

a counterfeit sovereign or a forged note got into circulation. If by luck the forger or coiner could be got at long last to redeem the note or coin it is surely clear that nobody would be hurt. More than forty years ago Glasgow schoolboys had a joke about paying debts with an imitation pound note issued as an advertisement. The trader probably had indirectly put notes into circulation. Could he have put his advertising imitation notes directly into circulation and redeemed them with groceries from his store it beats me to see who would have been injured.

"*Currency is to me the last, and not the first problem.* In the development of human society it arrives last. What we have first is a human being, and, as Pope Leo XIII said: 'Man's needs do not die out, but recur; satisfied to-day, they demand new supplies to-morrow. Nature, therefore, owes to man a storehouse that shall never fail the daily supply of his daily wants.' In the earth and the fruits of the earth we have this storehouse and its stores. The stores can be exchanged without currency, but much more conveniently with its aid.

"People should make up their minds whether they are more in need of the first necessity (land) or the final convenience (currency). Having done so, they will be able to decide whether it is land reform or currency reform which is most needed."

LAND PRICES IN MOUNTAIN ASH

The people need houses, the Education Authority schools, the Poor Law authority homes for the aged, homeless, and the orphan children, but the Land Monopolist holds up the community until a fancy price is paid. Fancy prices for land retard the progress of industry, create unemployment and deprive the people of social amenities.

Let figures say how landed interest has served you in the past, and will do so in the future unless you send men to advocate a change of your rating system from that of taxing improvements to that of taxing the site value of land. Access to land and security of tenure is an immediate solution to the acute problem of unemployment. It might interest the Electors if a few purchases of land by the Local Authority from ground-landlords be quoted:—

Darran Las Mixed School works out at £686 per acre; Oxford Street Improvement works out at £1,705 per acre; Maesyraian Cemetery works out at £800 per acre; Duffryn Schools Playground (or Maesyraur), £1,912 per acre.

From 1900 to 1920 the Local Council required land for schools, playgrounds, widening of streets, and a cemetery.

Forty-four acres cost approximately £22,800. This amount borrowed at 5 per cent. means a 2d. rate. The price per acre ranged from £140 to £1,912. This land was rated mainly at agricultural value. In 1911 the total acreage of the urban area was 10,513 acres, 7,656 if the total were rated at 11d. per acre or a total contribution of £373. For that year the total rates collected were £67,740.

[From a leaflet issued by Mr. Sparey and Mr. Roberts, Labour candidates in the Darran Las ward, Mountain Ash, at the municipal election, 6th April. The particulars respecting the "agricultural" land in Mountain Ash are published in the Parliamentary Return No. 119 of 1913.]

The Treasurers of the United Committee acknowledge with pleasure three anonymous donations: £2 from Keighley, 1s. from Chassington, and £2 (postmark indistinct). These are among the many responses to the Committee's recent general appeal for funds.

LETTER FROM AN IRISH PRIEST

We reproduce the following from an interesting letter, by "A Dublin Priest," appearing in the IRISH WEEKLY AND ULSTER EXAMINER, 16th May.

"SIR,—I have read with much interest the issue of IRISH WEEKLY, of 25th April, and the article by Mr. J. O'D. Derrick. He understands and explains clearly the doctrine of Henry George. As George himself once said to me, 'there are many who do *not want* to understand it.' The words to which they object are explained fully in PROGRESS AND POVERTY. Many do not wish to study them. They are glad of any excuse for ignoring the book and its arguments.

"These persons were greatly pleased by Pope Leo's words in favour of private property in land. No doubt honest people, too, were by those words kept from studying the subject closely, or if they already saw that there had been a misunderstanding they were naturally very unwilling to say so. And so there has been much opposition, or at any rate cold indifference, on the part of Catholics. Along with this there has been much and strong opposition, chiefly among non-Catholics, on the part of those who think George is wrong because he attends to the root and not to the branches.

"I have always thought that the Pope did condemn Henry George—but owing to a misapprehension. I did not see that Henry George could have avoided defending and explaining himself. The phrase 'tactical mistake' may be right enough in the sense that he would have been more diplomatic if he had insisted more (but he did insist) on those many excellent principles in the Encyclical which prove George in the right, and if he had said less about the correct exactness and precision of his own way of stating the case. The word property or ownership is used in two different senses by others, in one sense by Henry George. An English law student is told to begin by putting out of his head the idea that there is any such thing as absolute property in land. Yet consider, e.g., Ireland before Gladstone began to reform the land laws. Henry George says private property in land is unjust, absurd, impossible, on account of the nature of the case, and the needs of the people. The Pope and all theologians and all sensible men say at once on hearing such a proposition, 'Oh, for private individuals or families to have their own farms is not only lawful, it is desirable pro bono publico, perhaps even necessary pro bono publico.' But this is also George's doctrine. Only he cannot look upon a person's exclusive claims regarding land as being ownership in the same sense as ownership of a coat, or a carriage, or a crop of wheat. He is surely right in using words in their own strict and correct sense. Others will be content to use words in a popular and inexact fashion. At least they will be so content when not challenged, or when unwilling to study. And there are multitudes, living on the pickings of landlordism, who have no wish to question what is not hurting them. And I do not suppose that all the landlords themselves are aware that the system is felonious.

