

LAND & LIBERTY

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Here are two simple principles, both of which are self-evident:

I.—That all men have equal rights to the use and enjoyment of the elements provided by Nature.

II.—That each man has an exclusive right to the use and enjoyment of what is produced by his own labour.

There is no conflict between these principles. On the contrary, they are correlative. To secure fully the individual right of property in the produce of labour, we must treat the elements of Nature as common property.—Henry George: "Protection or Free Trade," chapter 26.

THE PAISLEY PROGRAMME.

Paisley has returned Mr. Asquith to Parliament and by something more than a majority as such events are taken. It is a vote of confidence that is at once a personal triumph for the man and a mandate to him to maintain the principles and policies he proclaimed for the betterment of a war-worn people. The true reading of the election is that the nation is sick to death of the present Government and is longing for statesmanship capable of looking beneath the surface; for men who can measure the extent of the havoc wrought by the Peace and who can set in motion the thought necessary for a speedy restoration to normal conditions.

Peace falters along on crutches, and monopoly everywhere digs its fangs into the body politic; chaos keeps company with rising prices and industrial unrest holds the mirror up to any and every new venture of faith. Yesterday we were ringing the bells, to-morrow we may be ringing our hands. Our publicists keep sounding the alarm, but the idea of taking abstract justice and economic law as a guide in the matter seems to be the farthest thing from their minds. They set up their old-time conventional standards and keep up with the procession as if nothing had happened. The earthquake has come and gone, let us get to business as usual. Abstract justice, what has that to do with men of affairs? The natural agencies are here to exploit, and they must be exploited by brains and enterprise for the express benefit, of course, of the community at large!

But something has happened. In unmistakable terms the voice of Paisley foretells the end of the Government of evil passions. As a Parliamentarian Mr. Asquith returns to the Forum with the almost universal approval of friend and foe alike, certainly with the overwhelming approval of those who regard with apprehension the future of Europe, if not of civilisation itself. His programme indicates that the British people have steadied themselves for a serious view of a baffling situation, with a possible drift to perdition.

So much for the wider-looking issues. As the Paisley election campaign developed Mr. Asquith explained his views on the land question, as we report elsewhere. He labelled himself, not only in his formal address to the electors, but in speech after speech, a supporter and an advocate of the direct Taxation of Land Values. When he dealt with the question on former occasions he was vague enough to stand excused, in the eyes of the average party politician, when in 1909 he wantonly jettisoned the radical principle for a tax on future unearned increment. His Paisley pronouncements mark a distinct advance.

Mr. Asquith's difficulty is that he does not see, or seeing, will not admit that the Taxation of Land Values bears any relationship to cognate questions such as housing, employment and wages. Unhappily for the causes that hang on the promised change in land tenure and taxation, he is not alone in this limited view of the case.

The Liberal leader will have nothing to do with Land Nationalisation; yet it is true that the chief supporters and advocates of this doctrine are to be found in official Liberal circles everywhere. Years ago Mr. Asquith silenced the men inside and outside Liberal circles who stood for Leasehold Enfranchisement by telling them that it was as dead as Queen Anne. He could very well perform a similar useful service to the cause of land reform to-day if he were as free to bury the question of Land Nationalisation in the same grave. Our experience is that Liberals turn to Land Nationalisation in the main because they are out for compensation to landlords. There can be no compensation for taxation; the alternative is land purchase. This means the ownership and control of the land by the State, and this Mr. Asquith will not have. It is a pretty state of things, sure enough, and there's worse to follow.

Discussing the question of Mineral Royalties, he said they were all agreed—both Liberals and Labour—he (Mr. Asquith) certainly was strongly of opinion—that the time was coming for the State to acquire mineral rights and royalties. They believed that would be in the interests of the community and would not in any way hamper or interfere with the natural and free development of the mines themselves. He would pay compensation, he declared, for this property on its fair value; it was a property which had been sanctioned by law, bought and sold in the open market. Shades of Queen Anne, what about Land? Where is the authority at this time of day who places Land Values and Mineral Royalties in two separate categories? And even if they could be so distinguished as forms of property, what kind of justice is it that would compensate the one and tax the other?

To carry the argument a stage further, Mr. Asquith is not only against Land Nationalisation, he is as strongly opposed to the Nationalisation of Industry. He is a stickler for Private Enterprise, but it looks like Private Enterprise with a halter round its neck. Coal is the lubricant of all industry, but coal the workers may not have unless they agree to pay or buy out the interests that batten on their hard-won earnings. It is the law, Mr. Asquith coolly tells us, as if he were not in politics to replace bad laws by good laws. Verily the dead hand of monopoly holds the Liberal Party to ransom, reduces its leadership to impotence and drives its

supporters, in quest of radical reform, into opposing camps. Mr. Asquith will have nothing to do with Mr. Smillie's policy of no compensation for mineral royalties, and so it comes to pass that Liberals on this question, now up for settlement, are impelled to give allegiance to the Labour leader who stands for the rights of the people, and to deny it the Liberal leader who openly champions the claims of the monopolist.

