

LAND & LIBERTY

Published by THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE
TAXATION OF LAND VALUES.

Thirtieth Year. Established June, 1894.

3d. Monthly. By Post 4s. per annum.

United States and Canada, 1 Dollar

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The Postage on this issue is One Half-penny.

MR. CHURCHILL'S BUDGET

Fancy comparing these healthy processes (the service of doctors and lawyers) with the enrichment which comes to the landlord who happens to own a plot of land on the outskirts or at the centre of one of our great cities, who watches the busy population around him making the city larger, richer, more convenient, more famous every day, and all the while sits still and does nothing. Roads are made, streets are made, railway services are improved, electric light turns night into day, electric trams glide swiftly to and fro, water is brought from reservoirs a hundred miles off in the mountains—and all the while the landlord sits still. Every one of those improvements is effected by the labour and at the cost of other people. Many of the most important are effected at the cost of the municipality and of the ratepayers. To not one of those improvements does the land monopolist as a land monopolist contribute, and yet by every one of them the value of his land is sensibly enhanced. In no great country in the new world or the old have the working people yet secured the double advantage of free trade and free land together, by which I mean a commercial system and a land system from which, so far as possible, all forms of monopoly have been rigorously excluded. Sixty years ago our system of national taxation was effectively reformed, and immense and undisputed advantages accrued therefrom to all classes, the richest as well as the poorest. The system of local taxation to-day is just as vicious and wasteful, just as great an impediment to enterprise and progress, just as harsh a burden upon the poor, as the thousand taxes and Corn Law sliding scales of the "hungry 'forties." We are met in an hour of tremendous opportunity. "You who shall liberate the land," said Mr. Cobden, "will do more for your country than we have done in the liberation of its commerce."—*Mr. Winston Churchill (Chancellor of the Exchequer), at Edinburgh, 17th July, 1909.*

The "Baldwin Budget," as a representative Conservative organ describes it, has brought the country sharply enough into the whirlpool of Protection. The man who once "banged, bolted and barred the door" against the imposter has abjured the full Cobdenite faith he assumed for a period in his chequered career. He has recanted, perhaps under duress, and now proclaims with equal audacity his belief in the fraud he but yesterday so unscathingly exposed. Land monopoly as the impediment to enterprise and progress is no longer staged as the piece that is going to have a long run. In its place the curtain rises on the international war for markets; the certain prelude to the fight on the bloody battlefield some other day.

For the rest the Budget, apart from its expert financial jugglery, is cleverly enough framed on the Liberal and Labour principles of "money for Social Reform," that is, money taken from the earnings of industry, including the wages of labour, to make good the economic disabilities the existing system inflicts upon the low paid workers and their dependents.

Our All-In Insurance Liberals from the leaders down to the managers and Fabian pamphleteers of the Liberal Summer School have now their reward. As one of the chiefs of this NEW LIBERALISM has put it: "In pensions for widows we have seen the fruit of the travail of our souls and may be satisfied." It is a graceful confession, even though it leaves the Liberals nothing but their record as good pace-makers for the Tories. The enemy has caught the insurance Liberals arguing the case and quietly annexed it as something worth his while. It is evident that what the Liberals took to be an up-to-date piece of Liberalism was common to all three parties in the State.

It is a policy that does not challenge any vested interest, and the Baldwin Government have lost no time in making the most of their opportunity. The Liberals may acclaim the measure as theirs; the Labour Party also; but when the day of battle at the polls arrives the Tories will issue the most telling posters. It is quite a "scoop" in politics—something attempted, something done for the poor and unfortunate, something to save them, perhaps, from the section of men, to quote the Prime Minister, "who stand for a violent upsetting of existing conditions."

The Taxation of Land Values is a plain simple remedy; it does not fall on industry or wages; it commands much popular support, as witness the place it occupies on the programmes of the Liberal and Labour parties, and the support given the policy by their candidates at the two recent general elections. All this may be counted up by our superior persons as so much lip service, yet the day was when the questions asked the candidates by the United Committee could not command even lip service on the hustings. The answers to the questions can at least be taken to mean that in the estimation of the candidates the taxation of land values and the untaxing of industry can no longer be treated with indifference nor the United Committee ignored.

The disadvantages the reform labours under is that it challenges both vested interests and vested prejudices. A system of insurance with all its fine wealth of detail and balancing argument, even if it does leave the working classes where they are and the land speculator undisturbed, is to our politicians a much more inviting prospectus. And so the game of politics is pursued without regard to fundamental principles.

The Communism that denies the rights of property and openly preaches the doctrines of class war has received no setback by this Baldwin Budget. On the contrary, the cult is more likely to gain an even stronger footing for its destructive propaganda. The Budget does nothing to alter the maldistribution of wealth; it opens up no opportunities and until a successful attempt is made on this line of advance the demagogues have the field to themselves, and not all the demagogues are at the street corners.

