by the few. And this is the fundamental social wrong, the death-knell of which was sounded with the publication of "Progress and Poverty." To-day its power is at its height. Tomorrow it will have passed away, and be regarded as we to-day regard the institution of slavery. For "the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small." L.H.B.

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