

LAND VALUES.

Thirteenth Year. Established June, 1894.

Published the first of each month at

*Glasgow, 13 Dundas Street, City ;
London, 376-377 Strand, W.C. ;
Bradford, City Chambers, 2 Darley Street.*

PRICE ONE PENNY.

*By Post in Great Britain and Ireland, 1/6 per annum ;
Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, 2/- per annum ;
Canada, United States, and South America, 50 cents.
Payable in advance.*

*All Communications to be addressed to THE EDITOR
13 Dundas Street, Glasgow.*

CORPORATION TELEPHONE, No. 1146.

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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 NEW CRUSADE.

The Valuation Bill the Bridge that connects the Urban and the Rural Land Question.

"In taking up the land question and having put our hand to the plough we are not going to turn back from it."

"This is largely, I imagine, a town audience, but I do not apologise for dwelling on the rural aspects of the land question. If I were in search of a bridge which directly and visibly connected the two, I should find it in the pair of Bills which are to be introduced and, I hope, passed into law during the present session. In the Valuation Bill for England—I cannot say that valuation is a very exciting word, but it seems to have a mesmeric effect upon you here—but in providing, as we propose to do, for making a separate valuation of the land, apart from buildings and improvements, we shall be preparing the way for a reform of the rating system in our urban areas which is so urgently and properly desired, and we shall at the same time very much simplify the processes of the public acquisition of land by getting on record how much of their value is due to improvements and how much to the natural value of the land. It is an indispensable preliminary step. It will show us what the land values are and

where they are."—THE PRIME MINISTER, London, 20th April.

"All roads led to Rome. All considerations of the land policy led to one central point—Valuation."—WINSTON CHURCHILL, M.P., London, 20th April.

SATURDAY, April 20th, 1907, will long remain a red-letter day in the calendar of all earnest Land Reformers. For the first time in the history of Great Britain a Government, supported by an overwhelming majority both inside and outside the House of Commons, led and inspired by the most radical Prime Minister the country has ever possessed, have stepped into the public arena to urge the people to resolve "without haste, but without rest, to step forward on the crusade of land reform."

Above all others, our devoted co-workers in every part of the British Empire, aye, of the world, have reason to be satisfied and encouraged. For not only the speeches, which we give in another column, but also the attitude of the somewhat critical, though enthusiastic, audience that assembled to listen to them, unmistakably revealed the growing conviction that it is in the Separate Valuation and Taxation of Land Values that the key to the coming land crusade is alone to be found. Both at the luncheon which preceded the great meeting at the Drury Lane Theatre and at the meeting itself, it was the references to this plank in the Government programme, and to the promised Valuation Bill on which all Land Reformers are now united, that alone aroused the enthusiasm of the eager listeners, who for the most part cheered every point made regarding it before it was well uttered. All else was comparatively coldly received. In truth, all earnest Land Reformers are becoming alive to the utter futility of the talk about granting increased power to Local Authorities to do things they have repeatedly demonstrated they are unwilling to do, and which the local Landocracy, as Lord de Ramsay has so recently abundantly proved, can always prevent them undertaking at all, or in anything like an efficient and thorough manner. And against the expressed wishes of the Local Authorities, no matter how elected, no Central Authority can undertake anything. As everybody now knows, or should know, the economic power of the Landlord, rural or urban, cannot be broken, nor the economic pressure constantly exerted by land monopoly in any way be lightened, by any Small Holdings Act, no matter how drastically worded. But that, on the other hand, it can be broken by a sufficient instalment of the Taxation of Land Values, which, as Mr. Churchill well pointed out, by removing the speculative element in land values, will leave the holders of our land no other motive save the desire to promote the natural and harmonious development of both town and country.

We appreciate to the full that, to use the inspiring words of the Prime Minister, "Our task as reformers

is to apply such treatment to the land as to facilitate its opening out for purposes of utility, and to develop its utility to the utmost." And we know, as it is fairly evident he knows, and as the vast majority of his audience showed that they realised, that no other step within the field of practical politics will promote this half as effectively as the Taxation of Land Values which will at once put an end to all withholding of land from its fullest and best uses.

We appreciate also the full truth and meaning of Winston Churchill's forcible words, that "There are only two ways in which people can acquire wealth. There is production, and there is plunder. Production is always beneficial. Plunder is always pernicious, and its proceeds are always monopolised by a few or consumed in the mere struggle for possession." And we cordially welcome his declaration that "We are here to range ourselves definitely on the side of production, and to eliminate plunder as an element in our social economic system." This has been our attitude during the whole course of our existence, though we have seldom expressed it so bluntly.

War has now been declared. The fight in the open for which for years we have been preparing has now begun and well begun. The logic of facts has forced the issue. To the Tory demand to strengthen the cause of Monopoly and Privilege under the specious guise of Protection or Tariff Reform, there was but one effective answer. This has now been given. Happy are they who to-day are already well-equipped to combat on its behalf. We have the men and the organisation. The one thing necessary to enable us confidently to confront the vastly increased work now awaiting us is additional funds. New literature has to be prepared; the existing organisations have to be relieved of the financial difficulties now hampering their activities; and new demonstrations will have to be organised in every important industrial centre. As we announced last month, a United Committee, composed of representative members of the English and Scottish Leagues, has already been formed to undertake all this work. We confidently look to all concerned for the financial support necessary to press onward with this new crusade.

L.H.B

THE LINE OF LEAST RESISTANCE.—The true line of progress in regard to small holdings, rural housing, and all such questions as depend for their solution upon access to land—the line of least resistance—appears then to be:

- (1) The Separate Valuation of Land apart from Improvements;
- (2) The Rating of Land upon this Valuation, and the exemption of Improvement Values, present and future, from taxation and rating;
- (3) The adoption of this Valuation as the basis of purchase or hire whenever it is necessary to acquire land for a public purpose.

—From our new leaflet—*Small Holdings and Land Valuation*.

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PROGRESSIVE PALMERSTON.

As most of our readers will remember, Palmerston was the first place of New Zealand to adopt rating on unimproved land values. With the result that, to use the words of a leading article in the *Evening Post*, of Wellington, New Zealand, 13/12/06, "Palmerston has bolted in the race for the premier borough stakes. A little while ago it was a baby in swaddling clothes, but now it is a strong boy growing altogether too big for knickerbockers and leading strings.

This fact is emphasised by some figures furnished by Mr. J. A. Nash, President of the local Chamber of Commerce, at the annual meeting of that body in November last. For 1901 the population of the Borough was 6,514; the census of 1906 shows that in five years the number of residents had risen to 10,243, an increase of about 55 per cent. The figures for property reveal the same story of progressive prosperity. In March, 1901, the unimproved value of ratable property was £331,499; improved value, £348,687—total, £680,186. In March, 1906, the aggregate value had almost trebled. The unimproved value was assessed at £1,081,851; improved value, £792,549—total, £1,873,900. That is to say, in five years this mere handful of people had made permanent improvements to the value of £443,862, whilst the unimproved or site value of the borough had increased by over £750,000. Palmerston is now agitating for improved railway facilities, which will tend still further to increase the unimproved value of its land, and also, thanks to the system of rating it had adopted, its public revenue without penalising the industry of a single one of its progressive and prosperous citizens. Floreat Palmerston!