

LAND & LIBERTY

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Editorial Offices :

11, TOTHILL STREET, LONDON, S.W.1.

All communications to be addressed to the Editor.

Telegrams: "Eulav, Parl., London."

Telephone: Victoria 7525.

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COAL AND THE LOCK-OUT

"The ideas that there is a necessary conflict between capital and labour, that machinery is an evil, that competition must be restrained and interest abolished, that wealth may be created by the issue of money, that it is the duty of government to furnish capital or to furnish work, are rapidly making way among the great body of the people, who keenly feel a hurt, and are sharply conscious of a wrong. Such ideas, which bring great masses of men, the repositories of ultimate political power, under the leadership of charlatans and demagogues, are fraught with danger; but they cannot be successfully combated until political economy shall give some answer to the great question which shall be consistent with all her teachings, and which shall commend itself to the perceptions of the great masses of men. It must be within the province of political economy to give such an answer. For political economy is not a set of dogmas. It is the explanation of a certain set of facts. It is the science which, in the sequence of certain phenomena, seeks to trace mutual relations and to identify cause and effect, just as the physical sciences seek to do in other sets of phenomena."—*Henry George.*

The General Strike has come and gone, a nine days' wonder, but the miners' strike drags on its course in bitterness and gloom. There is "great argument about it and about," but after weeks of stress and strain no one appears to be any the wiser as to what is being done to put an end to the dispute. The quarrel is not the outcome of any scramble for a limited amount of coal; it is on record that as one coal mine gets worked out another seam is discovered which makes good the wastage. But neither mineowners, nor miners, stop to pay homage to this beneficence. In the noise and shouting of the day it is wickedly suppressed by their spokesmen as they turn and rend each other.

The problem to be solved is of our own making. Society, in its growing pains, in its progress from small things to great, has allowed coal-bearing land, as all other natural provision for man's chief end in life, to become the private property of the few. This means the economic enslavement of the many, and if it is to cease, society must learn to free itself from the unjust and mischievous regulation. To continue on present lines means anything but peace in industry. The interminable conflict between capital and labour is a sham fight the terms of which

are decreed neither by the one nor the other combatant, but by monopoly—the well entrenched enemy of both. In all the discussion that rages round the miners' strike this question of the need for economic freedom is quietly ignored. Yet on other occasions, on countless platforms, speeches have been made and evidence given as to its importance by many who are dumb to-day—dumb when they could do so much to clear away doubts on the need for fundamental change.

There is no end to the advice given by our publicists to the mineowners and the miners on how to bring their quarrel to an end, or patch it up for the time being. Figures are taken from reliable data and from more questionable sources of information to prove the case for a certain line of advance, only to be challenged by another set of figures equally imposing which go to prove the opposite contention. It is a curious predicament. Nature has done her part in providing the coal, the machinery for bringing it to the surface and despatching it to the consumer is not wanting, and all the Government can attempt after ten weeks' deliberation is to add one hour to the working day of the miner. Still the cry for longer hours and more coal mingles with the wail that it is not the want of coal, but the want of markets for it, that is the chief difficulty.

The miners' leaders are told by their well-meaning counsellors in the Press that they show no real leadership. "We look in vain," says one critic, "to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's speeches, whether on the coal dispute or the general strike, to know what he and his party would do if they were responsible for the present situation." But Mr. MacDonald and his party are not alone in this dilemma. We look in vain for any other group of politicians with a watertight scheme to better the condition of the mining industry. In the light of the explanation given by political economy there is nothing to be gained by considering the coal question apart from its relationships to industry as a whole; there is no special dispensation for coal mining. If there was, it would be likewise with all other industries. In that case strikes and lock-outs would give place to the higher interest of the community and labour, without any strife, would secure its just reward.

A miners' leader writes: We must get to know the real nature of the problem before we can understand and appreciate the value of any suggestions for its solution. He quotes from the coal report to the effect that 95 per cent of the coal is produced by two groups comprising 613 different firms who own 2,000 and 3,000 separate mines; that one group comprising 396 firms producing 58 per cent. of the output making losses varying from 3d. to over 7s. a ton; and another group of 217 firms producing 42 per cent. of the output making profits of from 1s. to 7s. a ton. With emphasis, he exclaims: There is your problem in a nutshell. It is difficult to see the problem in this benighted analysis of firms, percentages, losses and profits. The argument is based on the mistaken notion that for some men nature has nothing to offer but the mining of coal. It is simply not true and no amount of special pleading can make it true,

however guileless the intention may be. We find ourselves more in sympathy with the writer when he insists that, "to-day there is no foundation anywhere on which to build a settlement, and the first thing to do is to create a foundation." Manifestly that is the first thing to be done. Given a sure foundation labour can work miracles; without it any settlement is a mere scrap of paper to be torn in pieces when the forces are called to attention for the next offensive.

