

"OUR POLICY."

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacred to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—*Henry George.*

OUR STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS.

It is a civil conflict. In spite of attempted diversions this election, like the last, has had little to do with foreign questions; it has fallen back steadily round internal systems and internal relationships. It closely resembles the conflict between Charles Stuart and the Parliament. The first engagement has been more decisive than Edgehill; if not so decisive as Marston Moor. The encroaching domination of the Lords has been checked. They have followed Charles in their tactics; they have made enemies of the North, and particularly of Scotland, and they have been heavily beaten there. They have succeeded where Charles succeeded—in the Midland and Southern Counties under their personal influence. They have insolently rejected every measure which the Scottish people demanded, and they have had their candidates thrown out with increased majorities against them.

The Scottish Smallholders' Bill, the Scottish Land Values Bill, and the Budget have kept Scotland true to the Government. The Budget, the one measure dealing with land in England on the land values principle, has by the testimony of men in every party rallied the Liberal forces in England, and it will be generally conceded that the Liberal victory is entirely due to this measure. Unfortunately, the Government limited the taxes on land values to certain kinds of land. They exempted agricultural land. They were urged to do this by Liberal members who claimed to represent the opinion of agriculturists and the counties, and who took an active part in pressing amendments for exemption. Singularly enough the agricultural counties have shown no appreciation of this, as the districts in which the Tories have gained coincide almost exactly with the districts exempted.

We regretted those and other exemptions and opposed them, but if the elections did nothing more than teach the Government the folly and weakness of making exemptions to the working of this principle, they would serve a great purpose. The Government have failed just so far as they have failed to grasp and apply this principle.

Let us briefly survey the issue as it has been forming for the last seven years. Since the Protectionist campaign was started in 1903 the issue has been very simple. Is

the country to abandon Free Trade, adopted in 1846, and go back to Protection, or is it to maintain Free Trade and go forward to Free Production? That issue has been raised on one side by the strong agitation for Tariff Reform, and on the other side by the agitation for the Taxation of Land Values and the valuation clauses of the Budget. We repeat that it is a simple issue, and that it is very far-reaching. We will be tedious and re-state it. Are the streams of trade flowing between this country and all parts of the world to be restricted and dried up in volume, or are the springs of production in this country which should feed the streams of trade to be opened? The Tariff Reformers, or Trade Destroyers, are clear enough on their side. Traders with foreign countries are to turn themselves into producers or manufacturers in this country—if they can. The subdivision of labour is to be checked and diminished. The Free Producers, on the other hand, have been less heard. The valuation clauses of the Budget still stand as a clear light to those who have looked into them. The Tariff Reformers have done so, and have honoured them so far as to say that their operation will postpone Tariff Reform for ever. We agree with them; and for this reason we think that Free Traders should get a clear understanding, and give a clear explanation, of this proposal which is, on the evidence of its opponents, calculated to safeguard Free Trade.

We would suggest to Liberal Ministers that the Land Clauses of the Budget contain something more than they realise or admit; that they contain something for which men not only in the manufacturing industries are waiting, but men in the agricultural industry. Ministers defend the Budget because it obtains money for social reform. It embraces a Development Bill for the benefit of agriculture, grants for Labour Exchanges and Insurance against unemployment. Well, we regard those provisions at the very best as ineffectual superfluities, and we shall give our reasons. Let us consider for a moment the Reform which gave us Free Trade. That is perhaps the greatest economic and social reform ever effected in our laws. Yet that reform obtained no money for social reform, but rather involved the loss of money to the Treasury. It was a reform which broke down barriers, gave a wider field and greater scope to capital and labour which were restrained by these barriers. The situation is the same to-day. Capital and labour are fettered. Production is the indispensable preliminary and source of trade, and production in this country is more hampered to-day than was trade in 1840. There is in this country an enormous, an incalculable mass or volume of palpitating energy in the shape of capital and labour pressing against the barriers to industrial progress, to production, but these are rigid and insurmountable. The march of Hannibal across the Alps, his melting of rocks by vinegar and fire, is nothing to the march of industry over

the impediments and under the burdens of our land and rating systems. Our brave, strong men in middle life can build roads and houses; they can plough fields and reap them, but there are some things they cannot do. They cannot pay a rent out of interest and wages, still less out of their capital; they cannot overcome the landlords' veto on the use of land. In the presence of these things they are paralysed and rendered helpless as children. It is pitiable and tragic, because they are strong men. It is an insult to offer these men charity, to offer their dependents charity. The only thing they need, the thing to which they have an unqualified right, is freedom to use their energies. To assist these men in any other way is putting out one's hand to hold the ark of the covenant for which action, we are told, a good but over-zealous man was once stricken dead.