As to the vague and much abused term Socialism, every man in the Labour ranks, as outside, appears to enjoy the freedom of his own definition. If it happens to conflict with that of the other fellow no matter, the blessed word itself can cover a multitude of confusing contradictions. Yet no sensible person need fear the Socialism that springs from individual freedom. Given that to begin with, everyone can welcome co-operative enterprise in industry and commerce. In that sense the name has lost its terror and we are all Socialists now. The Socialism that wills to power before the workers are first emancipated from the fetters of monopoly, and it still has some vogue, is as useless and as impossible as Communism itself. It is the kind of Socialism that would make its own economic laws and can be dismissed as of no account whatever, except to those who take the slave state to be a healthy and wholesome aspiration.

In the field of practical politics the Socialism that would make the producer pay for pensions or for any similar melioration, and allows the non-producer, as such, to escape, is to be condemned no matter who or what party stands for the imposition. The publicly-created value of the land is the natural reservoir from which to take all supplies calculated to better the condition of the people. It was and is the declared intention of the Labour Cabinet to tap this new and abundant source of revenue. Is this to be the argument of the party in the Budget debate on pensions? If not it only means that the Taxation of Land Values is good enough for the platform, but that in Parliamentary endeavour any benefit for the worker must be obtained always at the expense of his own purchasing power.

As to Liberalism it has been aptly defined as the political expression of progress, synonymous with the freedom of the individual to work out his own salvation. It is out of this freedom that our social life and public spirit has evolved, and hence it is that Liberalism contains within itself the germ of the Socialism "that is noble and grand and possible of achievement." The manufactured article with all its regimentation and ordering has an autocratic ring about it that is alien to democratic institutions. In practice it would take more out of politics than public opinion puts in. It is the cry for more than one step at a time and can only end as it begins, in so much noise and shouting. It is not the State that makes democracy, it is democracy that makes the State, and a democracy denied access to the means of life can only be expected to make a State of equal impotence to itself.

An avowed Liberal Free Trader, so named, is glorying in his Protectionist Budget, which he justifies as a Liberal precaution, if not a precedent, to be taken when the ship of State is in distress. It is for the Liberal leaders who betrayed the Free Trade principle, in their distress, to answer Mr. Churchill. In times of national stress and strain Liberal Free Trade is always in danger, always at the mercy of war or industrial depression. The persistence of the McKenna Duties in war and peace is the proof that there is no stability in freedom to exchange goods. What is wanted to save the principle is to make it apply to free production, free from the menace of an indefensible land system.

Cobden, as Mr. Churchill has reminded us, saw this himself, and he boldly advocated the liberation of the land as the next step in the liberation of commerce.

We are now solemnly assured that by all three political party spokesmen that there is no cure for unemployment. Of course, not while land monopoly bars the way to the free production of wealth. The bounties of nature are for each and all, not for any privileged class, and a Budget that ignores any approach to the reform that would open up to labour the natural storehouse for the satisfaction of its daily wants can do nothing to better industry and progress. It is the mere annual enshrinement of poverty.

The prevailing thought in politics as in literature and social life, is that in due time in some gradual manner through education, enterprise and spiritual growth social problems as we know them will disappear. It is the current coin of political opinion, but it has no sound basis either in reason or experience, for it has failed to explain why social problems have not been solved concurrently with the advance of the uplifting agencies that have come during the past hundred years to the service of society.

But, alas for experience: "The promised land lies before us like the mirage. The fruits of the tree of knowledge turn as we grasp them, to the apples of Sodom that crumple at the touch" and "the huns and vandals of whom Macaulay prophesied are gathering in the shadow of college, library and museum."

In the light of the law of rent the fruitful source of social problems is revealed and the abiding cause of the trouble, like all true diagnosis, plainly enough suggests the remedy. The law was not invented by Ricardo any more than gravitation was invented by Newton. It was discovered by Ricardo and developed in the most convincing manner by Henry George.

What is the law of rent? For all practical purposes Mr. Churchill knows. It is in his own words "the enrichment which comes to the landlord who happens to own a plot of land on the outskirts or at the centre of one of our great cities, who watches the busy population around him making the city larger, richer and more convenient, more famous every day and all the while sits still and does nothing." Henry George gives this clear and concise explanation: "As individuals come together in communities, and society grows, integrating more and more its individual members, and making general interests and general conditions of more and more relative importance, there arises, over and above the value which individuals can create for themselves, a value which is created by the community as a whole, and which, attaching to land, becomes tangible, definite and capable of computation and appropriation. As society grows, so grows this value, which springs from and represents in tangible form what society as a whole contributes to production, as distinguished from what is contributed by individual exertion—all social advance necessarily contributes to the increase of this common value, to the growth of this common fund."

