

WINSTON CHURCHILL : HERBERT MORRISON ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR

ALL AGREE IN DECLARING THAT RATES AND TAXES SHOULD BE LEVIED ON THE VALUE OF LAND EXEMPTING HOUSES AND OTHER BUILDINGS

Mr. Churchill said :

"There are only two ways in which people can acquire wealth. There is production and there is plunder. Production is always beneficial. Plunder is always pernicious, and its proceeds are either monopolised by a few or consumed in the mere struggle for possession. We are here to range definitely on the side of production and to eliminate plunder as an element in our social system. The present land system hampers, hobbles and restricts industry They were resolved if they could to prevent any class from steadily absorbing under the shelter of the law the wealth in the creation of which they had borne no share, wealth which belonged not to them, but to the community, wealth which they could only secure by vexatious obstruction of social and economic progress, far more injurious and wasteful than could be measured by their own inordinate gains."—*London, April, 1907.*

"It is quite true that the land monopoly is not the only monopoly which exists, but it is by far the greatest of monopolies—it is a perpetual monopoly, and it is the mother of all other forms of monopoly. It is quite true that unearned increments in land are not the only form of unearned and undeserved profit which individuals are able to secure ; but it is the principal form of unearned increment which is derived from processes which are not merely not beneficial but which are positively detrimental to the general public. Roads are made, streets are made, railway services are improved, electric light turns night into day, electric trams glide swiftly to and fro, water is brought from reservoirs a hundred miles off in the mountains—and all the while the landlord sits still. To not one of those improvements does the land monopolist as a land monopolist contribute, and yet by every one of them the value of his land is sensibly enhanced. He renders no service to the community, he contributes nothing to the general welfare ; he contributes nothing even to the process from which his own enrichment is derived."—*Edinburgh, July, 1909.*

"Land differed from all other forms of property in several primary and fundamental aspects. It was fixed in geographical position, it was limited in extent, it was absolutely necessary to everyone, and there were many conditions attached to land which gave to the possessor, whether he liked it or not, an undoubted power to absorb to himself year after year a share, and sometimes a very large share, of the general enrichment, which was created by the general community as a whole."—*Dundee, September, 1912.*

"I have made speeches to you by the yard on the Taxation of Land Values and you know what a strong supporter I have always been of that policy."—*Dundee, July, 1917.*

Reminded in the House of Commons on June 5, 1928, of his former declarations on the Taxation of Land Values, Mr. Churchill said: "I have taken the

trouble to re-read some of these statements quite recently and I am bound to say that I am not at all convinced that, among my arguments in favour of the rating of undeveloped urban land upon its true value, I employed any which were lacking in lucidity or reason."

Mr. Morrison said :

Speaking on the London County Council Site Value Rating Bill, 1938 (which could make no progress under the National Government and has not since been re-introduced by the Labour Government itself), Mr. Morrison said : "It was a great measure for the relief of the general body of London ratepayers. For the London Labour Party it was a measure of justice. No less was it a matter of justice for the general body of London ratepayers who now through rates on buildings carried the whole burden of municipal expenditure. It was right that the owner of land should carry a share of the burden. Municipal activities themselves enabled landowners to get a higher rent for their land. Nearly every public improvement increased the value of neighbouring land and yet, in spite of the fact that large sums were paid in compensation to landowners by public authority, they contributed nothing to the municipal treasury."—*At South Hackney, reported in The Times, August 1, 1938.*

"The community itself, the millions of people in London, could not live in this great city if the local authorities did not discharge many statutory duties and conduct many public services. It is grossly unjust that the landowners who benefit so much from the existence of the community and from the work of the local authorities should be specifically exempted from contributing their share to the work of the local authorities. The general body of ratepayers, including the residents, the little shopkeepers, the business men, the lower middle class, the owner-occupier who is purchasing his house under a loan—all this body of ratepayers are paying more rates in order that landowners shall pay no rates ; and we say that it is unjust and that it is the duty of the House to give justice to this general body of ratepayers."—*House of Commons, February 15, 1939.*

Sir Archibald Sinclair said :

"The principle of taking taxes off improvements and putting them on site values is one of the chief principles and aims of the Liberal Party. Outside the House of Commons it has received increasing support from men and women of all parties—in short, national support. The taxation of land values would liberate enterprise from the crushing burden of rent, rates and taxes which it now carries and make possible sweeping measures of town and country planning and national development. Here is a powerful weapon of national recovery and the Government instead of using it are breaking it" (by repealing the

Land-Value-Tax Finance Act, 1931, of the Labour Government).—*House of Commons, May 16, 1934.*