"I always thought the Pope's few words about the

By HENRY GEORGE

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land a great blow to the cause of social reform. They turned their thoughts away from the root evil. They had their effect upon the dishonest, the honest, and the indifferent. They neutralized all the sound principles of which the Encyclical is full:

"THE FAILURE TO SEE THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE SAD CONDITION OF THE WORKERS MADE THE SUGGESTED SOCIAL REFORMS OF NO ACCOUNT."

"As for our own problem of unemployment, i.e., hunger, in the midst of plenty, perhaps it will be best solved as a question of taxation. No possible tax can be so reasonable and just as payment for the private possession of what is essentially public property, the municipal or national soil, and its rental value.

"You cannot too often, or too strongly, exhort our Catholic people, and especially the trade unionists, to work for the taxation and rating of Land Values."

A LABOUR PARTY PAMPHLET Taxation and Rating of Land Values

By the RT. HON. JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD, M.P.

Timely service is rendered by Col. Wedgwood's new pamphlet on the Taxation and Rating of Land Values, published by the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party, 33, Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1. The price is one penny; 9d. per dozen, or 4s. 6d. per 100, post free. Within the compass of twelve pages, it states the case with Col. Wedgwood's accustomed vigour, concisely and convincingly, so that all who run may read. "The Landlord holds the permit to use the Earth; Labour proposes to loosen his grip by taxation." That is the author's message and it should have a wide circulation through the organized agencies of the Labour Party.

It is difficult to "review" a publication of this nature. It could only be reprinted *in extenso*, and this our limited space will not allow. We quote with pleasure from the concluding paragraphs:—

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO LAND VALUE TAXATION

1. That a tax or rate upon Land Value would be passed on to the occupier.
2. That it would mean confiscation.
3. That it would lead to overcrowding.
4. That there is not enough Land Value to meet even the local rates.
5. That it is impossible to discover this hypothetical "Land Value."
6. That rich men would buy up more land if it were cheap, and hold more idle.

Objections 1 and 2 are, of course, mutually destructive. If the tax can be passed on there is no confiscation. If there is confiscation the tax must be supposed to settle and remain on the landlord. Every action and protest of the landlord class show clearly enough that they know that the tax cannot be passed on to the occupier. If anyone desires authority to convince them, we have:

"A tax on that part of the annual value of land which arises from its position, its extension, and its yearly income of sunlight, heat, rain and air, cannot be settled anywhere except on the landlord."—MARSHALL.

Even if the tenant occupier himself pays the rate in the first instance, still the landlord will pay in the end.

"The real incidence of a rate depends mainly on the nature of the property in respect of which it is levied, and is but little affected in the long run by being primarily charged on this or that person. The real ultimate

incidence of a site value rate would be upon the owners of site value in any case, even if it were simply charged upon occupiers as the present rates are. Accordingly we regard the question of the party on whom the rate is to be charged as a question of sentiment and temporary convenience."—LORD BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH, in the *Minority Report of Royal Commission on Local Taxation*.

Objection 3, which suggests overcrowding, should really suggest the reverse. Anything which makes land cheaper will enable the house builder to provide more land with the house at the same price as he would have to pay now. The idea at the back of the objection is the old one, that a tax on Land Value will make land more expensive. If that were so, we should meet with no opposition.

Objection 4 suggests that, however desirable the change of rating might be, there is not enough Land Value to meet the rates. One might reply that we are only changing the standard by which each ratepayer's contribution is measured, and are not concerned with whether we take all the Land Value, or more, or less. But, in fact, of course, the value of all property is that which it will sell (or let) for *subject to the existing Rate and Tax*.

Objection 5 says that Land Value cannot be discovered. But people who deal in land find no difficulty in discovering Land Value. They find it easier than estimating the value of improvements. How often has an agent said to me, "If you buy that house you can sell off half the land, it will fetch £5 a foot frontage"; or "You can buy another half acre at 10s. a yard." With merely the map before them, without ever visiting the property, they can estimate what land is worth, or what the ungoten minerals are worth. It is when estimating the value of improvements that they have to go and count and measure and calculate and then they will all differ from one another.

There is nothing "hypothetical" about Land Value. In Denmark the valuation is made periodically for the whole country, urban and rural, showing separately the land value of each piece of land; so also in New Zealand, Queensland, New South Wales, and other Australian States, Cape Province, Transvaal, and the Western Province of Canada. In many cities in the United States of America the same kind of valuation is made, and as an instance, the established and agreed value of land in New York City (apart from improvements) is more than £1,000,000,000. If that is the Land Value of New York City, ascertained as it is year by year, and published in the official records and reports, the Land Value of London cannot be much below that sum. And the aggregate Land Value of the whole of Great Britain may be put down at about £4,000,000,000. The initial tax on that value, the national tax of 1d. in the £ to set up valuation and prepare at once for the further taxation of Land Values as proposed in this pamphlet would yield about £16,000,000 in the first year of operation. How this revenue should be applied, or which of existing taxes or existing local rates it should replace, will be a matter for the Government of the day to decide. The main thing is to get the tax—and the valuation—at work.

Objection 6, that really rich men might still buy up cheap land and hold it idle, is answered by the obvious fact that it will at least be more expensive for them to do so. But who would dare? Why, if we ever have the power to enact such legislation, "rounding off estates" will cease to be a popular pastime. Land will only be cheap for those who are prepared to use it. The drones will fly when the attack gets home. Nor will there be so many rich men to attempt the amusement. Inordinate wealth is generally based upon the ownership of a monopoly; and even inordinate wealth will be helpless when men can work for themselves.