

What corresponding assistance does the Government propose to give in relief of urban rates? Notice Lord Eustace Percy's astute or slipshod reply: "The proposed grant (caused by the reduced rating of agricultural land) will be payable in urban as well as rural areas."

Quite. But the grant will be payable *only in respect of agricultural land*—namely, that land which in urban areas is already rated at a negligible figure, despite its high market value. The whole benefit of the relief will go to the owners of all the area that is now held speculatively at "building prices," and the ring of monopoly will hold the towns in a tighter grip than ever.

* * *

In this matter of "agricultural land" and its real market value, we are presented with an admirably frank and unreserved admission on the part of no less an authority than Mr. E. Edward Briggs, Rating Surveyor and Valuer to the Bradford and District Property Owners and Rate-payers' Association. Mr. Briggs, commenting on the Land Nationalization Bill recently introduced by Mr. Snowden, states in a letter to the YORKSHIRE OBSERVER of 24th April:—

Generally speaking, the bulk of the agricultural land, or even land which has a building element, is yielding only an agricultural rent, although in fact the value in the open market represents something like 200 years' purchase of the annual rent received by the landlord. Take a farm in any part of the city you like, where part of the land abuts upon a main thoroughfare. True, the average frontage strip of any agricultural land which abuts on a main thoroughfare has a building element, but the term "building element" to my mind is a most illusive quantity, because it is not known when that building element will actually mature. It will be seen that, although there is a building element, the greatest rent which can be commanded at the moment is an agricultural rent, which by no means represents, or bears any relation to, the true value of the land in the open market.

We pass on to the Land Union this unexpected contribution to the debate.

* * *

Says THE SPECTATOR, 24th March:—Houses and buildings, of course, should be rated, for the buildings which a man occupies are a fair measure of his taxable capacity. But why land? Surely land, instead of being still held in the meshes, should have been one of the first forms of property to escape. It is true that a concession has been made in that land pays only half rates. But we are unwilling even to speak of this as a concession, as Members of Parliament commonly do. We call the rating of the raw material of the farmer an injustice; and though half the injustice has been removed we shall not be content until it is wholly removed.

Was it not a friend of THE SPECTATOR who said the higher the cheque for rates the lower the cheque for rent? But of course land should escape all such payments; nothing but the unimproved value of the land should be taken in taxation, and this the farmer *qua* farmer would not pay.

* * *

Once again we gladly recognize the well-sustained publicity campaign for the Taxation of Land Values in THE IRISH WEEKLY AND ULSTER EXAMINER. The Scottish Editor (68, Bath Street, Glasgow) can be cordially congratulated on his able and consistent advocacy. The paper circulates in Irish circles throughout the west of Scotland, and every issue carries columns of information on the crying need for opening up the land for employment, housing and municipal development. Our readers would be amazed and greatly uplifted if they would subscribe to this paper for a time and realize for themselves the splendid service the movement commands in this popular weekly.

HOW TO RAISE WAGES

You can raise wages by strikes—sometimes. But at best this is an uncertain and hurtful way. As a rule not more than one strike out of four is successful, and even then only at the cost of immense suffering to the men and their families, and injury to the very trades from which both masters and men make their living. The strike is an artificial and barbarous thing.

Are we then to fold our hands helplessly and say that nothing can be done? Most certainly not. There is a means which will not only raise wages with absolute certainty, but which will also help every useful trade. There is a true, a natural, and a lasting way of raising wages.

The way is to free the land—to give agriculturalists, builders and miners, and all other workers freer access to the land.

The machinery to free the land is quite simple and is ready to your hand if you like to use it. It is to Tax Land Values; that is, to make every owner of land pay his rates and taxes on the full value of the bare land even though he only half uses it or keeps it locked up altogether. Do not let any owner of land escape his rates and taxes simply because it pleases him to act the dog-in-the-manger by locking up his land or only half using it. At the same time abolish present rates and taxes, which heap all the burden on improvements and so often keep them from being made, thus causing unemployment.

This would drive all land to its very best use, and we would no longer see unused or labour-starved land side by side with men who seek work. The present land famine and scarcity of work would be brought to an end, so that all who wanted land could get it at its fair, natural rent. Trade would bound forward, the demand for labour would increase, and wages rise. Employers could raise wages without loss to themselves if they got their land cheaper and were not taxed and rated, as they are at present, on the value of every improvement they make. The present land laws, and the existing system of taxing and rating, keep wages down. The natural and certain way to increase well-being is to Tax Land Values, and so make sure that land can everywhere be got on fair terms by those who want to use it.

See how things would then work out. A suitable small holding means an addition of several shillings per week to the agricultural labourer's earnings, provided he can get the land at a fair rent.

This improved position of the labourer would induce many who now flock from the country to the towns to stay in their own villages, and at the same time would enable the countrymen who stayed at home to buy more of those things which are manufactured in the towns.

If countrymen could get the land they so much need on fair terms, we would then have three natural forces at work, each and all making surely for higher wages.

1.—Wages would rise in rural districts because it would be easy to get land at fair rents, and therefore fewer men would be seeking to hire themselves out.

2.—Wages would rise in the towns because fewer men would be driven from the country to cut down the wages of town workers.

3.—Employers would have to seek more workers to supply the increased demand for produce, and this would further assist in raising wages.

The Taxation of Land Values is in the official programmes of both Labour and Liberal Parties, and speakers at by-elections are advocating this reform.

Put it to the Candidate:

IF YOU ARE IN FAVOUR OF THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES, WHAT ARE YOU PREPARED TO DO TO BRING IT BEFORE PARLIAMENT AND YOUR PARTY LEADERS?