

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.

TWO POTENT PROMOTERS OF INDUSTRY AND PROGRESS

"People want the things the manufacturer makes as much as ever, just as the operatives want the things the storekeeper has to sell. But they do not have as much to give for them. Production has somewhere been checked, and this reduction in the supply of some things has shown itself in cessation of demand for others, the check propagating itself through the whole framework of industry and exchange. Now, the industrial pyramid manifestly rests on the land. The primary and other fundamental occupations, which create a demand for all others, are evidently those which extract wealth from nature, and hence, if we trace from one exchange point to another, and from one occupation to another, this check to production, which shows itself in decreased purchasing power, we must ultimately find it in some obstacle which checks labour in expending itself on land. And that obstacle, it is clear, is the speculative advance in rent, or the value of land, which produces the same effects as (in fact, it is) a lock-out of labour and capital by landowners. This check to production, beginning at the basis of interlaced industry, propagates itself from exchange point to exchange point, cessation of supply becoming failure of demand, until, so to speak, the whole machine is thrown out of gear, and the spectacle is everywhere presented of labour going to waste while labourers suffer from want."

—PROGRESS AND POVERTY, *Book v., Chap. 1.*

In this issue we present to our readers reports of illuminating Parliamentary debates on Land Tenure and Taxation. In the scrapping of the Land Valuation Department, in the legislation passed for the financial enrichment of the territorial landlords, and in the Agricultural Credits Act so ably dealt with by Mr. Dundas White in an article appearing elsewhere in this issue, we have an exposition, *par excellence*, of how this Government is busy helping its friends at the expense of the worker and the man of enterprise.

It is a Government, too, let us not forget that holds office and carries out this "homeward bound" policy on a third of the votes cast at the General Election. It is a Government with a majority that has no moral sanction for such conduct. Not content with the rent of land for the benefit of the landlords, the Government raid the public exchequer for their special friends, and they do it on the plea of helping agriculture. And when the plunder is handed over to the non-

producer the Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, goes to Glasgow to say that he has come to his high place in politics as a "healer" of the wounds the people suffer under.

The Press that guards the interests keeps the pass and the swindle is made to appear to be the only course to pursue in these hard times. We commend to our readers a serious consideration of the speeches we report. As a rule such publicity is not to be found in any other paper outside of Hansard. Beyond doubt the spokesmen of the spoliators were met and answered in the debates, but the "business" went through and millions of pounds are now safely scheduled for selfish greed and indolence. That is the true explanation of the legislation carried last month.

The Labour Party cry out against capitalism as the enemy of society, but it is a catchword without any real meaning. To indict capitalism implies a charge against those who own capital, and it is an abuse of language to say that as a section of the community they are in any sense of the term a hindrance to industry. The truth is in the reverse side of the picture; a community without capital and without capitalists is a community that stands in urgent need of both. The real trouble is that there are too few capitalists. If the worker were not robbed of his earnings by landlordism and unjust taxation, he would be a capitalist, and the sooner he is in that position the better it will be for himself and his dependents.

The enemy of the worker is not the man with capital; the man without capital can neither help himself nor any other out of any industrial chaos. In economic terminology the term capitalism is a mere generalization signifying nothing. To say that we live in a capitalist state and that that accounts for low wages, unemployment, hunger and bad housing conditions invites an answer to the next question, namely, What is capitalism? and upon what does it rest? Capital is the produce of labour in any of its forms, and the only sound way to get the better of the capitalist, if he is to blame for hard times, is to discover how to enable the worker himself to become a capitalist. It is not by knocking some people down, but by raising up those who are down, that democracy must function for the good of all. That way lies peace and harmony and progress; any other way means hard pulling and slow progress, getting nowhere at the end of the day.

Let those who affect the word capitalism as embracing the sins of society tell us what it is and how it appears. Let us have some analysis of its component parts. In the Commons' debate on Socialism, 23rd July, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald said: "Can anyone tell me how you are going to avoid monopoly under capitalism?" He would have been nearer the mark, as the matter is known and understood, if he had put the sentence the other way about, and asked: "How are you going to avoid capitalism under monopoly?" Even in economic argument there is no purpose served in putting the cart before the horse.