If miners are hard pressed at the coal mines for a living wage, why cannot they turn to other sources of employment? That is the problem to be solved, and any advice to the contrary is not worth a moment's consideration. The coal-owners' lock-out of the miners is a mere circumstance to the more general and all-pervading lock-out from the natural opportunities that is labour's portion in every settled community, and the Labour Party that refuses to acknowledge this fact and its implications is shirking the real issue. Its programme and its conventions are in the air so long as it declines to grapple with and overcome the basic monopoly. It is this incubus that denies the worker his place in the sun, and dooms millions to penury and want in sight of an abundance that is equal to any emergency. As Henry George says: "It is this very fact, that want appears where productive power is greatest and the production of wealth is largest—that constitutes the enigma which perplexes the civilized world and which we are trying to unravel."

Labour is a drug on the market and a mendicant at the door of Parliament for subsidies to eke out a precarious existence. How this comes about is the problem to be solved, and when the cause of it is made plain, the cure will not be far to seek. To consider a settlement of the miners' strike on its own merits is to betray a parochial mind; and to develop the idea of a general strike with international agreements so to bring labour into its own, before dealing faithfully with land monopoly, is like the legendary belief that omelettes can be made without breaking eggs.

But let us glance at some other facts and figures that bear on the miners' strike and seem to shed light on the situation. In a special article in the *MANCHESTER GUARDIAN*, 23rd June, Mr. John H. Humphreys recalls that recently a north country coal-owner stated that in 1914 his concern paid in rates and taxes £35,000 and in 1925 some £148,000; that in 1914 National Health and Unemployment Insurance cost him £9,000, in 1925 £60,000; that the Welfare Fund cost nothing in 1914, but in 1925 some £18,000. As this writer truly remarks: "In the discussion within Parliament, in the negotiations with the Government, neither Mr. Herbert Smith, nor Mr. Cook, nor Mr. MacDonald, nor Mr. Thomas, nor Lord Oxford, nor Mr. Lloyd George, nor Sir John Simon, nor Mr. Baldwin have dwelt upon the additional burdens which Parliament has imposed upon the coal industry." Of course not, and the only reference made to the royalty burden is the proposal to buy out the royalty owners at something like £100,000,000.

There is no end to the growth of these onerous

burdens on industry. They act always in restraint of trade, and it is just here where the teaching of the Labour Party clashes with the teaching of political economy. Taxes on industry are a deduction from the earnings of industry, and labour suffers accordingly. But the Labour Party are out to make the "capitalist" pay, heedless of the fact that Capital and Labour in the long run stand or fall together. The "capitalist" passes on the burden to the consumer, and in higher prices the worker is forced back again to the level of subsistence; his purchasing power is restricted, trade slackens and things get worse instead of better.

Unemployment accounts for low wages, and there is nothing in Labour organization, as such, to stay the tendency. Land monopoly and the taxation of industry are alone responsible for bad trade and hard times. Burden after burden is piled on industry and enterprise, and in cunning, subtle, indirect ways which benefit some industries at the expense of others; and Parliamentary discussion proceeds as if members never even heard of the communal value of land. With the taxes wrung out of the taxpayer they subsidize agriculture, sugar beet, housing, coal, and provide for the poverty that comes of their own uneconomic legislation.

The land value policy is the only alternative to taxing industry, and for that reason it continues to make greater and greater headway in the public mind. Its own reasonableness and its adoption by other countries gives this assurance. In its fiscal aspect the Taxation of Land Values stands for economy and efficiency, for a principle that would encourage the industrious citizen and lead him to realize that his interest was not at variance with the life and movement of the community. In its incidence it would strike at the monopoly of the land and its products; widen the field for industrial development, and in this way bring labour and capital together for the common good.

If this claim could be disputed democracy would have no future. There is no answer to the demand for a land system, free from the element of monopoly, except one and that is silence. It is an answer that can be cheerfully taken from the beneficiaries of privilege and their agencies; it is their method of indicating what the reform will do for them. But why should the Labour Party and its leaders play this game? Surely, if any strike against longer hours and lower wages can be related to the land question, it is a miners' strike, yet never a word is heard from labour leaders on this pregnant truth. They one and all devote themselves to the effects inherent in the initial wrong that levies "a toll upon labour constantly and continuously"; the abiding cause of the trouble is ignored.

Economic law cannot be made to function by Act of Parliament, and goodwill is no substitute for good wages. The abject dependence of labour in a world in which labour is the active factor in production, the producer of all wealth, is the problem to be solved. It is rooted in the law and practice that makes labour a beggar at the threshold of Nature's bounty. This is the barrier to all progress, material and moral; at all points it was erected

by selfish greed and ignorance and only by enlightenment can it be overthrown.

