

States of power to decide what corporations or individuals may do or may not do under or beyond the law.

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Land Value Taxation in Great Britain.

(London) Land Values (s. t.), February.—Certain events have made a tax on land values in the budget of this year absolutely indispensable. All men in all parties admit and deplore the fact that the condition of trade and industry is depressed beyond the point of safety or endurance. . . . A tax on land values is required by every material and moral consideration that can be advanced. Both can, and must be achieved by the budget. The lords have had an opportunity of accepting the reform by the slow and indirect method; the people will now have it directly and immediately. New motives urge us to this course every day. . . . Shall we wait for more wordy debates in the House of Lords? Shall we not rather use the financial instrument which our fathers shaped for us with many struggles, use it to undo this system which does more villainous work than was ever attributed to a devil by poets or priests?

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South Wales Daily News (Lib.), Feb. 5.—The national demonstration at Cardiff yesterday for the taxation of land values was essentially practical. There are conferences where the discussion is academic and even the leavening factor futile. But yesterday's convention and demonstration took practical shape, and expressed the public mind on a question of supreme importance to the public. . . . It has been well urged that land values arise from the need of mankind to make use of the free gifts of nature—the land and the stores it contains; and they grow with the increase of population and improvements in the methods of industry. It is a truism to say that the improved value of land, though it now goes into the pockets of the landowners, is not, and never was, created by them; let it also be a truism that the present movement is not an attack on landowners, but a protest against a system which allows landowners to escape their responsibilities, and an effort to readjust taxation in such a manner that public enterprise will not be choked, and that those who create betterment will not be penalized, and that men shall return to the state in proportion as they receive from it. We discussed yesterday some of the main points, and today enforce the convention and the demonstration as a call to arms that no Liberal Government would seek to ignore. It may be said that chancellors follow their own course; they do. But behind chancellors there is public opinion, and public opinion is the greatest driving force in the world. Such gatherings as took place in the Welsh metropolis yesterday sum up and set forth public opinion; and Mr. Lloyd George, in his heavy task, knows that he has the people with him in any effort to readjust, or broaden the basis of taxation so that money may justly and without hardship be found for the reforms essential to the national welfare. Wales leads in this great movement; and we record the brilliant success of yesterday's meetings with the greatest satisfaction.

RELATED THINGS

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THE SHARING OF THE EARTH.

"Take the world," cried the god from his heaven
To men—"I proclaim you its heirs;
To divide it amongst you 'tis given:
You have only to settle the shares."

Each takes for himself as he pleases,
Old and young have alike their desire:
The harvest the husbandman seizes;
Through the wood and the chase sweeps the squire.

The merchant his warehouse is locking;
The abbot is choosing his wine;
Cries the monarch, the thoroughfare blocking,
"Every toll for the passage is mine!"

All too late, when the sharing was over,
Came the poet,—he came from afar;
Nothing left can the laggard discover,
Not an inch but its owners are there.

"Woe is me! Is there nothing remaining
For the son who best loves thee alone!"
Thus to Jove went his voice in complaining,
As he fell at the Thunderer's throne.

"In the land of the dreams if abiding,"
Quoth the god, "Canst thou murmur at me?
Where wert thou when the earth was dividing?"
"I was," said the poet, "by thee!"

"Mine eye by thy glory was captured,
Mine ear by thy music of bliss:
Pardon him whom thy world so enraptured
As to lose him his portion in this."

"Alas," said the god, "earth is given!
Field, forest, and market, and all!
What say you to quarters in heaven?
We'll admit you whenever you call!"
—Schiller (Bulwer's translation).

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BAD BUSINESS ALL AROUND.

A London Business Man's View on the Injury to Business and Labor of Encouraging the Holding of Land Out of Use.
For the Public.

Eleven years ago a Royal Commission visited the West Indies to inquire into the cause of the depression which had been such a persistent feature of their history for many years. In Grenada, one of the islands of the group, they found a strange situation. "A tax of \$1.50," say the Commissioners, "was payable on 263 houses which were, it is said, of such small value that the owners preferred to abandon them rather than pay the tax. Although these houses may have been of less value than \$1.50 each, it is unlikely that the owners possessed a second house, and

the abandonment of their places of abode must have involved some hardship. We recommend that the local government be instructed to take into consideration the question of reducing or repealing this tax on the poorer classes of houses."

