

**SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN ON THE
LAND QUESTION AT PARTICK, GLASGOW,
28th NOVEMBER, 1905.**

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman delivered an address to the Partick electors on behalf of the candidature of Mr. Robert Balfour (now M.P. for Partick), in the Burgh Hall. Mr. George Green, C.C. (a Vice-President of the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values), presided. In the course of his speech the Prime Minister said:—

"To the men who are working and able to work, abundant and potential wealth lies in the fields only waiting to be extracted until greater freedom of security is given to those who would develop it. . . . There is no task, sir, to which we are called more urgently by every consideration of national well-being than that of colonising our own countryside. (Cheers.) But let us look to the towns. (Hear, hear.) There also will be found causes for non-employment more fertile than Mr. Chamberlain can find in the tariffs of the foreigner. We find a rating system which discourages investments and tends to check the building of houses and factories. (Cheers.) I don't know what his views on the land question may be to-day. (Laughter.) It would be dangerous to guess. (Renewed laughter.) Twenty years ago he would have agreed that this state of things which militates so seriously against improvement, against industrial development, and against the health and comfort of the people, might be alleviated by the taxation of land values. (Cheers.) I fear his sympathies may now be quenched by the fact that the reform of which I am speaking is on the straight lines of free trade. (Cheers.)

"I am at any rate convinced that a moderate application of the principle of site values taxation, coupled with power to municipalities to acquire land on honest terms, would appreciably reduce the burdens and at the same time lighten rents and diminish the evils of overcrowding which disgrace us to-day, and give a fresh outlet for employment. (Cheers.) Let us be proud that it is this great City and Municipality of Glasgow which has taken the lead in promoting this subject and recommending it to the attention of the people of the country. (Cheers.) I hope we shall not have to wait long for legislative action on so important a matter." (Cheers.)

Why, we venture to ask, should the proposal to tax land values "be coupled with power to municipalities to acquire land on honest terms?" If the municipalities have not the power already to acquire the land they need for any public purpose then they ought to have it. But that is another question. At present they have to pay monopoly prices for every acre they acquire. These monopoly prices may not be "honest" prices, but as it is they are regulated by our present one-sided system of land tenure and taxation. Only with the taxation of land values will it be possible to acquire land on "honest terms." But the municipalities can have no better right, either under the present system, or under the coming freer conditions, to better terms than any individual citizen who may require land for any "legitimate" purpose. In the settlement of the land question we want no preferential claims established, nor are they necessary.

It is the taxation of land values, and not the acquiring of land on "honest terms" or for that matter on any other kind of terms, that "would appreciably reduce the burdens and at the same time diminish the evils of over-crowding (which disgrace us to-day), and give a fresh outlet for employment." Sir Henry boldly and wisely asked the meeting and the country for the necessary driving power to carry these reforms. We are glad to know and to realise how well the country has responded to this statesman-like appeal. But the driving power behind the principle of taxing land values—it is of no mean order—has no association with this very

different and suspicious-looking land-purchase business. "Let us be proud," said Sir Henry, "that it is this great City and Municipality of Glasgow which has taken the lead in promoting this subject." We are proud of Glasgow for this work. Because of it we can boast we are citizens of no mean city. And we single taxpayers are prouder still of the fact that Glasgow's agitation of this great and far-reaching measure of social justice has not so far been "coupled" to any outside separate question. In our view that is a principal reason why the municipal movement for the taxation of land values has made such marvellous progress during the past ten years. The great mass of the people who now so well support this reform is the proof that the agitation has come along on right lines; and we look with confidence to the Prime Minister, of all men, to keep the issue clear in the public mind. A "moderate application" now, if it must be so, but let it be pure land value taxation untrammelled by other questions and other issues.

We look forward with confidence to the reception the Liberals in the House of Commons will give to a measure for the straight taxation of land values; they have been educated so well on the subject these past few years. But we can only regard with dismay the inevitable conflicting views and confusion that will arise both in the House and in the country if the measure be coupled with a proposal to give municipalities power to deal, even "honestly," in land purchase. The taxation of land values can stand any amount of discussion, and every time it is discussed the clearer becomes the necessity for it. On the other hand it must be admitted that this question of acquiring land by public bodies is not so well defined. It is quite right that these bodies should have all the land they legitimately require for public purposes. But the phrase "acquiring land" means in the minds of those who strongly advocate it much more than this, and whenever it is brought forward we may be prepared for some wild-cat schemes. Be that as it may, we must protest against any attempt to couple such a proposal with the clear mandate the country has given both in its municipal and parliamentary representation for the taxation of land values.

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