

proclamation were issued by Admiral Koltchak promising legislation in the spirit of Mr. Lloyd George's great campaign, it would convince Mr. Lloyd George that Admiral Koltchak was, in the vulgar phrase, the man for his money. But Mr. Churchill made a bad slip, as often happens when a Minister takes independent action in a situation of this kind. For in point of fact Mr. Lloyd George, being one of those statesmen, as Mr. Chamberlain tells us, who go on learning after middle age, had by that time repented of his earlier views. Now Mr. Lloyd George had not told Mr. Churchill of his change of mind; Mr. Churchill had, naturally, not told Mr. Lloyd George of his message to the Admiral. Consequently the Admiral was put in a false position. A painter who changes his style resents nothing so much as compliments on his earlier work, and if the Admiral began to sing the "Land Song," instead of pleasing Mr. Lloyd George he might simply have rasped him.

The battle for land taxation is not over; it will be resumed with greater determination than ever.—*"Manchester Guardian," July 16th.*

When the Land question was staged at Drury Lane in 1909, Mr. Churchill announced that they, the Liberals in power, had just rung up the curtain on a piece that was going to have a good long run. The curtain has now fallen with our stage manager of ten years ago looking to Russia for a new star turn.

Records of Rateable Value.—Further questions were asked in the House of Commons on 7th July respecting the pledges that have been repeatedly given to keep a record of the rateable value attributable to any land bought for public purposes or with money provided by Parliament. Captain Wedgwood Benn was informed by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that the compilation of the record is part of the work performed by the Inland Revenue Valuation Office, and is still being proceeded with. Captain Wedgwood Benn asked why, if that was the case, information could not be given comparing the rateable value of the land purchased for housing with the price which is paid? Dr. Addison, Minister of Health, replied that portions of the land bought for houses are only parcels of land which are not separately assessed, while the rates cover particular estates or farms of which the parcels purchased are only part; they could not dissect them. This answer contradicts the statement made by Mr. Baldwin on behalf of the Treasury. If the Valuation Department is keeping a record of the rateable value of land purchased for housing and other schemes, it must be possible to distinguish between the whole rateable subject and the part of it which was purchased. The original pledge given by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, which has been repeatedly renewed by members of this and the previous Administration, was a promise to record the rateable value of each property bought or, if it formed part of a larger subject, to record what was taken as the value of that larger subject and by how much that value was subsequently reduced. Dr. Addison's reply and his previous statement (on 9th June) that no information was available in regard to comparisons between land prices and rateable value show either that one Department does not know what another is doing, or that it is indifferent—and that in any case no one need bother about the perfectly definite undertakings given to the House of Commons in respect to Ministerial duties. The matter

was clinched by Mr. Bonar Law who replied to Mr. Briant on 7th July that the labour and expense involved in preparing a complete return of land bought for housing sites, small holdings, land settlement and farm colonies, showing rateable value and price paid, would not be justified. The fact is, the document would be a revelation; and no such exposure is convenient to the present Government.

A GREAT BETRAYAL

This year's Budget is nothing less. How great a betrayal is hidden from public view by a deliberate withholding of facts, which, if known, would arouse feeling like that which won the two elections in 1910 and destroyed the power of the Peers permanently to override the will of the people by rejecting progressive legislation.

Under the impulse of that feeling the Budget of 1909-10 was forced through in the teeth of their opposition. But that Budget was not what the public asked for. The cry that carried the victors into office and power was "tax land values." The purpose they set out in innumerable pamphlets and speeches and articles was not merely to get revenue, but to secure economic liberty by breaking up Land Monopoly. The Budget did neither of these things. It left existing values untouched, except for the halfpenny duty on undeveloped land—a duty altogether insufficient to enforce development of the absurdly small area coming under that definition.

All the Budget did was to intercept a portion of the excess beyond its value in 1909, realized on sale (20 per cent), or on reversion (10 per cent), leaving the balance of increment, 80 per cent and 90 per cent respectively, in the hands of the owner, and the whole of the 1909 value exempt.

But to secure even this necessitated valuation, and the setting up of machinery to ascertain it. That machinery had functioned successfully, spite of attacks renewed every year by the enemies of Land Reform.

It was denounced as costing more than the taxes produced, as if any other result was possible until completion of the first valuation had made practical the levying of the taxes based upon it.

That the so-called Land Duties were not what they had fought for and won their seats by advocating was made clear in the Memorial signed by 173 members, including seven members of the present Government, and presented in 1911, the year following their election, to the present Prime Minister, whose Chancellor of the Exchequer is scrapping them this year, of course with his consent.

And now a Committee, manned by its enemies, is to find an excuse for scrapping the valuation department, and all the work it has done. That work, so far as the initial valuation is concerned, was nearly complete. But for the war it would have been completed in 1914 or 1915. It could be completed in a few months now by bringing the staff up to what it was before the war. Once completed, the valuation could be kept up to date and used not only to collect arrears of existing duties, but as the indispensable basis on which to levy the tax on the value of all land by promising which Mr. Lloyd George rode into power in 1910.

Power is sweet. With his present colleagues its retention is only possible by betraying his principles. Therefore the valuation, the existing taxes and the principles themselves must go, that the Prime Minister may continue Prime Minister. Was ever a more flagrant betrayal?

Look at the nature of the new proposals.

This year over a thousand millions are to be raised

in taxes on commodities, on incomes, on profits, &c. Every housewife, every workman, every business and professional man must bear unheard of burdens. And this is the time chosen not only to take off the duties on land, but to write off taxes owing to the State, and even to refund those which have been paid.

