

NOT SELFISHNESS BUT THE FEAR OF POVERTY

(From an Address by Mr. J. Haworth to the Members of the Clitheroe Adult School)

In this everlasting struggle to get a living, in which men are competing against one another for jobs, we often are told that selfishness is at the bottom of it all. Let it be granted that there is a lot of selfishness in the world, and you find more of it in the House of Have than in the House of Want. But it is not selfishness that makes people so desperate. It is the horrible fear of poverty, the craving to be secure against unemployment, doles, State charity, or having to beg one's bread. What is it but the fear of landing on the scrap-heap of pauperism that makes men and women suffer with such meekness the humiliations of outraged dignity that is the daily lot of the average worker? And is it to be wondered at that those who, by saving, scraping, or lucky speculations, manage to accumulate wealth become blinded to everything except how to retain and increase it, with a tendency to be more unreasonable, unsympathetic and tyrannical than those who are born into wealth and privilege?

Nearly all the hypocrisy in religious and social life arises from fear, which results in the cringing to official power, to employers, and to fawning upon customers. The servile sycophancy that is shown to the moneybags and to those who have the power to employ and to sack is an acid test of character. That is why there is so much self-importance and overbearing arrogance in the world, and why so many men who have been successful in making money are considered eligible to serve on governing bodies and have authority over those whose knowledge and skill in most things absolutely transcends their own.

It is this fear of want that haunts the struggling parson, doctor, shopkeeper, and schoolmaster, and keeps them from exercising their talents to ends of the greatest good, forces them to use push and tact at the expense of principle, and make religion into a business proposition. To those who have recognized the depth of meaning in "God made the land for the people," Henry George's definition of land is an inspiration. "Land," he says, "is the habitation of man, the storehouse upon which he must draw for all his needs, the material to which his labour must be applied, for the supply of all his desires: for even the products of the sea cannot be taken, the light of the sun enjoyed, or any of the forces of nature utilized, without the use of land or its products. On the land we are born, from it we live, and to it we return again—children of the soil as truly as the blade of grass, or the flowers in the field."

It is not the fault of the Creator that there should be this lamentable dearth of houses, or that we have slum dwellings, for ours is a land of promise richly stored with every requisite, with raw material for all building purposes. In our towns and cities are lots of vacant sites, while outside and adjoining are thousands of acres of eligible building land held up, waiting until economic necessity forces the people to pay the increasing values, a value that does not come from any labour or invested capital put into the land, but from the growth of population and industrial enterprise. Not a mill, workshop, house or any other improvement, but adds to land value. Take the making of the new railway from Longridge to Hellifield, how that will send the value of the land up at a tremendous rate, the proceeds of which will all flow into the pockets of those who reap where they have not sown.

To whom does this value belong? Could anyone with any sense of justice and common sense give but one answer: the community? There you have it. Why should we burden industry, incomes, food, build-

ings, machinery, houses, etc., with rates and taxes, when here you have the direct natural source of revenue—"Manna in the wilderness," ready as social needs increase for roads, streets, parks, baths and all other improvements. "The greater the needs the more the value increases," says Henry George. Render to the community the things that belong to the community; and to the individual sacredly the things which belong to the individual.

"THE LIBERAL LAND POLICY"

Arrant Nonsense

The following report of a meeting held under the auspices of the Manchester Henry George Club is taken from the *MANCHESTER GUARDIAN*, 2nd December:--

A discussion on the taxation of land values was opened at the Henry George Club in the Java Café, Corporation Street, Manchester, last night, by Professor S. J. Hickson. Mr. E. M. Ginders presided.

Professor Hickson said that one of the most interesting things which happened in the recent general election was the publishing of a document called "The Liberal Land Policy." Speaking as a Liberal, this seemed to him the most arrant nonsense ever published. It was a funny combination of protection for vested interests, of the land nationalization policy, and of what many of those present believed in—all mixed up together in a wholly incompetent and certainly unconsidered manner.

He did not think it would please anybody, certainly not agriculturists.

In the *ATHENÆUM* of 22nd November there was a letter, presumably from a Liberal, which showed most conclusively how unpopular the "Liberal Land Policy" would be amongst farmers.

The "Liberal Land Policy" did admit the principle of the taxation of land values as regarded urban land, but as regarded extra-urban land, including agricultural land, it suggested quite a different system. Whoever drew up that "policy" did not understand the principle of the taxation of land values. The League did not ask that a tax should be put on the use of land but upon the value of land created by the community.

He did not believe any democratic body of Liberals would give its sanction to the "Liberal Land Policy." The Manchester Liberal Federation passed a programme a few years ago which provided for a tax on all land, and the National Liberal Federation had passed resolutions to the same effect. His experience of Liberal meetings was that if the proposals put before them on land policy were not strong enough there was a general tendency to stiffen up in the direction of the taxation of land values. This was reflected to some extent in the programme recently issued by what was called the Radical group of the Liberal Party.

The general election had not depressed him at all. They all regretted the postponement of the expected measure for the taxation of land values, and if the two progressive parties had been democratically run there would have been no election, for the rank and file of neither the Liberal Party nor the Labour Party wanted an election. In his view it was due to the incompetence and the silly jealousies of the leaders of the two parties. He believed that if it were possible to have a plebiscite of England the taxation of land values would be passed by a small majority.

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