This policy of dishousing the working classes by means of a tax on houses is in operation in Great Britain as well as in the West Indies. A few years ago, Lord Swaythling offered to the London County Council as a free gift an estate of twenty-five acres at Edmonton, on condition that it should be devoted to the erection of dwellings for the working classes. The standing orders of the Council forbid any building scheme which will not pay without assistance from the rates. After careful calculation it was estimated that under present conditions there would be an annual deficit of \$3,500 on this scheme, the heaviest charge against the houses being \$10,000 for the rates. In view of this Council abandoned the undertaking.

Pressing most heavily on the men with low wages and irregular employment, the burden of the rates is felt by the business men who own or rent offices and warehouses. The antagonism to high rates, which found expression in the return of the Modern party in the London County Council at the last election, and in the return of men pledged to the reduction of rates in local councils all over the country, is fully justified. Men who are building up their businesses frequently need to extend their premises, and it is on those men the rates fall with all their discouraging weight. In their enterprises they are building into the jaws of the rate-collector, who, for every \$5 that they add to the value of their premises, carries off \$2.25 or \$2.50. Quite recently a firm of biscuit manufacturers erected a factory in the northwest district of London. They secured the site on sufficiently reasonable terms and proceeded to finish the building according to the most approved modern plans, making it in every way pleasant and convenient for their employes. On its completion they had reason to regret the large capital expenditure they had incurred, as the surveyor came along one day and, taking this large capital outlay into account, rated them on such a high basis that now they regard the rates as almost a full rent in themselves.

It is to this system, which penalizes the enterprising and industrious individual or firm, that the taxation of land values is offered as an alternative. On July 29, 1907, the site of the Old Bailey was put up on lease by auction for a term of ninety-nine years, the land being offered in three lots. The first lot went off at a rent which worked out at the rate of \$22,600 per acre; the second went off at the rate of \$28,965 per acre; while the third went to a figure at the rate of \$28,255 per acre and was withdrawn. This case illus-

trates the manner in which the present system affects the building industry.

This threefold transaction illustrates the whole industrial position. Men were willing to pay the full market value of this site; they were willing to invest capital in one of the safest and most profitable undertakings. Their ambition is granted in two-thirds of its scope, and denied in one-third. Every one benefits by the first part of the transaction, as every one loses by the second. In the first case the man who would invest his capital must seek a less desirable form of investment in some other part of the world. There is such a thing as unemployed capital as well as unemployed labor. His return in interest is delayed and rendered less certain. The tradesman who would be employed must go idle. The wages of masons, bricklayers, carpenters and joiners in London are \$10.93 per week; the wages of plumbers and plasterers are \$11.43; of painters \$8.85 to \$9.37. There are many of these men in London eager to engage in the building industry, and to receive these wages. But because the land is shut up against them they earn nothing, and cannot buy food, clothes, houses, tools or anything in the shape of necessaries and luxuries. Their custom is not worth a farthing, and degenerates into burdensome beggary. Yet a better market than those men's needs, seconded by money in their pockets, could not be found.

When the buildings are not erected, the rates fall more heavily on those already in existence; the landowner himself receives no rent, and the vacant site, with the signboard, "To Be Let," is a public eyesore. Surely it is unreasonable that owners whose land is declared in the public mart to be worth \$28,000 per acre per year should keep that value locked up in it, especially when other men have offered to pay it in hard cash, and are willing to spend their money liberally in extracting it.

The value of this land is put into it by the labor and enterprise of the community in performing public services, not by the individual enterprise or energy of the owner. All the unmitigated evils which follow his action in withholding the land would be obviated, if the rating authorities called on him to contribute a portion of its value to their revenue. The vast fund of which this is only an index forms the true standard of rating and taxation. Those men who own and control it are often oblivious to the injury they inflict on themselves and others by allowing it to be unused. As Lord Dudley said about Jamaica on his return from the West Indies last year: "It is a very productive place. There is hardly a thing which will not grow there . . . I have always rather laughed at our Jamaica estates, fancying that they could not be worth much as they never gave anything, and, of course, as

they never required any money I have never troubled very much about them."

