

## LAND & LIBERTY

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## THE NEXT WAR AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The Prime Minister, in what is described as a moving, eloquent speech at a luncheon given by 400 Free Churchmen, London, 28th July, pointed to the dangers of the next war. He passed on the responsibility to the Churches and declared that if they were going to allow it to take place they had better close their doors. "During the war," he continued, "the cry was 'Never again!' Watch! There is a growing assumption that the conflict is coming sooner or later. That is the business of the Churches." There were other lurid and terrifying descriptions which the daily Press reports of the speech save us from repeating. If the war spirit and the preparations for war now going forward were not checked, civilization was doomed and damned. In one of his excruciating periods, the speaker clutched hold of the League of Nations and passed it also across to the Churches. "That," he declared, "is where the Churches come in. You must," he cried, "put in your League of Nations the public opinion which alone can make it a force, and that is your business."

And this, after some four years of peace-making! The task is too big for the politicians, and the chief hands it over to a class whom, but the other day, he warned off the pitch, telling them to stick to their own mission, and leave politics to those who knew best what could be done in that line.

We have all sympathy with bringing in churchmen, so defined, to help put Europe on its feet, though we had imagined they were more or less concerned as citizens. Churchmen are like trade unionists and others organized for special work. They talk at large in their own particular circle, but when it comes to voting, their high-sounding principles get lost on the way to the ballot-box and the reactionaries are returned to Parliament. When some trade union leaders criticized the late Joseph Chamberlain, he replied that he did not care a brass farthing what those people said: the working classes sent him to Parliament.

Once in, the reactionaries look after their own friends and their own friends know how to look after them. The people who vote monopolists, financiers and place-hunters into power must realize in suffering, through hard times and unemployment,

the full fruits of their own act. But why blame the people when they know no better? Why indeed? especially when we listen to the general instruction they receive day by day and hour by hour from the seats of the mighty and the halls of learning.

The war, they are told, has exhausted the resources of Europe, and until Europe is by way of well-doing, nothing can be done. If unemployment, says one authority, is to disappear we must set Europe on its legs instead of keeping it on its back, and to accomplish this some countries must have credit to restore their finances to a sound basis, all economic and political barriers to trade must be abolished, inter-Allied debts and reparations must be settled—he would cancel them all. If this means money, the answer is no matter, it is a question of saving ourselves, for while Europe is bankrupt we shall be unemployed. Great Britain and Europe form one economic unit; the wastage and non-replacement of capital during the war left us with a greatly reduced productive capacity.

There, in this concise statement, we have the case put as it is expounded by recognized leaders of opinion who busy themselves with these phenomena. And the cure is not to open up the natural opportunities to employment, the only sound method of producing capital, but to spend tens of millions in credits to steady up the exchanges. Where the millions are to come from without causing more unemployment through lessening the purchasing power of the taxpayer, is not stated. But our "Money for Social Reform" reformers seem always to have little patience with the working of economic law.

But something must be done, and while Mr. Lloyd George was confessing to the churchmen the bankruptcy of statesmanship on the peace-making business, the newspapers were announcing the appointment of a Cabinet Committee to review the position of unemployment in view of its continuance during the coming winter. It is evident that peace and unemployment are problems related to each other, in the matter of setting Europe on its feet.

What is the Cabinet Committee on Unemployment likely to propose? According to the Premier, local authorities are to be once more circularized as to schemes of public work that might be undertaken with Government assistance. Not a word as to the breakdown of the scheme for settling the people on the land. £400,000 is to be spent by the British and Australian Governments this year for settlement of British immigrants in Australia. As Mr. Raffan said in his convincing letter to the Press on the subject, it is a policy of despair to send settlers thousands of miles overseas, when the simple step could be taken to remove the monopoly that locks up the resources of our own country. Reviewing the case, the GLASGOW HERALD, 22nd July, well said that "if a new British settler in Australia is worth twenty times as much to us in trade as a new British emigrant to the United States, the commercial value of a new settler in Perthshire and Inverness-shire must be even higher—home trade being more profitable, pound for pound, than overseas trade." That sentiment recalls the forgotten policy of colonizing our own countryside.

