

A. 225536

THE
SINGLE TAX REVIEW

A Record of the Progress of Single Tax and Tax Reform
Throughout the World.

PROGRESS OF THE SINGLE TAX MOVEMENT IN
GREAT BRITAIN.

(For the Review.)

By JOHN PAUL.*

At the recent land and housing demonstration held in London the 20th of April, at which the Prime Minister and Mr. Winston Churchill M. P. were the principal speakers, the policy of the government on the land question was made quite plain and in a way which should gratify the followers of Henry George. Hitherto the parliamentarians have fought shy of the name of the author of "Progress and Poverty;" but time and events have only shown that his practical proposals were genuine and the only possible steps to take in a society like ours. The other day *The Tribune*, our great liberal daily, boldly declared that the Separate Valuation Bill recommended last Christmas by the Select Committee on the Land Values Taxation (Scotland) Bill, 1906, was the Basis of all Reform. The Government are pledged to introduce a Bill on similar lines for England and Wales, but it is doubtful if this promise can be fulfilled in the present Session. However we are well organized both within the gates of the Commons and without. We have a Parliamentary Campaign Committee on the Taxation of land values which meets once a week, or oftener when necessary. This Committee is composed of twenty members of Parliament with Charles Trevelyan, M. P., as chairman; the Secretaries are Crompton Llewelyn Davies and myself. The duties of the committee are to watch events in the House and to take what steps may be deemed necessary to promote the question. When any cognate subject, such as finance, housing, unemployment, taxation, either in the form of a Bill or by resolution the Committee look around for speakers to point out in the debate where the taxation of land values comes in. In this connection the Committee possess in the chairman, Mr. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M. P., for Newcastle-under-Lyme, a most untiring and capable organiser. Last month the Committee entertained the Solicitor General for Scotland to dinner in the House in recognition of his eminent services to the movement, as chairman of the Select Committee on the Scottish Bill. (Anyone can have a copy of the official report of the Select Committee by applying to the Scottish League for

* Mr. John Paul is the editor of *Land Values*, of Glasgow, Scotland, and one of the secretaries of the League for the Taxation of Land Values. No one has done greater service for the cause, and our British co-workers are accustomed to repose great faith in his wisdom and judgment. The Autumn number of the Review in another series of articles on "Hands Across the Sea," with accompanying portraits, will include an account of Mr. Paul's life and services in the cause.

the Taxation of Land Values, 13 Dundas Street, Glasgow.) At the dinner it was hinted that the Valuation Bill for Scotland might have to give precedence to other measures clamoring for all the available time. Our Committee got themselves together on the point, and some effective steps were taken to bring the urgency of our case before the powers that be. In these days of high pressure in legislation eternal vigilance appears to be the price of progress.

The Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill is now before the Commons and is presently being considered upstairs by the Scottish Grand Committee. Before being sent to this Committee a land purchase amendment was defeated by an overwhelming majority. The Bill is on right lines and is after the pattern of the Crofters' Act of twenty years ago. But I confess I am not very enthusiastic about it. Our Separate Valuation Bill and the adoption of the policy of no rates on improvements will do far more to establish people on small holdings, and quicker than this cumbrous, heavy-weighted, half-baked Socialistic measure. The Valuation Bill will tend to bring the landlord to the labourer—the potential small holder—the M. P.'s wish so much to benefit. The landlord and his legal adviser are not going to argue the case. He has made up his mind, and his retainers and camp followers in the County Council agree with him that there is no demand for small holdings, that taxes and rates are high enough already and that the labourers would be too independent with a patch of ground! Moreover, the land-owners everywhere can afford to sit down and wait on developments. They will wait and see whose land is wanted by this new central authority, and then the defence will be set up. Meanwhile the labourer will be sickened and tormented by the law's delays; ultimately very little will be done at the expense of much time, money and organisation.

