

schemes of doles and relief works would have done if the funds to pay for them could have been drawn out of airy nothing, and they had had no repercussion on the general conditions of industry. Even a small but general beginning in the transference of rates from improvements on to land values would have given a much needed and appreciable relief to industrial undertakings and to the cost of housing accommodation. It would, at the same time, have exerted a constant and steady pressure on those who are holding land out of use. The liberating and stimulating effect on production of the taxation and rating of land values is infinitely more important than its merely fiscal results, valuable though these may be, and we look in vain through all the welter of discussion on economic and industrial topics for any other proposal which will produce such an effect.

We do not overlook the complexities of the industrial situation, the adverse influence of the crises that have taken place in other countries which are the customers of British producers, the detrimental effect of tariffs, the changes in methods of production and demand for goods which alter the volume of employment in particular industries. These conditions have undoubtedly affected the mining industry, but the tragedy of that trade, as of the engineering and other trades, is that men who are thrown out of employment in them have nowhere else to turn. Yet it is a fact that in agriculture, the most fundamental industry of all, the resources of this country are not half developed. It is almost impossible to obtain land for small holdings on terms that are at all reasonable, and when it can be got the smallholder is penalized with a burden of rating on his more expensive and more efficient development of the land, which the inefficient farmer and idle landowner escape from. In like manner the building of better homes for the people is obstructed.

In the end we must come to this point. If there are too many people in this country to be supported, some means must be taken to limit their number. If there are not, they can only be supported by the produce of the land and labour of this nation used either directly to produce the commodities required or indirectly to procure them by exchange for the products of other countries. Surely then the first problem of all is to see that the land of this country is developed to the uttermost, to remove the barriers of monopoly and taxation which prevent its use, and so secure for every citizen the opportunity of useful employment and of earning an honest livelihood.

We must add a word on another aspect of the matter. It may be that the utilization of water power, of windmills and of the direct rays of the sun will diminish the demand for coal. It may also happen that economies in the use of coal and improvements in the methods of getting it will contribute to reduce the number of miners necessary to supply the national requirements. In that event it will not necessarily follow that the miners will be entitled to have their hours of labour still further reduced while their wages remain the same, in order that they may all continue to be employed in that industry. To set up such a claim is as preposterous as the claim to break up machinery of the Luddites. Society is entitled to the benefit

of inventions, and a particular section must not claim to prevent their adoption or to appropriate their advantages. No such claim would ever be made if it were not that monopoly restricts the opportunities of employment and production generally. It was the driving of the people off the land at the time of the industrial revolution which deprived them of any alternative employment and made the hand workers so bitterly resent the introduction of machinery. The same influence is at work to-day, and the remedy is still the same. No body of workers is entitled to create for themselves a vested interest in their own trade to the detriment of the community at large. But the whole body of workers is entitled to have the obstacles to production swept away, to be relieved of the burden of maintaining those who exact a toll upon industry, so that they may have the fullest opportunity of employing themselves and obtaining the full fruits of their labour.

F.C.R.D.

HOW THE GOVERNMENT THINKS TO RELIEVE AGRICULTURE Dividing the Spoil

There is a Bill before Parliament this session dealing with Tithes. Its object is twofold. It proposes to substitute a system of equal annual payments for the plan of varying annual payments based on the average prices of wheat, barley and oats. And these equal annual payments are to include a sum which will in 85 years at compound interest produce an amount sufficient to redeem the tithe, and so put an end to it altogether. The redemption money is to be paid to Queen Anne's Bounty, which organization will, as soon as the Bill becomes law, relieve the clergy of the duty of collecting their tithes by doing so on their behalf.

This measure is provoking a considerable amount of opposition, and it is important that all who believe in the solution of the land problem by the taxation of all land values should follow its progress with a watchful eye. For tithe is land value pure and simple. Here is a proposal to dispose of one important section of the land values of England and Wales by purchase and compensation, for that is the true meaning of that innocent-looking word "redemption." The Government—which is promoting the Bill—no doubt trusts to the complete ignorance of all tithe mysteries prevailing among the common people and intends to set up a precedent which may undermine the principle of land value taxation. For if the clergy's special interest in land is to be dealt with by compensation, how can other interests in land be fairly dealt with by taxation?

This Bill, if it becomes law, would be a much worse precedent than the proposal made in COAL AND POWER to buy out the owners of minerals and mining royalties. That proposal, bad as it is in principle, does intend that all mineral lands should be vested in the State. But the Tithe Bill's intention is merely to transfer a certain section of land value from one class to another—from the clergyman to the landowner. So long as this is done by agreement between the two, it does not matter to the disciples of Henry George. In one way it would simplify our task, for we should then have to assess only one interest in the land value of a farm instead of two. The great vice of the present Bill is that the Government proposes to *compel* the landowner to pay, and the clergyman to receive, compensation, while the tithe value is *compulsorily* transferred from the latter to the former.

As a matter of fact, there is no agreement between the two parties to the proposed transaction. For the

last month or more the correspondence columns of the TIMES and the MORNING POST have contained pitiful complaints from clergymen against the unfair treatment proposed to be inflicted on them by the Bill, and equally strong protests on behalf of the tithe-payers that they are being compelled to pay too much.