But it can be claimed for the Labour leader that in bringing capitalism and monopoly together he made some advance in the direction of getting at the truth. It is monopoly that is up for trial and not capital, and if capitalism means aggregations

of capital equal to monopoly, the question is how do such combinations arise and why cannot the worker, the producer of so much capital, form similar sound combinations on his own account? The answer is that the worker's wages are insufficient and that the man at the gate fixes the wages of those inside. Manifestly the problem appears to be one of settling the unemployed question. The tenure of land is the governing factor in the case, and a second like unto it is our taxing system with its ever growing deductions from the earnings of industry. The worker is ground between these two remorseless forces. The "combine" may not embrace all that capitalism stands for in the eyes of those who seek its overthrow, but it constitutes in itself the two jaws of the vice between which labour is ground to starvation and impotence. As it is affirmed in the Declaration to be put before the Oxford Conference: "The more completely land is monopolized in any country the greater the insecurity of employment, and the nearer are wages driven down to mere subsistence level; and this is true under conditions the most diverse as to franchise, industries, tariffs, monetary systems and public debts."

But we have reached a stage when masses of men in employment are driven below the subsistence level. For their labour they cannot maintain themselves in decent house accommodation and have to depend on the general taxpayer to see them with a roof above their heads. That is the pass we have come to, and unless we can stop there is worse to follow. Land for houses is cheap enough, we are told; perhaps, but the taxation on houses is an item that in itself takes away any advantage of cheaper building sites. It does not require any great effort to imagine land free for housing, and yet witness under our penalizing methods of taxation an insurmountable obstacle to decent housing conditions. Land tenure and taxation go together as the root cause of bad times and low wages. That is the lesson the people must learn, and it will be the duty of our people to teach it now more than ever.

The Parliamentary session closed with a debate on armaments, and by resolution tabled by the Labour Party the Government were "urged to take immediate steps to call an international conference to consider a programme of national safety based upon the policy that by disarmament alone can the peace and liberty of small and large nations alike be secured." It is a sentiment that must commend itself to all who love peace and hate war, but as with the war in industry, the war for markets and for a place to earn a living wage, the question of employment stands athwart the claim. If we spend hundreds of millions on armaments it means that men by the hundred thousand are employed to make and deliver the goods; and these men, in all grades, cannot be expected to show enthusiasm for peace if peace to them means unemployment and starvation. It is useless to argue that the money spent in armaments could be better spent in peaceful industry. Of course it could, but in peaceful industries the facts are that over a million men are in idleness.

If we settle this question we are in a position to talk to armament makers about peace, and until we settle it any international conference on the

reduction of armaments is a waste of time and a pure delusion. The Taxation of Land Values will open up opportunities, take revenue from monopoly and not from the wages of labour; it will open up new avenues to greater production and bring out the full purchasing power of the community. The International Conference to be held at Oxford this month is the real peace conference, and so long as land monopoly, public debt and oppressive taxation is the order of the day such a Conference is the only one that counts.

The Taxation of Land Values is a first step to international peace, because when put into practice it will widen the field of employment, give new life to enterprise and expansion. As Mr. Asquith said at Buxton, these two things, the bringing of land into the best use for which it is fitted and relief from the burden of taxation, would be two potent promoters of industry and progress.

The abstract appeal for international peace must of course be heard if our civilisation is to continue, but abstract justice will not be satisfied with empty homage. It is a concrete offering that is required and we present our policy fully convinced that there is no other equal to the great emergency. The capital levy means one thing—capital disaster all round. It is a step which even if it could be carried means the taxation of enterprise and not its emancipation. The Taxation of Land Values will free industry from the burdens of the non-producers and the speculator. In Henry George's words: "it would take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to the land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual." There is no injustice here; the injustice lies in not doing this thing—the consequences of the injustice are to be found in the open streets of men.

On this principle and policy we Single Taxers take our stand, as we cordially welcome the members to our International to Oxford. We meet to take counsel together, and for an interchange of opinion that will strengthen our movement at home and across the seas. The Conference is the answer to the dull and short-sighted selfish agencies who compelled the new "healer" and his Government to stop the official registration of land prices. In taking this action they have done something to bring the movement into its own again. We must better the occasion, and we will.

J. P.

As we go to press, the newspapers announce that the Liberal Parliamentary Party has decided, at a meeting with Mr. Asquith presiding, upon a vigorous campaign of public meetings during the Autumn recess. Unemployment and other pressing industrial and economic questions will be dealt with at the roots on constructive lines. In this campaign the speakers will concentrate upon (1) a final settlement of the problem of reparations and indebtedness; (2) Free Trade; (3) Land Reform; and (4) Liberal Industrial Policy. The land question will be the most prominent feature of the campaign. The demand will be made for a complete and effective valuation of the land; the transfer of rates from business enterprise to land value; and the Taxation of Land Values with a view to the best use of natural resources.