

LIBERALISM IN AMERICA

The Committee of 48

A group has recently been formed in the United States known as the Committee of 48, which endeavours to keep in touch with the Liberal public opinion throughout the whole 48 States in the Union. The National headquarters of the Committee are at 15, East 40th Street, New York, and the Middle West headquarters are at 38 N. La Salle Street, Chicago.

The Committee held a great national conference at St. Louis on 9th—12th December last and formulated a platform with these three planks:—

Public ownership of transportation, including stock yards, large abattoirs, grain elevators, terminal warehouses, pipe lines and tanks. Public ownership of other public utilities and of the principal natural resources, such as coal, oil, natural gas, mineral deposits, large water powers and large commercial lumber tracts.

No land (including natural resources) and no patents be held out of use for speculation to aid monopoly. We favour taxes to force idle land into use.

Equal economic, political and legal rights for all, irrespective of sex or colour. The immediate and absolute restoration of free speech, free press, peaceable assembly, and all civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution. We demand the abolition of injunctions in labour cases. We endorse the effort of labour to share in the management of industry and labour's right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of its own choosing.

The Land Question

In explanation of its programme the Committee has published an informing statement, and we make the following extract from what is said on the land question:—

"The fact that many of our trusts control the market through ownership of natural resources, together with the generally admitted fact that putting idle men upon idle land is at least a partial solution of our economic problem, brings us face to face with the land question. Any permanent solution of our economic problem must obviously include a change in our land policy. If we do not change our land policy, most of the benefits from lower prices due to public ownership, the destruction of the trusts and other reforms will be absorbed in the constantly increasing price of land and rents, which in turn will be reflected in constantly increasing prices of all commodities. Even a successful application of the farm loan policy, or of the co-operative movement would, by making farming more profitable, raise the price of farm land and make it harder to buy a farm, unless we change our land policy. The Cleveland 3-cent trolley fare caused a corresponding rise in real estate and rents in the section served by the trolley. Henry Ford's increase of wages to \$5 a day caused an immediate jump in Detroit land values and rents.

"All wealth in the last analysis comes from the land. It supplies the sources of all energy and the raw materials of all production. The same reasoning that proves the injustice of allowing a few people to hold out of use great quantities of land containing anthracite coal, applies with equal force to holding out of use for speculation large tracts of farm and city land. There is no difference in principle between lands that produce coal, iron or oil, and land that produces food or that is used for building purposes.

"Colonel Roosevelt voiced a fundamental American doctrine in his Paris speech, when he said: "When property rights conflict with human rights, property rights must give way." No plainer application of this principle can be found than the proposition that the

right of the owner to hold his land idle must give way to the human right of unemployed or underpaid man to go upon that idle land and produce the things that the people need.

"The principle upon which we should work is that it is against public policy to allow any land to be held out of use for purposes of speculation or monopoly. If we can gradually bring into use the unused land in every part of the country, it will become easier for the average man to obtain a home or own his own farm, and this will result in decreasing tenant farming, increasing home owners, and drawing off upon the land large numbers of industrial workers, thus relieving the congested labour market. It will also lower rents by encouraging building. These results can be obtained by the use of taxing and police powers of the Government."

ZIONIST CONVENTION

Statement by Mrs. Joseph Fels

The MACCABEAN (December, 1919) reports that Dr. Wise communicated to the Zionist Convention, held in Chicago in September last, the following brief statements by Mrs. Joseph Fels concerning the land situation in Palestine:—

"With the full ideal of democracy before us, we must proceed carefully and without undue haste in the application of progressive principles to the land situation in Palestine. It is now generally agreed that the highest interests of the new Jewish nation would be compromised by private speculation and monopoly in the soil. As the process of setting up the new government goes on, the establishment of law and order with all the benefits of modern civilization will at once be reflected in a tremendous rise of land values, which must not be permitted to fall into the grasp of commercial exploitation, but must be preserved for the good of the whole community by a wise and cautious statesmanship.

"The danger of too hasty action is illustrated in the case of the native Arab elements of the country. The Arabs now hold about one-half the soil. Over 95 per cent. of them are illiterate, and could not be quickly adapted to a new system of land tenure and taxation.

"For this reason, it is proposed temporarily to ignore the Arabic real estate, and to apply progressive principles to the Turkish crownlands acquired by British conquest, and to the property of the non-Arabic part of the population. In reference thereto, we propose to exempt improvements from taxation, and in lieu thereof to take the ground rental value for government purposes.

"This plan of action will at once free the non-Arabic real estate from the evils of private speculation, and by assuring a reasonable supply of land for immediate bona fide settlement, will prevent the Arabic land from acquiring a speculative, monopolistic value. This Arabic land can then be either purchased at a low price and nationalized, or, as the Arabs gradually come to understand our good faith and purpose, it can be organized under the same rules of taxation and tenure previously applied to the non-Arabic real estate.

"By taking such precautions, we shall avoid friction and possible conflict with the native elements; and in shaping our course with a view to the conditions actually prevailing, we shall move steadily toward fundamental democracy."

FROM A LETTER FROM DR. MAX NORDAU

In the course of a letter to the Convention, Dr. Max Nordau, writing from Spain, declares:—

All the land in Palestine that has belonged to the late Turkish Government must be made over to the new occupants, but shall remain the perpetual and inalienable property of the Jewish nation, and proportioned to individual occupiers only on a system of a renewable emphyteosis, in accordance with our wonderfully prophetic law of Moses of the Sabbath and Jubilee Year which Rivadavia practically in Argentine, and Henry George theoretically in North America have tried to modernize.