

### "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.*

### THE VALUATION AND ITS PROMISE.

It is impossible to catch all the marks of growth that attend the present movement towards freedom. Like the spreading of light with the dawn, like the coming in of spring, like the return of health, this movement grows—silently, steadily, joyously, even amidst strife. Progress is taking place in deep and hidden ways no less than in those that are open and visible. In spite of comparisons with certain things that have occurred in the past, nothing like this has ever happened in British history, or in the world's history. Form IV. is in many respects like other schedules that have been issued by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue. In one respect it is quite unlike them. Behind it there is the weight of a principle that extends through every part of life, touching and moving human feelings and reason in a marvellous way.

Men have been wronged by landlordism; they have been crushed beneath its weight for centuries, for thousands of years, and now a growing number see and feel that the end of this oppression is in sight. The valuation has only touched landlordism, and already it is sore and uneasy. One by one the victims of this system will recognise valuation as their friend and liberator; in a few years millions will recognise it. Lord Hugh Cecil referred to the Budget last year as "a rehearsal of the Day of Judgment." He protested against this rehearsal, but as the Budget settles down to work, the people take a keener and more approving interest in it. They have no objection to the anticipation of the day of judgment, to the change in its date from the first ages of eternity to the present years of time; they have no objection to hastening the advent of all those fruits of righteousness and peace that are said to wait on the holding of that great and searching inquiry. They know they have nothing to lose, and they are possessed by a shrewd and intelligent conviction that they have much to gain, from certain questions asked with authority and purpose. As this day of judgment, this year of valuation, wears on, as it comes round again and again, some dark and criminal policies will be revealed. The unpardonable sin and folly of allowing landlordism to ride with its heavy hoofs over industry, over men and women, to rack rents out

of their life's blood, to shut up land against their labour, the equally sinful and foolish policy of taxing houses and food, will become apparent. These policies, noisy and subtle now in their own defence, will be identified as the causes of innumerable evils under which men suffer. They will be convicted, silenced and damned.

There should be no mistake. The principle of the Budget makes the widest and strongest appeal to the country. The basis of that appeal is the universal experience of the people. Apart from the fact that there is not one reasonable argument against a single tax on land values for the purpose of raising an amount equal to all our present revenue, there is the reasonable impatience of the country with the present, wretched conditions. If we succeed in yoking this sentiment in the country to the machinery of valuation, most of our great hopes may be realised within a few years. Events are full of promise. Mr. Lloyd George, in his City Temple speech, discussed in a serious manner the supreme problem of poverty. He did not suggest a remedy, but he suggested where the root of the mischief lay. This is a great step in advance. The impression made by the speech more than justifies its deliverance. It justifies the serious discussion of the same subject on the same lines by every wise politician. We have been told that this question does not interest many people, that it is necessary to display an interest in some twenty questions which as many sections of the community regard as the most important. We can now apply the test of experience to these statements. It is now eighteen months since the Budget was introduced, and what other policies have ever provided so much genuine material for humorous and serious discussion? What other policy has maintained and increased the interest of the people, or made them feel that it was but the beginning of a new and great movement which would give them more and more satisfaction as it proceeded?

Just as this is the policy to revive and consolidate the forces of progress, so is it the policy to confound and demoralise the forces of conservatism and reaction. It is impossible to read the speeches of extreme Unionist speakers, or the articles in extreme Unionist papers, without pity as well as amusement. There is a stern tug-of-war on between the forces of progress and the forces of reaction. The former, well on the winning side of the line, sit firm and easy on the solid ground which the Budget has prepared for them; the latter hop on and off every piece of demagogic policy which is left for them to take up. Now it is payment of members, now federal home rule, and now land for small owners. In their despair they quarrel among themselves about every one of them. Not one of them, not all

of them together, can compare with the simple valuation of land in its power of appeal to the country.