The Taxation of Land Values includes taxation of the right to take coal and other minerals from beneath the surface. It means the appropriation of what Mr. Asquith named the communal value of land. The economic side of the argument is that it would make the holding of land for monopoly prices, or for speculative purposes, a dear business to the monopolist and the speculator. It would bring land, ungoten minerals included, out of the grip of a privileged class and so place the natural reservoir of wealth at the service of the public.

The Liberal or the Labour man out for reform can have no objection to a policy that would bring unused and under-used land freely into the market. Land is the raw material of all wealth and capital. All industries are dependent upon land, the ownership of which sets bounds to material progress. Land does not count, as formerly it did, we are assured by some up-to-date persons, and the School men write at length under this delusion. We live in an age, so the story goes, of commerce and industry, and capital, not land, is the dominating factor. What is capital? Plant, machinery, railways, ships, aeroplanes, houses and such like, is the answer of the teachers of political economy. And what is this capital but the raw material of land fashioned by the skill and ingenuity of the workers into forms necessary to sustain life and gratify desire? To listen to these new exponents of social science, so called, one would imagine that land was made out of capital, and not capital from land. What kind of legerdemain was invoked, and at what period of time, to make the derivative factor, capital, change positions with the dominant factor, land? All very sound and not to be questioned, replies our advanced Liberal, who has no use for abstract argument or abstract justice, but you simply cannot stampede the Liberal Party into any sweeping declaration of Land Values Taxation. Why not? They stampeded their public into Home Rule, Disestablishment, Education, Temperance, Insurance, Land Purchase, Town Planning, and all the rest. It is on record that there was no great response to some of this stampeding, and *pace* our well-intentioned critics the Party will be stampeded yet again into some still-born scheme or another; anything but the liberating policy that guarantees the success of all other reforms.

The call is urgent for the solution of social problems. Nationalisation of land and industry is inscribed on the banner of organized Labour, fully aroused and determined to make some sort of new social contract. What is Mr. Asquith's alternative policy? Wages Boards that take no cognisance of prices, and State-subsidized housing schemes that ignore the growing burden of the rates can be translated into so much bureaucratic control and bankrupt municipalities. A Liberal leader the other day gave it as his opinion that dark, threatening storms were clouding the horizon of the world. It seemed inevitable, he said, that they

must discharge their fire, and what Liberals had to do was to erect lightning conductors of sympathy, understanding, and active help. This has the appearance of playing for safety when the place is on fire—nothing more than the easy rhetoric that unfortunately passes for the wisdom of statemanship. Whatever be the impending disaster, what is wanted is a policy that will break the fetters of monopoly. There is sympathy and understanding enough to effect any change, the trouble is with those who misdirect it, and turn it into so much dead sea fruit. The sympathy and understanding that has no relation to social justice here and now is but the blind worship of institutions and legal adjustments that deny democracy the very breath of life.

A great teacher now somewhat out of fashion once voiced the sentiment: that when the object is to raise the permanent condition of a people, small means do not merely produce small effects; they produce no effects at all. Whatever the Liberal Party may do, or refuse to do, that appears to be the settled conviction and the inspiration of gathering forces unhesitatingly on the march for a full measure of industrial emancipation.

J. P.

THE CALL FOR ADDITIONAL SERVICE

An Open Letter to Readers

Your attention is directed to the report you will find in this issue of an important discussion which took place at a recent meeting of the London Henry George Club. It is imperative that we find means to broaden the financial support of our movement. There are many promising schemes. The most popular is the one to set on foot a contribution of one shilling a week to the funds of the United Committee or to any of the Associated Leagues. The fund thus established could be maintained without any real sacrifice to those who contribute. No one would miss a shilling a week for the sake of the strength and advance of the movement. Only a little organisation is necessary to make this plan a success and bring with it several thousand pounds a year to extend the propaganda.

Another idea is that we should provide suitable cards with a clear and concise statement of what we propose, for crusaders to distribute from door to door just as church people do with their tracts. If three or four people in your vicinity could be interested in this plan, you could make your own constituency in a brief time and attach the personal and financial support of many who will gladly welcome the message you have carried to them. With proper superintendence we could bring home to thousands and tens of thousands of people a knowledge of our case. One card might state our principles; to be followed by one stating our practical policy. Another might be prepared for shopkeepers, householders and others, dealing with housing and rating. There is no limit to the good work that could be done in this quiet, unobtrusive way. There are few advocates of our reform who do not know that they have a hold of a great liberating gospel. It is something to them. In many cases it is part of their life like some religious conviction. They take the paper regularly, but as a rule look for someone else to do the practical work of carrying conviction. Meanwhile they go into the street, the factory,