

MR. LLOYD GEORGE AND LAND MONOPOLY

"What are the Liberal Proposals?"

Speaking at a Liberal demonstration in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, on 20th December, Mr. Lloyd George said:—

You cannot deal with this problem (of the slums) effectively until you have dealt drastically with the problem of land values in the towns. Every social reformer knows that.

You know the conditions of some of our great towns—those dens of misery. What is the trouble? The first is you have a growing need for land in the towns and only the same limited supply. What is the next? That every improvement you effect in order to ameliorate the conditions creates fresh values beyond which are built up fresh barriers to further improvement. What is the third? That the rates and taxes of this country are so high that unless fresh resources of revenue are discovered the best municipalities will be utterly unable to discharge the elementary duties of civilization to their citizens. Since the war things have changed for the worse. Taxes have trebled and quadrupled. Rates and taxes between them have certainly in many cases quintupled, and that makes the difficulty even greater.

What is the fault? Let us face it. That values created by the skill, the industry, the sacrifice, and the risk of the community escape contribution altogether to communal needs. That has got to be remedied, and until you do it you will find it impossible to deal with this great problem of housing.

It is no use for Mr. Baldwin to declare war on slums if he permits the great ally of the slums—land monopoly—to raid and pillage the community with complete impunity. You must deal with it.

What are the Liberal proposals? I will lay them down to you. The first is, assess the real value of the land. The second is, insist that there shall be contributions to public purposes on the basis of the real value. And the third is that values which are created not by industry, not by enterprise, not by the capital of the man himself, but created entirely by the industry, the capital, the skill, and the enterprise of others shall belong to the community. The same principles apply to land in the country.

"You are rendering a public service by exposing the housing conditions of the people in congested areas. Might I say that in my own division in the Potteries we have the same terrible conditions? Our record of infantile mortality is among the highest in the country. In one ward we had 159 per thousand. How can politicians and reformers continue to talk about housing reform when we allow our present system of rating to do its deadly work? If houses are built we proceed to levy rates upon them. If no houses are built the owners of vacant land pay no rates on the value of their land, so they can wait until they receive a monopoly price. We have vacant land in Burslem for which the owners are asking £800 per acre; no rates are paid in respect of this land. We have filthy slum houses which are heavily rated. Untax the houses of the people, thus making houses cheaper; rate and tax land value, thus forcing land into use. There is no other way of solving the problem. I hope you will continue your splendid work in arousing public feeling and thought."—*Andrew MacLaren, M.P., in the DAILY NEWS, 3rd January.*

RADICAL GROUP CONSTITUTED

The Radical Group formed shortly after the General Election decided to constitute itself a permanent force with the Liberal Party. This course was taken (*DAILY NEWS*, 29th January) last night at the Essex Hall, London, Mr. P. Wilson Raffan, ex-M.P., presiding. In the course of his speech the chairman said:

"The Liberal Party had always had a Radical element in it, and that Radical element had contributed to the greatness of the Liberal Party."

Justifying this contention, he mentioned such names as Richard Cobden, John Stuart Mill, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who had left their imprint on the history of the land.

"While the Liberal Party should interest itself in all questions of the hour, the Radical group felt that the land question was so fundamental that it should be taken up by the Party as the most vital reform."

The Liberal Party, he suggested, is in its present position not because of bad organization or lack of financial support, or through not having a big enough number of candidates at the polls, but because the great mass of the electorate have lost faith in the Liberal Party as being the great reforming Party.

The audience sang the "Land Song."

A Liberal Convention was held at Sunderland 17th January (*DAILY NEWS* report) with close upon a thousand men and women present, nine-tenths of them working folk. The number who were eager to see the Liberal Party go to the country again on the Land Question was noteworthy. Mr. Haines of Middlesbrough called for equality of opportunity.

"We want to be singing the Land Song again," was a remark by a Middlesbrough working man, Mr. Coleby, that was heartily cheered.

A South Shields man who wanted to hear a clarion note on land monopoly, told how a Liberal study circle in his town is going closely into this question and believes that it lies at the root of all effective social reform.

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Sir,—The query of your Middlesbrough correspondent, "Why not sing the Land Song?" will strike a sympathetic chord in the breasts of all true Radicals.

What diverting figures our opponents cut when trying to combat the arguments for the taxation of all land values! What enthusiasm is aroused when this policy (which would gradually work a social revolution) is properly explained to a working-class audience!—*C. A. Gardner (Cardiff) in the DAILY NEWS, 22nd January.*

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The *LABOUR CHRONICLE*, Burslem, has published as a supplement to its New Year issue a calendar for 1925 illustrated by the picture representing the opening words of Henry George's *PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE*. In this passage Henry George compared the condition of the working masses with a bull that has so wound its rope round the stake that it has become helpless and cannot get at the rich grass. The Calendar is printed in size suitable for framing.

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By mistake, last month the *IRISH TIMES AND ULSTER EXAMINER* was credited with the article on "Glasgow Land Prices." The article appeared in the *IRISH WEEKLY AND ULSTER EXAMINER*, which, as our readers know, devotes much space to the evils of land monopoly. The Clydeside new columns of the *IRISH WEEKLY AND ULSTER EXAMINER* are made lively enough with a brilliant and outspoken advocacy of Land Values Taxation.