Therefore, let us hold to this policy; let us develop it. The valuation is full of possibilities still undiscovered by its administrators and by the mass of the people. In itself it provides the means of restraining and destroying the encroaching and fatal power of landlordism. Then there is the question of taxation. Mr. Ure has been charged with being a Single Taxer, and he has made it plain that he is not. Mr. Ure is perfectly right and perfectly justified in doing this. But we are Single Taxers. We believe that our land and tax laws are utterly perverse, utterly contrary to every sound and natural principle, and, as a matter of immediate practical politics, we demand that every penny of revenue to be raised shall be raised on the basis of land value. There are those who think that some deserving members of the community are indirectly benefited or sheltered by taxes on food, houses and incomes, that some are benefited by the withholding of land. Industry, industrious men, are tied up under landlords by restrictions, leases and contracts of various kinds. There are those who believe that there is a sanctity about those contracts which must be respected. There will be none in the day of judgment, when it is fully come. In a community which depends on industry—and there is no community that does not—a contract which interferes with industry is the opposite of sacred. The moment it ceases to be consistent with the interests of industry its sanctity is gone. Under the present laws contracts take the first place and industry the second. All that will be altered by the Valuation. The beneficiaries of the contracts, who fondly believe that they are supported by the contracts, live on bread and the other fruits of the industry which they do so much to destroy. If the contracts are so essential, let them eat them, let them clothe and house themselves in them.

The Valuation is a revolution. No revolution was ever so necessary. Here is a recent and typical example of what is done in the name of business, and of what must be undone. THE ESTATES GAZETTE of October 22nd had a short article on "Housing in Yorkshire Mining Districts." In the Hemsworth District to the south-east of Wakefield the rapid development of coal mining has given rise to a house famine. The medical officer of the district "reported that in some cases sixteen and seventeen adults had to live in the same house, a small miner's cottage we presume, and the result has been in at least one instance the outbreak of enteric fever." The GAZETTE goes on to support the perpetuation of this policy. "Once a mine," it says, "is exhausted or abandoned, the village that housed its workmen becomes worse than valueless, and it is therefore only to be expected that whoever erects miners' habitations will hesitate to adopt any plans adding seriously to their cost, and absolutely no compulsion whatever can be applied to the owner of a mine or a factory to compel him to house the hands for whom he provides the means of livelihood. . . . When one is building not for an age, but for a single genera-

tion of thirty years or so, . . . it is difficult indeed to coax capitalists into finding funds for ideal garden suburbs."

This is the view which governs "business" policy in these matters to-day. It will be noticed that the landlord, the mineral rents and royalties, are altogether left out of this view. The life of the mine may be short or long, but they are to be paid in full. Not a pennyworth of coal will come out of the mine without the labour of the miners, but they are to live seventeen in a house, while the landlord may have seven castles, several of which may have as much accommodation as a mining village. Business is to be facilitated by overcrowding the men, who are the very bones and marrow of business, by housing them as pigs are housed, by engendering outbreaks of enteric fever! Is it not time that we had a day of judgment? Let the Valuation see to these things, let rents and royalties wait until the men who produce everything are made secure. Let industry, as it is the first thing, take the first place. This is the revolution.

J. O.

### OUR OLD BROWN MOTHER.

Whatever its faults may be, Form IV. has succeeded in converting Great Britain into a debating class on the eternal Land Question. Even newspapers mainly concerned with the speculating and gambling enterprises of the privileged and "investing" classes, have not escaped the infection. Hence, we find in what claims to be "London's Leading Finance Paper," THE FINANCIAL NEWS of October 10th, an interesting, even a misleading article on the Land Question, summarising the outstanding processes to which English land has been subjected during the last thousand years or so.

The writer prefaces his sketch with the following poetic story:—

When Brutus went with his two cousins to the Oracle at Delphi they asked which of them should obtain the chief power at Rome. The Oracle replied that, "he who should first kiss his mother" was the fortunate man. The cousins hastened home to compete for the auspicious maternal embrace; but Brutus feigned to stumble, and kissed the Old Brown Mother of us all—the land. From the ground our physical frame is formed and from its produce nourished. To the open land we go for health, when work and weariness have sapped our vigour; and to the Old Brown Mother's breast we all return, when life's long hurly-burly ends at last.

The writer then alludes to the fact that it is now some "eight hundred and forty-four years since a little army of Englishmen entrenched themselves upon the field of Hastings to defend their Old Brown Mother from the Norman vultures." The Normans were victorious; hence a few years later found William the Conqueror hard at work upon his Land Programme—drawing up his Form IV., known in history as the Domesday Book—upon which, the author is pleased to affirm, "the current Government scheme of land valuation is modelled." "The enquiry," he continues, "was as severe and as relentless as that which England is about to undergo." And yet he himself reveals the essential difference between the two enquiries when he quotes from a contemporary English chronicler as follows:—"It is shame to tell what he (William the Conqueror) thought it no shame to do. Ox nor cow nor swine was left that was not set down upon his writ"—his Form IV. The modern enquiry does not concern itself with the individual property or live-stock which the holder may have upon the land.