I have the greatest possible sympathy with the view that the clergymen of the Church of England should be adequately remunerated for their services. That, however, is a matter which ought solely to concern the members of that church. All other churches in this country are self-supporting. Why should tithe-payers (who do not necessarily belong to the Church of England) be compelled by law to contribute to its support? The bulk of the nation is doubtless in favour of the Government's intention to abolish tithe, but very few can approve the method of compelling tithe-payers to raise a huge capital sum for the perpetual endowment of the Church of England as a fair and proper arrangement.

There has already been a considerable amount of "juggling" with tithe since the war. The basis on which the charge was computed since 1882 was, according to the average prices of corn during the seven years immediately preceding the year of assessment. High prices due to the war led, of course, to a large increase in the amount of tithe payable, and—equally of course—to an agitation among tithe-paying landowners against such increase. The Coalition Government, in 1918, obediently passed through Parliament an Act providing that all tithe payable up to the end of 1925 should be based upon the average corn prices for the seven years to December, 1917, and that, from 1st January, 1926, the basis should be a fifteen years' average instead of seven. Both these bases include four years of low prices (1911, 1912, 1913 and 1914), and the fifteen-year basis also includes 1910, another year of low prices. On the latter basis the amount payable next year would be £132 for every nominal £100 of tithe. On the seven-year basis it was £109 3s. 11d. The present Bill would fix the annual payment for 85 years at £109 10s., but this includes £4 10s. for the redemption fund, so that the comparable figure is £105. Now from 1883 to 1916 inclusive this figure has never touched £100, while from 1896 to 1908 it was below £70.

From these figures it will be seen that there is ample material for the pretty quarrel now proceeding between the tithe-payer and the tithe receiver, between the clergyman and the landowner, as to the division of the spoil.

Tithe is nothing more nor less than an unwarrantable burden on the agricultural industry. But that is the last thing to enter into the consideration of the framers of this Bill. Originally tithe was paid in kind: The farmer gave to the clergyman a tenth of the first fruits of his labour. And to-day tithe is paid out of the produce of the farm as part of the rent. The only question the Bill proposes to settle is whether it shall remain in the hands of the Church or go to the landowner. Whichever happens, the farmer must continue to pay. He is to get no compensation.

And a measure like this is put forward as a reform! It is the only kind of reform the nation can expect from a Government which is in the pocket of the landowners.

SIGMA.

200,000 ACRES WASTED

At the annual meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society, held at Chester yesterday, Alderman Watts, of Carlisle, said the Government was very kind to working men, and preferred to offer them a small gratuity weekly rather than they should do a day's work. Two hundred thousand acres awaited cultivation, yet it was thought preferable to provide the dole.—WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, 10th July.

NOTES AND NEWS

The CO-OPERATIVE NEWS, 25th July, contains an interesting interview with Mrs. Anna George de Mille, contributed by Mr. George A. Greenwood.

* * *

Mr. A. W. Madsen, who, along with Ralph Young of Edinburgh, is at present having a "husman's holiday" in Denmark writes from Skive, 16th July: It is wonderful to see how the heath is being reclaimed for farming and afforestation. What we have seen west of Jutland makes us think of a new colony—new buildings to be seen everywhere, and towns like Varde and Kerning with 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants which were mere hamlets a generation ago. We have been told much about Jutland's heath and what its reclamation has meant to Denmark. I asked about agricultural labourers and got the reply: "There are none in these parts"!

From Aarhus, 21st July: Grand meeting here last night with the Henry George circle. Conducted throughout in Danish; 31 present and altogether 36 speeches or "short remarks." Began 8 p.m., and lasted till 12 midnight. Discussed affairs in detail and many good points were raised. Local folks want this kind of discussion to be an "annual event"—an international conference in miniature! Heat wave of high degree.

* * *

Having detailed the amounts paid by the industry in royalties, Mr. Cook continued, "My charge and challenge is this: that as long as a penny is going to those people for royalties, then we are not budging in our demand on behalf of our men who are seeking their rights. (Cheers.) The miners are to-day receiving a wage that is a disgrace to civilisation."—Mr. J. A. Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain at Sunderland, 11th July.

* * *

Mr. Neville Chamberlain made the excellent suggestion yesterday that alongside new arterial roads there should be preserved great open spaces that could be used as playing fields. We believe that he quite sincerely cares about these things. But what good is that so long as the private gain of the landowner is continually put before public need, and new value created by a developing community cannot be secured to the community? Mr. Chamberlain has never yet shown any sign of resolutely facing the main obstacle, and until he does and until he shows enough force to get his colleagues to face it too, his good suggestions remain in the air.—BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE, 9th July.

* * *

Once a tax is imposed even on the owner's valuation, however faulty, the mere fact of its being made public—a vital necessity—the payers would soon see to it that they were not paying more than a neighbour for a similar natural opportunity.

It must not be overlooked that we all pay a land values tax now, but it goes into private purses. If that tax went into the public purse we should have less to pay in rates and taxes and cost of living generally, and give some of our social ills a chance to cure themselves.—A. J. M. in the GLASGOW EVENING TIMES.

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