"On the question of the taxation of land values there are three main propositions none of which is affected by the economic situation during the last 30 years. The first is that site value is created not by the owner of the land but, apart from special circumstances as to the nature and situation of the land, by the growth of population, the development of industry, the extension of public works and so on. In the second place, the amount of land cannot be increased. Taken by and large, with the exception of a very few remote parts of the country, land values

go on steadily expanding year after year without any active steps being taken by a landlord unless of course the individual landlord happens to be enterprising and develops his property. Without the necessity of any action being taken by the landlord these fruits fall into the lap of the landlord. My third proposition is that if site values are taxed and the burden of taxation is removed at the same time from improvements, a double stimulus is given to industry and development of all kinds. On the one hand the access of the community to the land is rendered easy on fair terms, while on the other hand the reward of development becomes relief from taxes and rates."—*House of Commons, June 5, 1934.*

What do these Leaders say to-day? What is the attitude of their Parties?

Tackle your Candidates with these questions and insist upon a reply

General Election Leaflet published and circulated by the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, Ltd.

QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Questionnaire submitted to Parliamentary Candidates by the United Committee for the taxation of Land Values, Ltd. Printed on Quarto sheet with space for replies, remarks, and name of candidate, party and constituency. On reverse side the document was addressed to the Committee by folding and using the post-free postage.

THE QUESTIONS

To All Candidates

1. Do you agree that the land on which and from which all must live and make their living is the common heritage of the people and that those who hold the land should pay a just rent for their holdings by means of taxation levied on the value of all land apart from buildings and improvements?

2. Will you urge that the next Finance Act provides for the Valuation of Land exclusive of buildings and improvements and for the levy of a uniform annual tax on the value of all land whether used or not, the revenue so derived being used to reduce or remit taxes that bear upon wages, industry and trade?

3. Will you support reform of local taxation so as to assess rates on the value of all land and exempt houses and other buildings?

4. Will you press for the repeal of protectionist tariffs and the establishment of Free Trade for British imports, whatever may be the fiscal policies of other countries?

5. Will you urge the abolition of the purchase tax and of all indirect taxes on necessary consumable goods which by raising prices add to the cost of living and diminish wages?

6. Will you demand repeal of the financial provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act so as to get rid of its penal development charges and its other vexatious barriers against building; and will you insist upon Land-Value Rating with exemption of all buildings as the right way to promote desirable development?

7. Will you press for amendment of the English Local Government Act to require that the valuations now being undertaken shall assess the value of all land (distinct from any buildings thereon), enabling rates to be levied on land values instead of upon houses and other buildings?

8. Will you urge repeal of the Derating Acts by which at present industrial premises pay only one-quarter rates and agricultural land, however valuable, is virtually

exempt, whereas householders, shopkeepers and other occupiers are heavily burdened?

9. Will you move for the abolition of the Exchange Control so that the Pound can find its own level in a free market, and imports and exports can adjust themselves in a perfectly natural way beneficial to the whole community?

To Conservative Candidates

10. Are you in sympathy with Mr. Churchill's repeated pronouncements summed up in his statement in Dundee, 1917: "I have made speeches to you by the yard on the Taxation of Land Values and you know what a strong supporter I have always been of that policy"; and does the Conservative Party accept or repudiate those views of its Leader which he has never retracted?

To Labour Candidates

11. Can you explain the failure to re-enact the Land-Value-Tax Finance Act of 1931 and to re-introduce the London County Council Site-Value Rating Bill of 1938, both these being Labour measures, the former having been repealed and the latter frustrated by the National Government of evil memory?

12. Do you endorse the statement in the Liberal Speakers' Handbook (pages 141-144) expounding the Taxation and Rating of Land Values and will you use your influence to see that this reform has first place in the legislation promoted by the Liberals in Parliament?

Free trade between the nations had been described as "all nineteenth-century stuff": but was it? One of the most important recommendations of the recent conference with Mr. Hoffman had been that 60 per cent. of the restrictions on trade should be removed. Were the socialists, who had been lukewarm about free trade, likely to carry out that policy? Would it be the Conservatives, who had imposed more tariffs, quotas, restrictions, and barriers on trade than any Government for a hundred years? Liberals believe that we could solve our economic difficulties and that we could raise the standards of living of the peoples of the world through free trade.—*Lady Megan Lloyd George at Holyhead, "Manchester Guardian," February 16.*

Good and well, but with all respect to Lady Megan, the mass of her Liberal colleagues gave free trade the go by. Leading Liberal Clement Davies, broadcasting for all, did not even mention the word. Hence these tears.