Without the Taxation of Land Values what can be done to free industry from penalizing methods of raising public revenue? Without this salutary reform how can labour escape from the tyranny that keeps it everywhere in economic servitude? These are questions that overshadow every strike; they are the unwelcome participants in every discussion on labour problems.

The Land Value policy in its bearing on agricultural land we are told is bristling with difficulties. How long these troublesome points would continue to exist under an efficient and well-equipped land valuation department is another question. Another sort of difficulty was before Henry George when he wrote: "It requires reflection to see that manifold effects spring from a single cause, and that the remedy for a multitude of evils may lie in one simple reform." The cure for this malady is apparent to all who believe in the need for the radical land reform we seek to promote.

J.P.

MONOPOLY'S GRIP

The landlord stands at the coal mine door—
"Stand back! Stand back!" saith he,
"The bounties of God are all my store,
And ye may but work for me."

Now doff your cap for a job, my man,
And take what the owners give—
God pity the man that's under the ban
Of the trusts that let men live.

The landlord stands by the iron mine,
And "the iron trade grows slack,"
"Ye shall pay me more for the God-made ore,
Or for tools and labour lack."

And the tools are few in the farmers' fields
And the coal in the kitchen scant.
Alas! for the man who pays what he can,
And takes what the trust kings grant.

For the buyers wait in the market place,
And the workmen wait at the mills;
And its Oh, for the land in the gripping hand
Of the trusts whose earth-grip kills.

VIRGINIA M. BUTTERFIELD,
in Johnstown Pa, Democrat.

THE THEORY OF HUMAN PROGRESSION

By PATRICK EDWARD DOVE

Abridged by JULIA V. KELLOGG

We are glad to announce that, through the kindness of Miss C. O. Schetter who is visiting London on her way to the Copenhagen Conference, we are now able to offer on sale a number of this most useful and acceptable exposition of Patrick Edward Dove's great work.

Price 1s. (1s. 2d. post free).

To be obtained from

LAND & LIBERTY, 11, Tothill Street, S.W.1.

NOTES AND NEWS

On behalf of all readers of LAND & LIBERTY we convey fraternal greetings to the representatives of the twenty-eight nations assembled in the Houses of Parliament in Copenhagen, 20th July, at the Third International Conference to Promote the Taxation of Land Values and Free Trade. May success wait on high purpose and goodwill wait on both.

* * *

As we go to Press we have word from the Danish Land Values Committee that arrangements have been made for the President of the International Conference, the Hon. Charles O'Connor Hennessy, to broadcast from the Copenhagen Studio a twenty minutes' speech on Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, on Friday, 23rd July; at 7.15 p.m. The speech will be repeated in Danish by an interpreter. We are officially informed that a relay from London is not possible because the question is "controversial." Readers with powerful enough sets will probably listen-in for themselves.

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In a further display notice the BULLETIN (1346 Altgeld Street, Chicago) for May, directs attention to the Copenhagen Conference, referring with interest to the election of the Hon. Charles O'Connor Hennessy as President. Items from THE MAIL BAG contain a letter from a London correspondent, ordering a copy of Mr. Jorgensen's book, FALSE EDUCATION IN OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. Copies of this book can be had on application to 11, Tothill Street.

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The issue of THE CENTRE, 25th May (2 Crosscauseway, Edinburgh) contains a short article on the coal problem by Sir Edgar Harper. In his closely reasoned statement the writer says, "The value of the coal is ours, not merely because coal was given by the Almighty, but also because its value is created and renewed from day to day by our presence, our activities and our needs."

* * *

In a contributed article to the EDINBURGH EVENING NEWS, 29th June, Mr. J. M. Wylie begins:—

"Among my earliest recollections of Scottish Liberal propaganda is what was known as the Land Song, with its haunting refrain, 'God Gave the Land to the People.' It was sung to the tune of 'Marching Through Georgia,' and was sung with real Radical zest and aggressiveness. Liberalism was Liberalism in those days!"

* * *

Mr. Oliver Baldwin, son of the Prime Minister, speaking at a crowded meeting at Tavistock, on 28th May, said: "No man could stand up and support any enactment of the law such as the Land Enclosure Acts, which were created by a minority of wealthy land owners who were put into power by votes which did not include anybody below certain stages of society. Wage slavery began, and it did not need anyone to open those damnable pages of English history. In 1914 England was a very rich country, and when the war broke out the biggest landless army that ever left its own country went overseas to defend something of which they did not own a single square inch."

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We have pleasure in directing our readers' attention to the advertisement in another column of Joseph Dana Miller's promised book, THIRTY YEARS OF VERSE MAKING, price two dollars. Already orders for 350 copies have been received. Mr. Miller writes in high hopes of early publication. Unfortunately he will not be present at the Copenhagen Conference, but trusts everything will go well and that harmony and good feeling will prevail.