The valuation clauses of the Budget, followed by taxation, provide for the industrial army nothing but a free opportunity to open up and colonise the country; they simply clear off the monopolies which are impregnably entrenched in its path to act as sharpshooters and underminers. In several of his speeches delivered during the elections, Mr. Asquith appealed to the verdict of the industrial centres. With one or two exceptions "they would find that the whole of the great centres of industry, whether in England or Scotland, had given an emphatic verdict in favour of Free Trade. Whatever might be the ultimate composition of the new Parliament, whatever the distribution of parties, and whatever the work in store for it, one thing might be confidently predicted even at this stage, that it was a Parliament which would not have received from the great industrial areas of the country any mandate of authority to interfere with our system of Free Trade." It is appropriate that the Prime Minister should associate himself with industry, and we hope that when the new Government is formed with its Budget majority, it will recognise that industry is a more comprehensive thing than trade, that there is not a trader who is not a user of land, that two out of every three traders are hit heavily and directly by the land system, and that the third trader is hit heavily and indirectly through the misfortune of the other two who are his customers. Indecision on the part of the leaders is the chief cause of defeats or indecisive actions in these struggles for freedom. The Budget, standing unexplained and limited so far as the principle of freeing industry or production is concerned, has won a clear victory against heavy odds, with that principle explained and set free to operate universally in the counties as in the towns, it will sweep reaction and monopoly away for ever. No Parliament since 1846 has received a mandate to interfere with Free Trade, but it will be a still more glorious achievement if there will be no Parliament after 1906 which will not do something substantial to thrust back and destroy the monopoly of land which as long as it exists must seek to crush and interfere with industry.

J. O.

LOUIS F. POST ON THE ELECTIONS.

Mr. Louis F. Post, known to all Single Taxers as the Editor of *THE PUBLIC*, Chicago, and as the author of several of the best works on the Single Tax and its philosophy, has come to Britain to see the elections. He spoke for Mr. Brunner in Northwich Division, for Mr. Wedgwood in Newcastle-under-Lyme, for Baron de Forest in Southport, and for Mr. Dundas White in Dumbartonshire. He has kindly given his impressions of the elections in the following interview.

1.—WHAT IS YOUR OBJECT IN COMING TO BRITAIN AT THIS TIME?

I came for the purpose of observing the elections over here and the political campaign preceding. What I wanted to do especially was to make a comparison between your methods of campaigning and your elections and ours. But, in addition to that, I was especially interested in the issues that these elections seem to me to have raised. As an American with the English traditions of liberty strong within me, I had very pronounced sentiments in regard to the arbitrary power of your House of Lords in matters of legislation. As a disciple of Henry George for more than a quarter of a century, I was profoundly, and, I might say, primarily interested in the land question; that is to say, the taxation of land values, which the Lloyd-George Budget had raised. When I left the United States I had little knowledge of any of the other issues over here, and such knowledge as I had did not excite in me any great interest regarding them. But when I got here I found the Unionists were making precisely the same kind of campaign for Tariff protection that has bedevilled our politics for the past thirty years or more; and, inasmuch as I am an outright Free-trader, my interest was, of course, excited by this issue. Your licensing issue has had only a passing interest for me except in so far as it involves the land question. That passing interest was due to the fact that the liquor interests over here seem to have a good deal of the same disregard for political honesty that our corrupt and corrupting business interests have in the United States. In other words, I have perceived what looks to me like a tendency on the part of the liquor interest to swing the elections by other influences than argument. It is not as bad as in our country but is pretty much the same in character.

2.—HOW DOES THE MANNER IN WHICH CANDIDATES PRESENT THEIR CASE, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH AUDIENCES RECEIVE THEIR STATEMENTS, IMPRESS YOU?

In that respect I have been very much impressed, sometimes with unexpected similarities and sometimes with unexpected differences. The Balfour meeting at Bradford was wonderfully like our Republican meetings during the height of Mr. McKinley's campaign for the Presidency in the 'nineties. The Republicans at that time were at the height of their agitation for Protection and they resorted to all kinds of patriotic claptrap as well as to fallacious arguments and misrepresentations of facts. They brought out children to sing patriotic songs as if their own party had a monopoly of patriotism. Their songs were generally war songs, and the whole spirit of the meetings was one of warlike hostility to foreigners—especially to England. The Bradford meeting seemed like an excellent imitation, with Germany substituted for England as the foe.

At the Asquith meeting in the same hall in Bradford I was most favourably impressed with the straightforwardness of the speech and the total avoidance, both in the speech and in the behaviour of the audience, in the decorations and in the programme, with the simplicity of the affair and the absence of clap-trap. Among the meetings I have attended since I landed in England on the 5th January, have been many of what we should call minor meetings, although they were, in fact, large meetings ranging from one thousand to two thousand five hundred. One of these impressed me very strongly from the fact that the speaker delivered what might have been regarded as a college professor's address to his class—the straightforward, simple reasoned-out argument lasting an hour and half. The audience, numbering perhaps five or six hundred people, not only sat through this address but showed their intelligent appreciation of the logical points that were