

BOOK REVIEWS

A UNIVERSITY ON THE QUESTION*

The two pamphlets before us are of capital importance, not only for their own merit, but also because they show the excellent work a democratic university could do. Even to those who are able to attend them, universities usually afford little information on the public affairs which are important to every intelligent citizen; and to the much wider body of citizens who can never come to the university they usually afford no instruction at all. The pamphlets under review mark a radical departure, inasmuch as they contain a useful and unbiased discussion of a political question of importance and are designed for free distribution to encourage the discussion of such questions.

The "Outline for Debate" contains, first, a general statement of the single tax proposal, giving a brief account of the history of the idea, of the extent to which it has been put into operation, of certain main propositions which both advocate and opponent of the plan will admit to be true. Then follows a detailed, concise, and well-arranged statement of the case in favour and a similar statement of the case against. The case *for* is brilliantly stated, the case *against* as well as can be, though the careful reader will soon discover a number of contradictions. Finally there is a brief but useful bibliography which we need only refer to, as it follows the lines of the separate and longer one in the other pamphlet.

The "Bibliography" has a similar arrangement to the "Outlines for Debate," giving first General References, second Affirmative References, and thirdly Negative References. In the first section are given references to works containing statements dealing with taxation and finance generally without particular treatment or with merely incidental treatment of taxation of land values, works containing statements both for and against, and works which the compilers have been unable to examine. The other two sections need no further characterisation. References are made not only to books and pamphlets but to magazine articles also. Certain of the references are distinguished by an asterisk as being particularly useful.

The work of a compiler of a bibliography is notoriously difficult, especially when the task of classifying the references is undertaken, and consequently before proceeding to detailed criticism we would say that the work has been very well done; for this is, so far as we are aware, the first attempt at such a bibliography, and the compilers cannot have had much previous research to aid them. The bibliography is confined to books in the English language. This does not greatly impair its usefulness, though the number of excellent works in foreign languages is steadily growing. It does not include books and pamphlets published by societies for or against the taxation of land values, though a list of these societies is given. This is rather unfortunate, as it excludes some of the most brilliant statements of the case. But even within the field that it sets out to cover there are some unfortunate omissions. For instance, in the General References, though Ricardo is cited, there is no reference to Adam Smith's *WEALTH OF NATIONS*, nor to J. S. Mill's *PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL ECONOMY*; in the Affirmative References are included two books by Professor Smart which should be in the Negative References, while such books as Max Hirsch's *LAND VALUES TAXATION IN PRACTICE*, O. R. Trowbridge's *BISOCIALISM*, Frederick Verinder's *MY NEIGHBOUR'S LANDMARK*, Edwin Adam's *LAND VALUES AND TAXATION*, and others are omitted.

* *THE SINGLE TAX: An Outline for Debate. TAXATION OF LAND VALUES: A Bibliography.* Bulletins of the University of Washington. University Extension Series, Nos. 6 and 13. Published by the University, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

But in spite of its defects—and we hope there will be many more editions in which they may be remedied—this is a most valuable pamphlet, and will supply even the most earnest student with references to books and articles he might easily have overlooked.

THE WAR AND THE LAND*

While the war has not created any new economic problem it has accentuated some old ones such as unemployment, the difficulty of raising revenue imperial or municipal, the small amount of foodstuffs produced in this country in proportion to its area and population, and so on. The author has sought to focus attention on these economic questions and to show their relation to the taxation of land values, and he has done it very well. Apart from the rights and wrongs of going to war, it is quite certain that any country which reformed its land system by rating and taxing land values would find itself in a much stronger position for defence and better able to bear the strain of a war than under the present system. But there is another aspect still more interesting to those who desire international peace which we wish that Mr. Weller had dealt with. Autocratic and irresponsible governments composed of the landed and privileged classes are the great obstacle to peace. Only in so far as government is controlled by an alert politically-educated democracy is there permanent hope. But, as Henry George well says, the only basis of really democratic government lies in economic freedom for the mass of the people. The pages of history in all time bear witness to this. There can only be a stable and peaceful society when all are free and prosperous. War has few horrors to those who "have nothing to lose but their chains"; it is rather, like alcohol, a source of delirious excitement and forgetfulness of their misery. Though we regret that Mr. Weller has not wandered further into these more abstract fields of discussion, he has written a very good pamphlet which deserves a wide circulation.

F. C. R. D.

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS JUSTICE

There dwelt in a far country a rich lord and his wife.

And seeing that the people were cold and hungry, the woman did ask her husband for food and raiment that she might comfort the people.

Then said the lord: Verily, all that I have is thine.

And he called his steward, and said unto him: Lo, I am poor and have need of greater riches.

Then went the steward unto the people and said: My lord is poor. Ye must give of the produce of your labour, corn, and flesh and cloth. Ye must give a tenth of the fruits of the fields which are your lord's.

There was wailing and gnashing of teeth. But the land round about was desert, and they that would not pay must wander forth and perish.

And the children lacked bread and raiment, and the people were exceeding sorrowful.

Then came the wife of the great lord and gave bread to them who were hungry, and they did eat and praise the woman for her goodness.

But the people waxed ever poorer and poorer.

M. F. D.

* *THE WAR AND THE LAND.* By Arthur H. Weller. Published by The Manchester Land Values League, 1, Princess Street, Albert Square, Manchester. Price One penny.