

THE LABOUR PARTY AND LAND VALUES

(From an article by Councillor Herbert Eastwood of Bolton, in "Lansbury's Labour Weekly," 15th January)

Every penny spent on improvements has the economic effect of increasing the value of land in the vicinity. The greater our activity, the greater price we have to pay. If we round off a bad corner, or widen a street, make an open space, or extend a bus or car route, the landlord reaps the benefit, and we have no effective counter at the moment. Land which one week is assessed as agricultural land becomes building land the week after. One acre in three is kept lying idle and remains assessed as agricultural land. Potential building land is withheld from use and a premium placed upon it by our effete system of assessment and taxation.

We do our utmost to secure new businesses or shops or industries for the town. But the purchaser of land for industry has to pay through the nose for sites which previously have paid a local rate as agricultural land. If he spends money on a decent building, we then proceed to punish him by taxing at a high rate not only the site but the building as well.

In the new assessment and valuation areas which are now being set up all over the country there appears to be no appreciation of this fact at the moment.

Labour representatives on these area committees should concentrate attention on this point of land value taxation. The Glasgow Corporation has set us all a splendid example by its recent conference on the matter, and all other towns should follow suit or co-operate with others on similar lines. Then when the anticipated Labour Government becomes an actual fact, the Municipal Authorities Enabling Bill, in conjunction with the taxation of land values already promised by Mr Philip Snowden in the next Budget of Labour, local authorities should be freed from the intolerable burden of high rates, which are wholly unnecessary in any town.