As the rent of land rises the wages of labour falls; and as the value of land increases, which

it does by all social growth, speculative rent hampers industry and drives labour below the margin of subsistence and on to the "dole." We have reached a time in this depression when the wages of common labour are insufficient to provide the worker with a roof above his head, and the taxpayer must make good the deficit.

The Taxation of Land Values comes into politics in the name of social justice from this reading of the law of rent. As Mr. Churchill has said: "It is a healthy process for it will secure the double advantage of free trade and free land together, a commercial system and a land system by which all forms of monopoly will be rigorously excluded." All that need be added here is that to the extent that this is true his Budget is a contemptible performance. It can merit no countenance from any student of political economy. It does nothing for the removal of poverty; it relieves industry of no burden; it hampers enterprise with another invasion of the McKenna Duties and other like devices of the commercial buccaneer. It is the most reactionary Budget within living memory, and for it we are indebted to the politicians now in opposition who, at a moment when vision and statesmanship were required, put their personal difficulties and predilections before the interest of humanity and led their forces to wanton disaster.

The reactionary provisions of the Budget will be vigorously opposed in the House of Commons, and the Taxation of Land Values as an alternative policy should have its place in the debate. But the work of education in the country must not be overlooked. It is in the constituencies that this work must be undertaken. The final word is with the electors; and the United Committee, together with the associated Leagues and agencies, should be encouraged and helped by land reformers everywhere to take an active part in this campaign.

J. P.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO An Acre at £8,500

The greatest sensation was produced on Saturday week by the sale of one single acre of ground, divided into 15 lots, situated on the West Cliff at Brighton, the property of the Count and Countess St. Antonio. The sale took place on the premises, under the direction of Mr. G. Robins, and such was the eagerness of the purchasers in this speculating age that the moment the doors of the Count's house were open the room, although very large, was literally crammed. The fifteen lots produced eight thousand five hundred pounds! . . . It is on this site that the new square, called Cavendish-square, is to be formed, and the houses are all to be of the first class.—THE OBSERVER, 27th March, 1825.

By HENRY GEORGE

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From our Offices.

A NEW PUBLICATION

The literature of the movement is soon to be enriched, not for the first time, by the gifted pen of Louis F. Post. He has been working since last October at what may be named a New Life of Henry George, and hopes to have the final revision of the MS. finished before July.

In a recent letter Mr. and Mrs. Post send affectionate greetings to all their friends on this side.

We gladly put before our readers the "Table of Contents" of Mr. Post's new book THE PROPHET OF SAN FRANCISCO, and hope in an early issue to give the name of the publisher together with the price.

THE PROPHET OF SAN FRANCISCO

By Louis F. Post

Author of "Taxation of Land Values,"
"Social Ethics," "Ethics of Democracy,"
etc.

PART ONE.

PERSONAL MEMORIES.

- Chapter I.—Eastern Advent of the Western Prophet.
- II.—First Impressions of the Prophet's Message.
- III.—Pursued by the Prophet's Teachings.
- IV.—Balked by the Prophet's Plan.
- V.—A First Meeting with the Prophet.
- VI.—Dinner Reception at Delmonico's.
- VII.—Early Organizations.
- VIII.—Eastern Activities of the Prophet Prior to His First Campaign for Mayor.
- IX.—Campaign for Mayor of "Little Old New York."
- X.—The United Labour Party.
- XI.—The Anti-Poverty Society.
- XII.—The Standard.
- XIII.—The Grover Cleveland Campaigns.
- XIV.—The Bryan Campaign.
- XV.—Tom L. Johnson.
- XVI.—The Singletax Movement.
- XVII.—Our Prophet's Personal and Family Life.
- XVIII.—Campaign for Mayor of Greater New York.
- XIX.—A Triumph Over Bodily Death.

PART TWO.

RESURRECTION.

- Chapter I.—Our Prophet's Spiritual Vision.
- II.—Our Prophet's Cause.
- III.—Antecedents of Our Prophet's Cause.
- IV.—Antagonists.
- V.—Protagonists.
- VI.—Future of Our Prophet's Cause.

PART THREE.

THE LEGACY TO MANKIND.

- Chapter I.—Progress and Poverty.
- II.—Social Problems.
- III.—Protection or Free Trade.
- IV.—Herbert Spencer and the Pope of Rome.
- V.—The Science of Political Economy.
- VI.—Our Prophet's Program.

CONCLUSION.

PERSONALITY.

I never could gather from one single working man that he wished for any change other than that which would leave him the enjoyment of the fair fruit of his earnings.—William Cobbett.