

The Example of Denmark

ALL out-and-out reformers will be keenly interested in the Act which has been passed in Denmark to levy a national tax on all land. It is quite evident that the Danish people are under no illusions regarding the needs of their country. In the current number of *Land and Liberty* there is a full statement as to this great and significant adoption of a land reform which has so frequently been advocated in these columns. We have been amazed over and over again to find that the case for a real land tax has not been accepted gladly as a practical solution. It is only too true that this country is afflicted with unemployment. Palliatives have been offered, not cures.

The doctrinaire attitude will not do. Some really practical scheme is wanted. The present land laws are against adequate development of the natural resources of the country. Yet if this could be done, would not production be vastly increased and men now unemployed find that work useful to the community was at hand? The existing conditions are exposed by *Land and Liberty*, which points out that access to the land is "the basis of all production," and "if land is denied, men are necessarily idle." At present, it pays to let land remain out of cultivation; it thus escapes taxation. But "let 30,000 approved applicants for small holdings in England and as many in Scotland wait upon the pleasure of some landlord or drift into the towns or overseas." These things have much to do with unemployment. At any rate, Denmark has set Great Britain an example, a fact which should stimulate advocates of the taxation of land values in this country. Denmark is, in fact the first country in the world to introduce the system of land value taxation on clear-cut principles, with a flat tax on all land values.

There is the full application of the principle without fear or favor. As the writer in *Land and Liberty* puts it, "land value is treated as a common fund, to which no one individual has a greater right than any other." There is every provision for the valuation of land by local courts and committees at periods frequent enough to disclose the true conditions, to the advantage of the community. The rate of the new tax is approximately one-third of a penny in the £ of selling value. To those who say that the tax is small the answer is that, being universal in application, it will bring a satisfactory return. Then again, the beginning has been made with the valuation. The country adopting this method of making the land yield its increase to the community can periodically raise the rate as the need arises for the relief of burdens which restrict industry and impose taxation on enterprise. These burdens may be finally got rid of if the land value tax is progressively applied.

Taking all the facts into consideration it is not surprising to find that very great interest has been aroused in this country by the step which Denmark has taken. We have referred to the crippling of industry by the tax on improvements. The Denmark measure will displace this taxation by an arrangement which will ultimately profit

the community still further; a great reform is launched and a principle established. The people in Denmark see the value of two things—"an equal tax on equal land," with real Free Trade, and the abolition of the taxation on industry and enterprise. Thus they have set their hearts on true reforms. The new Bill is the fruit of strenuous agitation, zealous and persistent work, and of faith in the efficacy of the system.

Express and Star, Birmingham, England.