During and since the war prices have gone up. But on nothing has it gone up more than on land. Ex-Bailie Burt gave a case in Glasgow in which on expiry of a lease of one property the rent was raised from £400 to £1,850 per annum. Capitalized at 5 per cent., the increment in this case represents £29,000 on a value of £8,000. Of that amount the owner owes the State Reversion Duty, 10 per cent., *i.e.*, £2,900. That is to be presented to him by this year's Budget.

Devonshire House is said to have been sold in May of this year for £1,050,000. It stands in the valuation roll at £400,000. That represents an increment of £650,000. Of that sum 20 per cent. or £130,000 is owing to the Exchequer as Increment Duty. The Budget writes it off.

On June 9th, the very day of our great meeting in the Central Hall, THE TIMES recorded the letting of two sites in Cornhill at ground rents representing capital values at the rate per acre of £6,500,000 and £5,400,000 respectively. The increment here must be millions.

Leases have been falling in, land has passed at death, and unprecedented sales of great areas at unheard of prices have been taking place. All these events are recorded. Many are published. There could be no hiding them. Nothing could have been easier than to collect the duties. But the debts to the state incurred through them have not been collected. "These arrears include duty which has been assessed, but is unpaid, and duty which, owing to adverse decisions in the Courts, and for other reasons, it has been impracticable even to bring into assessment. In numerous instances the arrears date back to the very inception of the duty" (Mr. A. Chamberlain, House of Commons, April 19th, 1920).

So, because these particular debtors to the State have not paid their debts, "the collection of arrears in such conditions is clearly impracticable," and the charwoman must pay more taxes on her sugar and tea to find the money their collection could have provided, in order that the landowner may pocket in full increments of value created entirely by the very community to whom they legally owed the money, when they sold the land.

The amounts which the Budget legally robs from the public till to give to the downtrodden land monopolists must reach hundreds of millions. It is nothing short of treason to the State by the Government that should be its Trustee, and the Parliament that should be its watchdog.

But the robbery is not its worst feature. A land of such value should be "fit for heroes to live in." If the value belonged to the heroes it would be. If the heroes enjoyed the values they had created before the war and at jeopardy of their lives conserved in the war they would not now need unemployment pay, or insurance funds, or subsidised rents, or "charity."

This legislation takes from them even such part of the value as they legally possessed as citizens, on the one hand strengthening the monopoly that has hitherto kept them dispossessed, increasing the price they have to pay for the use of such portions as they may desire to occupy, and on the other hand depreciating the value of their earnings by increasing the cost of living.

If, as I am certain, the valuation department is scrapped, then the one instrument for substituting a sound system of taxing land values for the ineffective system now abandoned will have been destroyed, that those who toil not may live as parasites on those who toil.

No wonder there is industrial unrest and talk of revolution. There is only one way in which these can be avoided. It is by taking for the community the value the community creates, and leaving to the individual the value he creates; in other words, by insuring to community and individual alike the justice without which there must be and ought to be revolt. The value the community creates inheres in the land to which their presence gives its value. The values individuals create are the commodities they produce from the land. These must be untaxed, and the others taken as public revenue and used for public objects. Thus, and thus only, can monopoly be prevented from exploiting labour and taking toll of individual effort. Thus and thus only can natural resources which no man made—clay and iron and slate and tin and oil and coal and sites—be released by the pressure of economic law from the stranglehold of those who "own" them, and made available to produce without let or hindrance at natural prices the things for which the people hunger—houses, clothing, food and commodities—in producing which every willing hand would be wanted, involuntary unemployment would disappear, capital, from being master, would become the servant of labour, privilege would give place to equity, and unrest be swallowed up of justice.

H. G. CHANCELLOR.

Ex-Service men resident at Portskerra in the north of Sutherland have taken possession of the farm of Kirktown. The holdings at Portskerra are very small, most of them being under three acres. At the beginning of the war the people applied to the Duke of Sutherland for this farm for the extension of their holdings, and they were promised it at the end of the war. In 1919 the people applied to the Board of Agriculture, but nothing was done. Last year a Mr. Macandrew purchased the land from the Duke, and they applied to him, but were met with a refusal. Then the men, after negotiations and several meetings, gathered their cattle and sheep and, with flags flying and headed by a piper who played at Boulogne when the 5th Seaforths landed there in 1915, drove their stock on to the farm. Last week a sheriff officer served interdicts on 14 ex-Service men, but they meantime declare their intention not to be daunted by any threats.—"*Glasgow Herald*," June 23rd

JOSEPH FELS—HIS LIFE-WORK

By Mary Fels

He had tried charitable work. He had supported almost every Socialist and Labour movement. He had attempted colonising enterprise. Increasingly he had come to see how clearly the dearth of available land lay at the root of social ills. He saw, too, that the land monopoly was a hydra-headed monster; to cut off any save the central head was but to strengthen and revivify it. It came to him slowly, but with the deep conviction that is born of intimate experience, that the cardinal principle in any declaration of social faith must be the destruction of the land monopoly. Everything else seemed to him but the establishment of fine superstructures upon a worthless basis of sand, and, as he once whimsically said, "Even for that rent had to be paid." He did not put forward the Single Tax as a panacea. He had too much knowledge of the complexity of social life to be thus unintelligent. What he did insistently emphasize was the truth that the time for tinkering at our ills had gone by, that it was vital to set about the building of a new social structure.—*From Chap. XI.*

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