

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.

TOWARDS PEACE IN INDUSTRY

Our fundamental mistake is in treating land as private property. . . . No labour-saving inventions can enable us to make something out of nothing, or in any wise lessen our dependence on land. They can merely add to the efficiency of labour in working up the raw materials drawn from land. . . . Land becomes more valuable, but the wages of labour do not increase; on the contrary, if there is any margin for possible reductions, they may be absolutely reduced. . . . But it may be said that, in asserting that where land is private property the benefit of industrial improvements goes ultimately to the landowners, I ignore facts, and attribute to one principle more importance than is its due, since it is clear that a great deal of increased wealth arising from modern improvements has not gone to the owners of land, but to capitalists, manufacturers, speculators, railroad owners, and the holders of monopolies other than that of land. . . . My reply is that I do not ignore any of these things, but that they in no wise invalidate the self-evident principle that land being private property, the ultimate benefit of all improvements must go to the landowners. To say that if a man continues to play at rondo the table will ultimately get his money, is not to say that in the meantime he may not have his pocket picked. . . . I do not say that in the recognition of the equal and inalienable rights of each human being to the natural elements from which life must be supported and wants satisfied lies the solution of all social problems. I fully recognize the fact that even after we do this, much will remain to do. . . . But whatever else we do, so long as we fail to recognize the equal right to the elements of nature, nothing will avail to remedy that unnatural inequality in the distribution of wealth which is fraught with so much evil and danger.—*Henry George*, SOCIAL PROBLEMS, VIII.

Lord Milner has contributed four notable articles to the London OBSERVER of last month. His appointed task was to discover the road "Towards Peace in Industry." The matter has been widely canvassed, THE NATION dignifying it as epoch-making.

The first article opened with an arresting statement: "What has become of all the good resolutions we formed during the war about the better social order which was to arise after the end of it—the improved relations between class and class, the establishment of a genuine partnership in industry between capitalist and working man? Was it all gush, or did the torchlight of war piercing the midst of our daily individual cares and preoccupations,

really reveal to us some fundamental truths which we have since forgotten?" It is well said, though not for the first time.

Lord Milner's review ranges all over the surface of things. He measures the width and takes the weight of the phenomena he selects for his readers' consideration; the depth of the real underlying problem he leaves to others to fathom. When the famous 1909 Budget was introduced, he urged the Lords to reject the Bill and "damn the consequences," to quote his own inelegant words. Before that, in 1902, as Administrator of the Transvaal, he prevented the passing of a Bill to rate land values in Johannesburg. He now challenges the idea of any frontal attack on property (land included). He will have nothing to do with it, and affirms that the responsible leaders of Labour do not really contemplate taking property without compensation. Some Labour leaders are for the Taxation of Land Values, but Lord Milner does not mention that form of "property." As a good Fabian it is not just exactly in his line; he prefers the easy method of talking at large about the impossibility of nationalizing "this or that form of property" without giving the owners the fair value of it.

The rightful owners of land values are the people, and when these values are appropriated by taxation in lieu of taxes now levied on industry, the question of compensation need not arise. The process will amount to nothing more than a mere fiscal rearrangement, though it carries with it a fundamental change in the method of raising revenue that will alter for good the general outlook on property.

Lord Milner closes with an appeal for Whitley Councils to prepare the way for a brand new Industrial Council. "Parliament," he says, "is a very bad arena for thrashing out the complicated details of industrial organization." As to this, there is evidence to show that Parliament is more or less incapable of thrashing out the details of any problem where "property" rights are at stake. But that is a question by itself. Manifestly the Parliament we possess is getting into disrepute, but whether a brand new industrial substitute would avoid the pitfalls of legislation and make good on every vital matter sensible people will hesitate to say.

There is an idea abroad that in the political enfranchisement of the people the Liberal Party finished its work, and must end its days in the contemplation of so much achievement for the common weal. That is an understandable proposition. But what are we to say to the rising school of thought that questions Parliament itself as a machine that cannot or will not function, not even for the immediate requirements of industrial peace? Lord Milner's voice goes to indicate the growth of this new cult.

The warning Lord Milner gives as to the certainty of our decline if we do not mend our manners, if we do not accept the need for a more equitable distribution of wealth and influence, was given half a century ago in PROGRESS AND POVERTY, in terms that were understood by the common people, who, robbed of their natural rights in the free gifts of nature, were accordingly doomed to lives of hopeless and degrading slavery.

