

THE LIBERAL AND LABOUR LAND POLICIES

Sir J. L. Green, in the *English Review* for March compares and criticizes the Liberal and the Labour Land Policies in a somewhat different aspect from that in which our own friends have reviewed them. The point of view appears to be a Conservative one; if so, the Conservatism is on the moderate and businesslike type. The feature of the two policies to which particular attention is given is that of administration.

Taking the Labour programme first, the article refers to Mr Ramsay MacDonald's recommendation of it as follows:—

"Mr. MacDonald, in defending the Labour policy against officialdom, says that, under a system of public ownership of land, every endeavour would be made to

minimize bureaucratic tendencies."

But Sir J. L. Green contrasts this promise with the actual Labour proposals, the administrative part of which he sums up as follows:—

"A County Agricultural Committee set up in every county. . . . We are not told of how many members the Committee is to consist, but, as in the Liberal scheme, it will probably be as large as an ordinary County Council, that is, it will contain from 70 to 100 members. The County Agricultural Committee will consist, not of direct representatives of the farmers and workers, but partly of representatives chosen by organisations, these being dominated by the remainder of the members, who are to be appointed by the Minister of Agriculture. In this way Socialism from the top will be practised and enforced on the farming community. There is also to be a London Commission under the Ministry of Agriculture, and this will have, to assist it: (a) a Finance Commissioner; (b) a Methods of Cultivation Commissioner; (c) a Transport Commissioner; (d) a Power Commissioner; (e) a Marketing and Distribution Commissioner; (f) a Labour Commissioner. Moreover, the County Agricultural Committee will also have associated with it: (a) a Letting Sub-Committee; (b) an Equipment Sub-Committee; (c) a Proper Use of Land Sub-Committee; (d) a Collection of Rent Sub-Committee; (e) an Education Sub-Committee; (f) a Live Stock Sub-Committee; (g) a Fertilizers Sub-Committee; (h) a Feeding Stuffs Sub-Committee; (i) a Transport Sub-Committee; (j) a Marketing Sub-Committee."

As between the two programmes, Sir J. L. Green appears to be quite impartial. He does not think that the Liberal proposals are much more distinguished for simplicity of administration. They involve "the setting up of no fewer than ten or eleven brand new public bodies. There are, for instance, to be:—

- "(1) A Central Agricultural Loans Board;
- "(2) A County Loan Board in every county;
- "(3) A County Agricultural Authority in every county;
- "(4) Land Commissioners for each county;
- "(5) A Land Court;
- "(6) A Central Land Fund;
- "(7) A County Land Office in every county;
- "(8) A Rural Housing Board;
- "(9) A Survey Commission in every county;
- "(10) A Commission on Co-operation in every county;
- "(11) A much enlarged Ministry of Agriculture at the head of all."

, Each of these will have its staff of officials and in most cases this staff will not be small or inexpensive.

Sir J. L. Green rightly draws attention to the economic advantage of leaving to the actual cultivators a free hand to arrange their activities as they choose, and to that end he favours the promotion of a system of occupying ownership. But various parts of the world have tried that policy in various forms, and, in spite of certain advantages over other systems, no satisfactory solution of the problems of land has been attained. So that, while his comments upon the policies under consideration show that he has looked well in advance, he can hardly be regarded as having himself contributed much towards a solution of the problem.

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