It is the Government that stands in the way of this home-settlement policy. The Prime Minister may say what he likes as to what he would like to see being done to keep the population here and regenerate rural life. The fact is, he is determined on a policy to turn those potential home-settlers out of the country. If the people want to go, why stop them? The answer is nobody thinks of stopping people who want to go. The question is: *What about the people who want to stay?*

To quote Mr. Raffan again: "There is not a single county council in England and Wales that has not on its books large numbers of applicants for small holdings; men whose qualifications for settling upon the land have been tested and approved." Across the border we have a similar experience. In nine and a half years from April, 1912, to December, 1921, in all Scotland, not more than 2,464 men have got access to land under the Small Holdings Act. There have been 18,162 applicants, of whom 3,962 withdrew and 108 were rejected. At present, 11,628 are on the waiting list.

That is the record, in recent years, of Parliamentary achievement in the matter of placing people on the land. The figures tell of an unsatisfied land hunger; the 'egislation is a piece of bungling incapacity, shaped and influenced by a land system that knows neither mercy nor pity. What has Europe or its exchanges or the want of capital to do with such ineptitude and stubborn resistance to land reform?

What has Russia, Poland, Mesopotamia or Germany to do with the stoppage in the building trade? If houses or any capital of the kind is scarce, why cannot the hatches that contain the new supplies be opened up? Here is the natural opening to employment and expansion, yet never a word is said about it. Truly it is amazing how the people who suffer so much from enforced idleness can be tricked so successfully out of their natural inheritance.

The Prime Minister, in his entrancing perorations, calls upon the nation to go to the help of stricken Europe. It is fine sentiment, but the truth is that what is keeping Europe on its back is the same economic tyranny that keeps Great Britain from rising to the occasion. Europe may not know what land monopoly means, as we experience it, but Mr. Lloyd George knows how it makes ten thousand little Czars, and the rest of us trespassers in the land of our birth. Has he not denounced the iniquity as the standing obstacle to all progress and pledged himself to "burst it" when the chance came his way?

We do not look for anything in the land monopoly-bursting line of business from the Cabinet Committee on Unemployment. The gentlemen who compose the Committee are not there for any such undertaking. Nor do we look for direction on fundamental causes from the chief men of any opposing Parliamentary group. What then can be done to provide employment and better the condition of the people? One thing, and that is to maintain the propaganda so that opinion may be made for the policy we put forward.

In reply to a question in the House of Commons, 25th July, Mr. Chamberlain said "the question of rating reform was enough to send a shiver through

every bench in the House, and, above all, through every member who takes any interest in safeguarding the taxpayer." Most taxpayers are under the impression that if there is much more of the "safeguarding" this Government has shown, the shivery feeling will not be confined to the House of Commons.

But, be that as it may, the question of rating reform implies the rating of land values and the unrating of houses. It is a reform that is full of promise to the overburdened ratepayer. To quote Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman: "The rating of site values is not a mere question of the apportionment and incidence of the rates. It goes to the root of the most pressing and most neglected of social questions. What is claimed for it, and rightly, is, that its effect will be to increase the supply of houses and improve their quality, and to reduce the rents, which in many cases are artificially high, and a cause of widespread impoverishment to the people." All else is mere play-acting. A measure of this kind, combined with a national tax on land values, is the key to a just system of land tenure and until it is applied, unemployment will continue to be master of the situation.

Twenty years ago, we who hold that land monopoly is the direct cause of unemployment were told by the practical politicians of the day that we had a good cause, but there were lions in the way. The Taxation of Land Values was right enough, but meanwhile something had to be done. As we stressed the argument we were asked kindly and unkindly to look at the need for immediate relief. Then, as now, relief works and the carrying out of improvements without delay were first in favour; the door was shut in the face of land reform. And now, twenty years later, the problem of unemployment is more formidable than ever.

There is a cult that looks to education as the means to the final cure for unemployment and other problems of a kindred character. To better his lot in life, the worker is urged along the path that leads to higher education, and the further he gets in that direction but brings to him the bitter experience that the better equipped he becomes the greater the struggle to keep his head above water. If education is to serve the worker in improving his position it must freely and frankly reveal to him the cause of his present undoing. For the worker, education as it is generally understood and practised is a well-organised conspiracy of silence on economic and social questions. Nothing can enable the worker to raise his industrial status but his own clear perception of economic injustice and the urgent need of a reform such as we advocate.

J. P.

To me it does not matter which party gives effect to this policy. I want the policy; the circumstances can take care of themselves. This question must appeal to business men, for whatever their politics are, they must remain keenly interested in good trade. It is obvious that the existing system of rating is a hindrance to trade and a menace to all industrial aspiration. The rate-collector dogs the footsteps of the man who would do things for his own benefit and for the benefit of the community. Is it not about time the rate-collector was directed to look for his revenue in the value of the land, which is created by the community as a whole?—*Joseph Fels, "Letter to an Enterprising Business Man."*