The fact is there are too many advanced politicians (advanced so far that they appear to have forgotten, if they ever knew, the elementary principles of political economy) who want to put the labourer on the land without interfering over-much with the privileges of the land-owner. They go on talking in their sleep about not standing for "spoliation;" but they will chatter away like that for a long time before they convince the landlord class to walk into their anti-"spoliation" tent. No, the failure these good political philanthropists are inviting to their schemes is writ large on the pages of political history. We want, God knows, just now a man or two of the stamp of Richard Cobden to boldly lead the radical forces of progress in the country. We have come to the parting of the ways, and the whigs have possession. We have come to the point where, as Henry Genyer says, the danger is in not going forward boldly and quickly with the most radical measure. There is nothing stronger than an economic tendency, and the Separate Valuation Bill will prevent the landlord having one price to the rate collector and another very different price to the cultivator and improver. That is what the taxation of land values will do; it will loosen in this way the monopoly in land and open wide the natural gates to all employment and improvement. It will bring the landlord to the potential small holder, and guarantee to him the full and untaxed fruit of all his improvements. This is the beginning, the basis of all social reform, and there will be found more virtue, more independence and more insuring prosperity and hope here than in any dozen Small Holders' Bills.

Outside Parliament our men are everywhere throughout the country active and devoted. We have just formed "A United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values," and opened offices at Broad Sanctuary Chambers, 20 Tothill street, Westminster, from which to organize demonstrations and conferences throughout the country. The Committee is composed of some twenty-four representatives from the Scottish and English Leagues for the taxation of land values, and their branch associations.

The Committee was formed at a meeting at 14 Barton Street, Westmin-

ster, the London home of Crompton Llewelyn Davies, on Saturday, 23rd March, when the undernoted office-bearers were appointed. The purpose of the Committee is to strengthen the existing Leagues at Glasgow and London, and their branch Association, and for extending the propaganda into new districts. Among those present were Messers. J. H. Whitely, M. P.; C. P. Trevelyan, M. P.; Harry L. Davies, Edwin Adam, C. H. Smithson, Fred. Skirrow, W. R. Lester, L. H. Berens, Fred. Verinder, A. W. Metcalfe, Crompton Ll. Davies, and John Paul. After a lengthy discussion it was resolved unanimously—

1. That a Committee be formed to be called the United Committee for the Land Values, to consist of representatives from the Scottish, English and Irish Leagues, with power to add to their number for the purpose of promoting the Taxation of Land Values throughout Great Britain and Ireland, and in particular strengthening and assisting the Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values with their headquarters at Glasgow and London respectively, and their branches at Edinburgh, Dumbartonshire, Dumfries-shire, Warrington, and Portsmouth, and supporting the Parliamentary Campaign Committee, and taking independent action by publishing and distributing literature, organizing in fresh districts and arranging meetings and speeches in the constituencies especially during bye-elections, and that an appeal be made for contributions to a fund to be at the disposal of the Committee, and that Mr. W. R. Lester be appointed Treasurer of the fund.

2. That Crompton Ll. Davies and John Paul be Secretaries of the Committee.

At subsequent meetings of the two Leagues the formation of the United Committee was unanimously approved, and it was resolved further that everything possible should be done to make the efforts of the Committee successful. Funds are being collected and already £1,000 (one thousand pounds) has been subscribed and promised by about a dozen representative Single Taxers, mostly by those who have helped the funds of our Leagues in the past. But much more money will require to be collected if the work before us is to be even fairly well undertaken. The Prime Minister has publicly asked for the driving power from the country to see this fight through, and it is for us who have helped so much to force the issue now before the Parliament to see that the war is conducted on our side with spirit and courage. We are promoting a demonstration in Manchester next month to be addressed by the Solicitor General for Scotland, Chas. Trevelyan, M. P., Dr. Macnamara, M. P., and Ex-Bailie Burt, of Glasgow. Other meetings will be promoted in other centres as funds are available. We are striving to organise a dozen or two such meetings in the Fall when Parliament rises. Besides these demonstrations we desire to put two or three of our best speakers in the field and hope to be able to do this. We have just published some new campaign literature and are preparing to spend about £100 in a reissue of Henry George's famous addresses in pamphlet form, "The Crime of Poverty," "Thou Shalt Not Steal," "Scotland and Scotsmen," etc., etc. There is undoubtedly a great wave of enthusiasm abroad for us, and we must take it at the flood. Now is the time for Single Taxers everywhere to concentrate here in Great Britain. The Prime Minister is for us and so is this Parliament, and what we can get from it will strengthen our cause the world over

Read the Conference Report on page 37.