Europe is distracted, let us invent a new Assembly, the League of Nations. Parliament cannot very well deal with industrial unrest, let us produce another piece of mechanism to undertake this task. What is this but an open confession of failure? The same men who make the present Parliaments will erect the new machinery, prompted or guided by the same ideas and beliefs as to what must and must not happen. It is the exploded idea that a legislature or an institution can hold and dispense more wisdom than the men who made it. The League of Nations would have a soft job if the nations represented at its board would first solve their own home difficulties. Not having accomplished this, the deputies in attendance at the League are more or less in bondage to economic interests, national and international. There is industrial chaos everywhere, but this, too, is to be provided for by a new industrial council with statutory powers, perhaps, later on. This is more than the breakdown of representative institutions. It is the breakdown of thought itself, at the threshold of radical reform, and just at the time when our capacity for inquiry and examination into the rights of property is put to the test.

Lord Milner explains. It is that "frontal attack on property" or somewhere in that region of thought that the breakdown occurs. Property, of course, is not defined. As usual in such first-class disquisitions the question is quite unrelated to land. All the same there is the property that man makes and the "property" that nature supplies for the common use of all; and though this difference in the two kinds of property is carefully disguised and hidden from sight, it does and *will* call for recognition and separate treatment. In the not over polite language of Lord Milner: "It is time to stop blathering about Russia and Revolution, and to settle down to a calm examination of what is in that case a purely economic question."

But where does his own examination of the problem lead us to, and what are the implications? It is the familiar question-begging struggle between capital and labour. Nothing more. Even Labour leaders have got the length of seeing that naturally there is no such struggle. It is labour always that employs capital, and if labour is not master of the situation, what is really at fault? If labour wants more capital, it can make what is required. Who says it cannot? Does nature impose any barrier to the making of any quantity of wealth, or any increase of capital? If not, what is it or who is it that stands between labour and the natural opportunities to satisfy desire and in freedom to establish the ideal State?

The real struggle in society is not between capital and labour, but between monopoly and labour. There are other monopolies besides land monopoly, and these can be dealt with once the bottom cause of the trouble is out of the way, and for this good purpose the instrument is at hand. In the *LABOUR SPEAKERS' HANDBOOK* and in the convincing platform expositions of Land Values Taxation put before the Newcastle electors by Mr. Arthur Henderson, Lord Milner should find food for reflection as to how Labour is getting to know the pathway to economic emancipation and progress.

In the Labour ranks there are signs that "revolutionary ideas" are in close correspondence with settled convictions on industrial matters. The Fabians and the Guild Socialists, still beating the air without a land policy, are having one presented to them from the inside. It comes none too soon. By all means let us get back to reconstruction, as Lord Milner advises, but let the genuine schemes each and all have a chance to develop on land free from the choking agencies of monopoly. The file leaders of opinion in Labour circles, who are not at all keen on Land Values Taxation, must now reckon with a new force in Labour politics and aspiration. There has been an incursion from the Liberal camp which has brought with it numbers and power. It is a strength the Labour Party must keep if it would accomplish anything in our day.

Some Labour men are not so sure of this new army or its equipment, and while they stop to inquire they are being told that the Taxation of Land Values is a Liberal reform. Suppose this charge be true, what then? There are many free institutions Labour men set store by that in their day were classed as Liberal reforms. The question is not whether a policy is Liberal, or Labour, or Conservative, but whether it is one calculated to serve the working people and the community. It is a common enough superstition if not a trick of the mind to say this is Liberalism, or Socialism, or *vice versa*. It is evident that both partisans, Liberal and Socialist, are apt to take ideas that are common to all advanced thought into their particular "ism" when thrown back on the defensive in some cogent argument. Doubtless this practice brings some comfort but all the same it is a pure delusion.

In our workaday world it is the practical proposals of a political party that tell and not the worship of any mere abstraction. There ought to be common agreement as to this elementary lesson. As Henry George has well said: "The natural progress of social development is unmistakably towards co-operation, or if the word be preferred, towards socialism, though I dislike to use a word to which such vague meanings are attached. Civilization is the art of living together in closer relations."

But why dispute over words? Let us get at the meaning behind the words, and so get down to realities. Unemployment and housing are well enough understood. The remedies now in vogue with the politicians mean one thing certain, increased taxation. That was the burden of the Prime Minister's lament to the deputation from the Trades Union Congress that waited upon him last month, to take the latest example. None of the deputation questioned his statement and none could point to any source of taxation that would not act injuriously on legitimate industry. Mr. Bonar Law told of 80 new schemes of useful work in hand to mitigate unemployment, and argued that increased taxation could only be at the expense of trade; that for the State to take a hand in production meant more money, the disappearance of credit, and so would go the possibility of getting into a sound financial position; if the wage level is higher than the state of the industry permits, the net result was social disaster.

The disappointed deputation, the Press reports, withdrew, but not before one of the number interjected: "It is always wages that you talk about," to which the Premier replied, "If there were profits it would be quite another story." The answer to this remark is that if there were profits wages would not rise without a struggle, because wages are determined by quite different circumstances. True political economy explains that where there are more labourers seeking employment than there are opportunities open to labour the profiteer is quite safe. As the Clyde shipbuilder is reported to have said long ago, in a time of general prosperity he would raise the yard labourers' wages if they stopped the Cork boats from coming over with Irishmen looking for work.

