

## THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

IN A recent speech dealing with the rise in agricultural labourers' wages Mr Hudson described agriculture as a "sweated industry," and certainly an industry that cannot be maintained without doles and subsidies in an unsound and precarious state. He made no attempt to diagnose the causes other than assuming that the low wages of the labourers hitherto were due to the cry of the town populations for cheap food.

Notoriously in the Highlands and islands of Scotland, and indeed generally, the cause that has ruined agriculture is landlordism and the arbitrary and capricious right which landlords claim of emptying an estate of its human population—resident in many cases—in order to make room for sheep or deer for so-called "sport." We cannot undo all the injustices of the past, but sooner or later the whole land question will have to be reviewed before the tribunal of ethics. Seeing that land stands on a different footing from movables and that it is the element on which all must live, there would be no difficulty in deciding that the amount which any man should control ought to be strictly limited by law.

"Great estates have ruined Italy," wrote Pliny, as he saw the economic results of the destruction of small freeholds; and the same thing applies to us. Whether the £3 a week wage now established will induce the labourer to remain on the land, and thus to some extent arrest the decay of the countryside, time alone will show; in any case, in placing the blame on the town populations for the plight of agriculture and the labourer Mr Hudson is backing the wrong horse. Why should the already overburdened taxpayer have to pay an extra £15,000,000 to £20,000,000 for iniquitous land laws?—D. Hamilton, in the *Manchester Guardian*, 5th January.

Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,  
Why this same strict and most observed watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land;  
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,  
And foreign mart for implements of war;  
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose  
sore task  
Does not divide the Sunday from the  
week;  
What might be toward, that this sweaty  
haste  
Doth make the night joint-labourer with  
the day:  
Who is't that can inform me?

*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 1.

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## RENT AND LAND SPECULATION

SPEAKING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS on 3rd December MR STOKES (Lab.) said: I gave notice, in Questions last week, of two specific instances of land speculation in my own constituency. The first refers to a farm outside my constituency, the rent of which was fixed, after the outbreak of war, at £26. It was mean agricultural land, but a speculator came into the market and bought it for £3,600, thereby only obtaining on his money something in the order of 14s. per cent. In another case, the rental was £126 net, and the land was bought up by a foreigner for £10,000. The return on that money was something of the order of 1 per cent. The Government have told us that they have taken control of the land. I fail to see where they have done that, and wherein they have adequately protected the farming community and the urban community from the evil results of this form of speculation. The evil for the town of Ipswich is that when the town wants land after the war, we are going to be held to ransom by people who have purchased the surrounding countryside.

There are two points to which I wish to call attention. The first is the evil of speculation. Here is the second: I have pursued the Chancellor of the Exchequer over a period of time trying to get him to agree that any increase in rent shall be subject to Excess Profits Tax. While it may be true that some people with very high incomes are now taxed at 19s. 6d., no steps are taken to prevent the landlords from benefiting from enhanced rents. While it is true that a landlord purchasing land cannot eject a sitting tenant, that is not the case of the landlord with a sitting tenant. He can, and does, browbeat the tenant to pay a higher rent rather than

pay away the profits which he, the tenant, now gets from stabilised prices in Excess Profits Tax to the Government.

Another objection which I have to the practice which is going on widely all over the country is that people who have never had the slightest interest in agricultural land are taking advantage of the present position and buying up land at high values merely for the sake of finding a convenient funk-hole for their money and so putting themselves in a more secure position at the end of the war than they otherwise would do, having regard to the fact that many of us expect that the devaluation of money is absolutely certain and inevitable. I have a case here of a farmer in Berwickshire. It is a dairy farm which was up till quite recently let at £260 a year. The landlord, on the expiration of the tenancy, gave notice to the sitting tenant that the rent would be increased to £423. That is exactly where the subsidy on milk goes; it goes straight into the pockets of the landlord the moment he can get an opportunity to put up the rent. It is ridiculous of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister of Agriculture to think that the sitting tenant or the farmer is protected by the steps they have already taken.

It is quite time the Government introduced legislation both to deal with rising rents and to prevent speculation in the purchase and sale of land at the present time. Unless they do so, we shall be faced with a continuation of a practice which is wholly pernicious and unfair and quite contrary to the spirit of equality of sacrifice about which we hear so much—a practice fundamentally unsound and morally wrong.

## AUSTRALIA

Last June the monthly meeting of the British Medical Association, Victoria Branch, was addressed by Dr John Dale and Dr Ramsay Mailer. Both read papers of great interest, the purport of each being to show that disease, or ill-health, had behind its causation a large economic factor. In other words, the connection between poverty and disease was emphasized. It was the first time that such a discussion had taken place at the B.M.A., and it was particularly welcomed by Dr Paul Dane of Melbourne. He chose the opportunity to write an essay "Privilege—Enemy of Liberty" the text of which appeared in *Progress* (Melbourne) October issue, and has since been published as a pamphlet sent by Dr Dane to more than 1,500 doctors in Victoria and other States of Australia.

## NEW ZEALAND

Active as a campaigner is Mr Arthur Withy, who will be remembered for his notable work when he was resident in the North of England. Retired now from his post as Hansard reporter in Wellington, he has the greater leisure for writing and speaking. We welcome his latest pamphlet, published by the Henry George League of New Zealand (P.O. Box 126, Auckland) and entitled *A New Order for New Zealand*. It is "a survey of the economic problems which confront the Dominion and the presentation of a programme for the restoration of real democracy, paving the way for the establishment of economic and social justice, securing equality of opportunity for all and abolishing undeserved poverty in the midst of superabundant plenty."

Mr Withy has informed us of a new book he has written which is about to be published in New Zealand under the title *Civilization's Greatest Crime—How to Set Mankind Free and Win Lasting Peace*. It is a work on which he has spent much time and care.

## HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Five 10-week courses are to be held at 13 Suffolk Street, London, S.W.1, on each night of the week from Monday, 16th February, to Friday, 20th February, at 6 p.m. Students attend on only one night of the week for two hours. The Syllabus is set out in a published Prospectus, and the classes will be conducted on the discussion method. The fees are 6d. a session, or 4s. for the whole Course, and the text-book costs 1s. 6d. Arrangements are being made for 10-week Courses in fundamental economics by the Stoke-on-Trent Branch of the School.

A series of public lectures is to be given by Mr Andrew MacLaren, M.P., at 13 Suffolk Street, London, S.W.1, at 6 p.m. The series is given under the main heading of "Social Philosophy," and the individual lectures will be as follows: On 26th February, 1942, "How Civilization may Decline"; on 5th March "Social Justice"; on 12th March "The Distribution of Wealth"; on 19th March "Ourselves and Other Nations"; on 26th March "The Rights and Duties of Citizenship." The Chair will be taken by a different prominent personality at each lecture. Admission will be 1s. for each lecture, or 4s. for the whole series; 4s. tickets are obtainable in advance from the Secretary at 13 Suffolk Street.