

to raise a fund out of which we shall pay monopoly prices for the land of our birth?

"It is because of this betrayal of the true Radical principles of taxation and rating of land values that many of us now are actively engaged in the Labour Party advocating the direct policy, rather than that which finds expression in the speeches of Mr. Lloyd George."

### UNACCEPTABLE PROPOSALS Mr. Ashley Mitchell's Outspoken Criticism

Mr. Ashley Mitchell, prospective Liberal and Radical candidate for Penistone, addressing the local Liberal Association on 11th October (MANCHESTER GUARDIAN report) criticized the new book *THE LAND AND A NATION*, published by the Land Inquiry Committee. After remarking that while in the report there was much valuable evidence which amply confirmed the statements that Liberals had made in the past, that attention to the question was needed, he stated that after careful deliberation he had definitely come to the conclusion that the new policy ought not to be accepted by Liberals, and he, for one, definitely declined to be associated with it.

The principle of purchase upon which it was based was quite incompatible with his Liberal principles. At the Liberal Convention in January the party deliberately placed the taxation and rating of land values as its first proposal for dealing with the land question, believing that the site value of the land was the property of the nation, in spite of the fact that it was at present owned by individuals. The new scheme could not be made to link up with that policy.

It was time for a bit of blunt Yorkshire speech on this matter. Either the party stood by what it did at the Convention in January or it did not.

Liberals had worked, in spite of many disappointments, ever hoping that the day would dawn when the nation would realize that their proposal was to lighten the burden of rates and taxes on industry, on wage-earners, and those genuine toilers whose work was seldom recognized because they were called income-tax payers, and instead to gradually begin to take the land value which the people had created.

He had worked for the Liberal Party because he believed that it stood for a policy of encouragement for enterprise, and now they were asked to accept a scheme which offered no relief to overburdened rate and taxpayers, but instead proposed to give those who were in possession of national property a perpetual annuity, and would make State property of farm buildings and improvements. He was not prepared to accept Socialism because it was put forward by Liberals. The greatest burden on the nation's back to-day was the load of officialism, and instead of more of it they wanted less.

It was time that business men realized that their interests were identical with those of the poorer classes; that the old Liberal policy would relieve their burdens at the same time that it would give life and hope to the poorest. Because they made a poor start in 1909 was no reason for abandoning their faith. In his (Mr. Mitchell's) opinion they failed then because they accepted a scheme with many bad features, believing that it could be amended and the lesson to be learnt from that experience was that in future they must accept only the genuine article.

Mr. Lloyd George, speaking in 1909, related in his own graphic manner the case of the Duke of Northumberland, who asked £900 for land rated at 30s., and he then

said: "If it is worth £900 let him pay taxes on it." "Why this different attitude to-day?" asked Mr. Mitchell. A few years ago men were asked if their native land was worth fighting for, and after fighting for it they were now told, by Liberals, forsooth, "the land is yours, but you must pay the people who have it a perpetual pension. Many Liberals had never shaken off the war-time political truce; the other parties did quickly enough, and now they saw proposals put forward which a Liberal conference before the war would have scorned.

"Why are we always trying to find an easy way, following the Baldwin precedent of buying our way out of a duty?" asked Mr. Mitchell. There was only one way—the straight Liberal road,—and in this matter the only way was to break down land monopoly by taxation, make the owners of unused land keen to have it used, give the people a chance to display that individual enterprise and vigour which abounded in this country.

There was no hope for a timid Liberalism. No party deserved a chance which subscribed to the fashionable doctrine that there was no cure for unemployment. Let them go boldly out, standing by their old Radical policy, assert that by real land reform, by setting the people to tackle the temperance problem, giving a fair electoral system, restoring Free Trade, then they did say in that way unemployment could be cured.

### NOT A WORD ABOUT PENAL TAXATION

#### Dr. Black Jones's Protest

Dr. W. Black Jones, writing to the *SOUTH WALES NEWS* of 19th October in criticism of Mr. Lloyd George's latest proposals, contrasts the findings of the Liberal Land Enquiry Committee of 1913 with the omissions of the Enquiry Committee of 1925.

In 1913, to quote Dr. Jones, the Liberal Land Enquiry Committee devoted a whole chapter to the question of rural rating. It states (p. 386) that a large farmer in Carmarthenshire says that "The present rating system sets a premium on slovenliness and idleness, while the diligent and hard-working farmer has to pay for his own labour"; while another farmer (Cornwall) writes that the present system puts a "premium on bad farming."

Further, it is stated that "We have had instances of agricultural land, formerly rated at 20s. or more an acre, turned into plantations, and then rated at 1s. an acre, including the sporting right. In such cases the law has put a premium upon misusing the land, while the man who puts his land to the best use has been correspondingly handicapped."

The present (1925) Land Enquiry Committee discuss the misuse of land for sport in the chapter on Landlordism, but do not make the slightest reference to the rate question.

The Committee of 1913 conclude that the rating system leads to great injustice, and that "the burden of rating is heavy where it ought to be light, and light where it ought to be heavy. The building of cottages, the establishment of small holdings, the better equipment of farms, and all higher and more intensive cultivation are penalized. Encouragement is given to the decaying village, the under-farmed holding, the badly managed estate, and the game preserving landowner. Thus the effect of the whole system upon rural development is one of steady depression." (P. 404.)

These words were true in 1913. The position is far worse to-day, yet the present Committee ignore the whole subject.