Here Lord Dudley clearly indicates the cause of his neglect. He was entirely ignorant of the real value of his estates. With our present systems of land tenure and taxation there is nothing to discover, to remind a proprietor of, the value of land, which he is unable to administer himself. The utilization of this land would benefit himself and the whole world, and it would be a simple thing and very beneficial to make it require some money from its owners, a certain sum in proportion to its value. This has been the experience in New Zealand, New South Wales and Queensland, where a slight measure of the taxation of land values has been introduced. A few months ago the Colonial Office issued a report on the working of this system in Queensland, written by an ex-Mayor of Brisbane, entirely from the business man's point of view.

"When an owner," he says, "has it brought annually home through his cheque book that he is paying out just as much in rates upon, say, a fifty-foot frontage of vacant land as he has to contribute on a similar sized piece, carrying, as it may do, his entire business establishment, which may be improved with building, giving him fair rental upon both land and improvements, it becomes a mere question of time until he either takes steps to render the unimproved land also rent producing or decides to let someone else have the chance to do so."

This constant stimulus to the use of land has a tendency to keep industry always brisk. The relief of buildings and all improvements from the burden of rates is a great boon to the enterprising men, but even this is of little advantage compared with the impetus that is given to expansion and development by the opening up of land to capital and labor. The effect of such a reform in this country would be greater than in a new and sparsely populated colony. Everything at the moment points to the fact that the present government will find itself bound to deal with this question, in the early future, and in spite of an indifference on the part of minister, we may anticipate some political development during the next few months which will give rise to new and startling divisions in Parliament and in the country.

JOSEPH FELLS.

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THE LAST OF HIS KIND.

Story of Timmy Feather, the Aged Weaver of the "Bronte Country" of Yorkshire. By Arthur Melton, in the London Chronicle of January 24, 1909.

Would you like to shake hands with the Grand Old Man of the cotton industry? If so, let me introduce you to Tim Feather, of Greenbottom,

Stanbury, near Haworth, in the highlands of West Yorkshire. He is not a Captain of Industry. Just the opposite. He has not harnessed science and invention to trade, and by making the old conditions give way to new created busy manufacturing towns in which the hum and whirr of machinery is ceaseless. The Captains of Industry stand for the New. Timmy, as he is known, stands for the Old. He is one of the very few men who have lived through the revolutionizing of industry without altering his methods.

You will remember reading that when the cotton masters of the north equipped factories with machinery, the irate weavers, fearing they were to be snuffed out, did their best to raze them to the ground. Tim Feather had more courage, and, I sometimes think, infinitely more wisdom, than to let the coming of the factory system worry him in the slightest. He simply went on working with his hand-loom, in the upper chamber of his cottage at Greenbottom, oblivious that the industrial world was being turned upside down.

Timmy defied Time. And Time respected him, so that, when nearing his 85th summer, Timmy still sits slowly producing cloth as his ancestors produced it.

It is a splendid disregard of the march of industrialism. Down below, in the Lancashire towns on the one side, and in the Yorkshire towns on the other, men and women tend the hurrying looms of the mill. Up there, with the open moor at his door, a wide vista of hill and dale at his back, Timmy and his hand-loom are of a piece, both dating back to the beginning of the century, caring nothing for steam-engines and factory buzzers. For his persistence is he not worthy of the title, Grand Old Man of the cotton trade?

Between ourselves Timmy is not an economic success. His limbs are getting stiff, and he does not work the loom with the same ease as fifty years ago. And, as it takes a long time to weave a yard of cloth in comparison with those tireless aggregations of steam-driven wheels and rods and shuttles in the valley, he would have to work day and night to earn rent and keep.

So his friends come quietly to his aid. The landowner forbears from asking him for rent. In the summer visitors arrive from the four quarters of the earth. Operatives from the adjacent towns come to see how their ancestors earned a livelihood. They get Timmy into the upper chamber and seat him before the sloydboard, and, pretending that acquaintance with a hand-loom is necessary to the completion of their education, they slip money into his hand. Neighbors look in to see if the old man wants for anything—for he is a bachelor, and lives alone. Literary pilgrims to the Bronte country a couple of miles or so away hear of this quaint survival of the past, and swell the number of his visitors.

And because Timmy is a guileless, soft-spoken