The speaker at the deputation occupied firm ground when he said it is always wages that is talked about. It is the language of common thought and speech even with the organized Labour movement itself. It is true the talk is always about *wages*. Never a word about the rent of land. Yet the law of wages is embraced in the law of rent, there to direct the further thought and action necessary to bring the worker into his own. Wages must advance at the expense of monopoly or come out of new production. The other method of attempting to raise some wages at the expense of other workers' wages is a piece of folly that ultimately brings its own reward in a cargo of Dead Sea apples. Wages imply production, and this takes us to the bottom question. Taxes on industry mean taxes on wages and a further narrowing of the field of employment. The Taxation of Land Values will strike at the fundamental monopoly, and free industry from its bondage. It will secure these advantages and at the same time bring to the community the communal value its presence and industry attaches to the land.

J. P.

HENRY GEORGE, THE PRACTICAL POLITICIAN

PROGRESS AND POVERTY, page 404: "Inasmuch as the taxation of rent must necessarily be increased just as we abolish other taxes, we may put the proposition into practical form by proposing to *abolish all taxation save that upon Land Values.*"

SOCIAL PROBLEMS, page 208: "All it is necessary to do is to abolish all other forms of taxation *until* the weight of taxation rests upon the value of land, and take ground rent for the public benefit."

PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE, page 320: "That way is clear. It consists simply in abolishing *one after another* all taxes, and resorting for public revenues to economic rent. The whole of this value should be taken, but that will *inevitably follow* the decision to collect from this source the revenue needed."

Page 321 (PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE): "In the United States the most direct way is through local taxation. And this is doubtless the way in which the final advance will be made."

"We cannot get to the Single Tax at one leap, but only by gradual steps."—Henry George in CENTURY MAGAZINE, July, 1890, p. 401.

"In the very nature of things it can only come slowly and step by step. We do not delude ourselves on that point, and never have."—Henry George in SARATOGA SINGLE TAX DISCUSSION, 1890, p. 78.

LAND VALUES CAMPAIGN IN NEWCASTLE

A by-election took place at Newcastle-on-Tyne, East, on the 17th January to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. J. N. Bell, M.P., who had been returned as Labour member at the General Election with 10,084 votes as against 6,999 for Major H. Barnes (Liberal) and 6,273 for G. Stone (National Liberal). The result of the poll on 17th January was:—

Arthur Henderson (Lab.)	..	11,066
Major H. Barnes (Lib.)	..	6,682
Capt. Gee (Con.)	..	6,480

Northern Single Taxers considered this Newcastle by-election a good opening for propaganda work, and Mr. Fred Skirrow and Mr. John Cameron were deputed to get on the spot, there to arouse interest in our reform and work on entirely neutral lines.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE CAMPAIGN

Mr. Cameron writes:

A by-election offers us unique opportunities of doing some very effective work. All eyes are for the time being centred on the constituency and political stars of all magnitudes flock there in numbers. Our movement can thus be brought into sharp prominence, in full view of the party wire-puller. This was the case at Newcastle.

Our first step was to issue a specially prepared leaflet calling on the electors to demand from their candidate a definite declaration on the Taxation of Land Values. The question should be asked at every meeting. Of these leaflets 25,000 were distributed in every nook and corner of the constituency. Several thousand were also circulated in the central parts of the city. We had an effective distribution outside the Town Hall one Sunday night at a Labour demonstration. There were about 2,000 in the waiting queue an hour before the doors opened and our remedy for unemployment was much canvassed from end to end.

Telling advertisements calling attention to the Taxation of Land Values in relation to the election were inserted in the local newspapers. Posters were placed on the hoardings throughout the constituency. One of these measured 9 by 7 feet and made a striking display of the message:

TAXATION OF
LAND VALUES
THE REMEDY
FOR
UNEMPLOYMENT

This poster was generally admitted to be the most arresting piece of publicity that has appeared on Newcastle hoardings for many a day, and simply put everything else of the kind in the shade. Smaller posters stated the case for the Taxation of Land Values and gave a list of questions to be put to candidates, concluding with: "Will you, if elected, do all in your power to promote the Taxation and Rating of Land Values: IF NOT, WHY NOT?"

We organized and addressed several outdoor meetings on our own account, one held in the Bigg market being a specially remarkable success. Mr. Skirrow held the vast concourse for two hours.

We attended many meetings and heckled the various speakers. Our experience offers a typical example of the way in which some politicians treat the subject. On two occasions we took special note of the replies to our questions and they are worth a comment.

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A LIBERAL EXCUSE

In support of the Liberal candidate there was a meeting in the Raby Street School, 15th January.