

## DON'T WASTE YOUR SYMPATHY ON THE LANDOWNER

*From a contributed article by Noel Carrington in the "News Chronicle," 16th March.*

WE ARE always being asked to pity the poor landowner. You can hardly pick up a paper but he is not complaining of his miserable lot. . . . We are asked to believe that there is a regular plot to bleed him to death.

Estate duties in particular are a standing grievance, though I fail to see why a man who desires his son to enjoy the same capital possessions as himself should not insure against the time when he must hand them over. One way and another you would think that land was the greatest encumbrance in the world.

The fact is that we are so largely a people of commerce and manufacture that we have very little knowledge of the land, except as a pleasant playground. Therefore, we take all the poor landowner stuff at face value.

It hardly occurs to us to ask why, if land is such a burden, a landowner does not get rid of it. Apart from entail, there is not a law compelling a man to own it. We travel about the countryside with eyes that see but do not understand. . . .

Why is our countryside so poor? Why is it in constant need of subsidies? Why is the farmer always the object of pity. I know Mr A. G. Street denounces all these and all this pity, but he is as a voice crying in the wilderness. Owners and farmers alike conspire to beg for sympathy. Is this England of ours so unfertile and so unfavoured by Nature? And how is it, with the greatest market of consumers at his door, the producer of eatables is always in the dumps?

There are tracts of Hampshire which have reverted to wilderness. The fields have gone to weed and thornbush: the houses gape roofless to the sky.

There are thousands of acres in East Anglia, once reclaimed by Dutch engineers and turned into rich pasture, which have reverted to bog and are the home of wildfowl. The same land in Holland would be sustaining two or three dozen farms and a busy creamery. In Wales the bracken invades the sheep-runs.

In the Highlands you can travel all day in country which is nothing but a desert of heather and bracken, beautiful indeed to our civilised eyes, but unproductive of anything but grouse and deer. The same land in Sweden would be rich in forests. . . .

There are outstanding exceptions to which almost anyone could point. There are farmers and landowners still who put more into the land than they take out; who, adapting their methods to the time, make a good thing from agriculture. It is, however, undeniable that the majority of landowners to-day are neither interested in nor trained to their job. . . .

Too many leave their estates to agents, as if it were beneath their dignity to concern themselves with the details. The result of such management has been the same in every age.

The landowner, we are asked to believe, has a position to keep up. Not only must he keep horses to hunt and gamekeepers to rear pheasants; his family must have a flat in town and several cars for their conveyance. He must be seen at Newmarket or Ascot, and his daughters must be presented at Court. His sons must go to an expensive school, and then probably into the Army. It will rarely occur to him that one son at least might be trained in the science of agriculture or forestry.

At the same time we see broken gates and fences, drains choked and all that disrepair which seems so picturesque to the jaded motorist. Cottages grow

derelict for lack of timely repairs, until at last they are condemned amidst the lamentations of the sentimental.

The woodlands are full of fallen timber and are kept only to conserve the game. The poor landlord, of course, cannot afford to do anything, otherwise how could he race, hunt or shoot, or how could his daughters cut a figure in town or at St. Moritz?

I think a time of reckoning will be forced on us, whether we like it or not, by the ineluctable forces of competition in a world which grows daily less acquiescent of sentiment. The time may soon come when the surplus national income will no longer pay for a mis-managed land, beautiful but unproductive. . . .

I do not say the landowner will or should be eliminated. . . . But I am certain that if he is to survive he will have to make the land his livelihood and profession. He will have to take his part in the rebuilding of our agricultural life. Otherwise the land cannot afford him any longer.

## WEEK-END CONFERENCE MATLOCK BATH 20th-23rd MAY

WE RENEW invitation to the Henry George Conference being held at Cromford Court, Matlock Bath, on 20th to 23rd May and urge all who are intending to come to assist arrangements by writing without delay. This is all the more important as accommodation is filling up. The letter should state whether the stay is for the whole period or, if a part of it, which part. Those who wish to remain at Cromford Court for some days after the Conference, on holiday bent, should say so in advance and arrangements will be made for them. Intending day visitors at the Conference are also asked to write in advance stating what meals they will take.

Conference terms are: Membership fee, 2s. 6d.; residence and board: Friday evening (20th May) to Monday morning, 21s. 6d.; Saturday mid-day to Sunday evening, 14s. 6d.; Saturday evening to Sunday afternoon, 10s. 6d.; Saturday evening to Monday morning, 14s. 6d.; other periods in proportion.

The Conference, which has the advancement of the educational work of the movement as its special object, is being held under the joint auspices of the Henry George Foundation and the Henry George School of Social Science. Following is the outline of the programme, subject to alterations that may be made by the Conference in session:—

Friday evening: Reception and informal conversations.

Saturday, 10 a.m.: Ways and means of promoting the sale and circulation of the publications, including *Land & Liberty*, organising discussion meetings and groups; platform and press propaganda.

Saturday, 2.30 p.m.: Meeting of the United Committee (trustees of the Foundation) followed by discussion on preparations for the Henry George Centenary (1939) celebrations; the International Union and the proposed International Conference in New York (1939); and generally on the Henry George social philosophy as the true road to peace.

Saturday, 7.30 p.m.: Meeting of the Board of Governors of the School; past year's work; preparations for the autumn and winter Study Circles and Advanced Classes; subsequent activities of students, what they can or should do.

Sunday morning: Free to members, or arranged excursions by foot or motor for which the surrounding country offers many attractions.

Sunday, 2.30 p.m.: Nature and scope of the school curriculum; text books in use; teacher's guide and lesson sheets; the classes from both teachers' and students' point of view; discussion of particular or "difficult" questions asked in class and the answers thereto.

Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Adjournment session for discussion of topics not fully covered in the previous sessions or other subjects as may be decided by the Conference.

**IMMEDIATE:** If you are coming **ENROL NOW.** Address letters to "Land & Liberty," Henry George Week End Conference, 34 Knighttrider Street, London, E.C.4.