

The British Labor Platform

WE have received a copy of the Labor Speaker's Handbook used by the British Labor Party. We quote from that part referring to the Taxation of Land Values which leaves little to be desired:

The Labor Party holds that the whole value of land—that is whatever cannot be shown to be due to actual expenditure of money or labor by the owner or occupier—ought to be public revenue; but until this can be secured by public ownership, the Party favors a carefully devised scheme for the Rating and Taxation of the owners of Land Values, in relief of the occupiers, provided that adequate steps are taken to prevent the owner from securing for himself, either by raising the rent or the selling price of land, the benefits that are intended to accrue to the occupier or the community.—See pamphlet, "Labor and the Countryside."

BASIC PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on the following principles:

The land which Nature provided as the physical basis of life ought to be treated as common property.

When land is in private hands, those who hold it should be called upon to pay to the people a rent or tax for it.

That this tax or rent should be based on the true market value of the land apart from the value of any improvements which may be in or upon it.

The tax should be made payable whether the land is being used or not.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS

The immediate effect of a direct tax upon the value of land would be the opening up of land for productive purposes. It would end the present system which allows a landowner to be assessed at £490 for land which has a value of £50,339 when it is required for building purposes (the Bellingham site purchased by the L. C. C.). Under Labor's land value tax scheme, the owners of land would be taxed according to the value of their land as entered in the taxation roll: this same valuation would be the basis of the purchase price. The pressure of the tax so levied would compel the owners of land either to use their land or to make it easy of access for those who would be willing to use it. In this way we would promote the development of the land, and, by virtue of the fact that more land had been brought into use, rents would be reduced. The effect of opening up greater opportunities to labor must be readily appreciated by those who are suffering from unemployment. Apart from these economic considerations, there is the just claim, that as the land value is unquestionably the creation of the community as a whole, therefore the community have a moral right to appropriate through the machinery of taxation a part, or, if need be, the whole of the land value of the country.

There are further declarations in condemnation of indirect taxation and the resulting increased cost of living. We cannot avoid contrasting these explicit and economically sound statements of the British Labor Party with the platform of the American Labor Party in which the principle of so much importance to labor is timidly advanced and linked up with measures that are more than questionable:

We favor the repeal of all taxes on articles of consumption and common use, and the substitution therefor of a rapidly progressing inheritance tax, an excess profits tax, high surtaxes on large incomes and a special tax on land values due not to the productive labor of the owner, but to speculation or commercial growth.