

have had experience of it. The Labour Party pledged itself to the Taxation and Rating of Land Values as recently as at its last annual conference (Liverpool, 1925), and advocated it "primarily as a means of (1) collecting the economic rent for the community; (2) deflating land values, and so cheapening land; (3) promoting the most profitable use of land; and (4) facilitating the acquisition of land by public authorities." All these considerations are fundamental to the problem which the concocters of the new policy had to consider, but they are all completely ignored. The economic rent of the "nationalized" farms is to furnish compensation for landlords. There is not a word of reference to the hostile tariff against the good use of land which we call local rates. The very few and casual references to rates in the report clearly imply the continuance of the existing system.

The writers of the report admit (p. 5) that public improvements and State encouragement or assistance increase land values: "They all in part are in the nature of gratuitous subsidies to the partner who," in spite of the fact that he "invests neither brains nor energy in the business," is to be compensated. They must also know that land wholly withheld from use is not rated; that the artificial scarcity of land thus created, in the face of "the increasing competition for farms" (p. 8), restricts access to land and inflates its price, while the putting of land to good use, whether for food-growing, or for housing, or for the extraction of building material or coal or other minerals, is penalized by a heavy burden of rates; and that the better the land is used the heavier is the rate-burden. They ought to know that, if farm land is converted into fox-coverts, to the detriment of agriculture and poultry-farming, the sporting landlord can get his assessment reduced; but if waste land is made into fruit-gardens, or covered with labourers' cottages, or if a neglected farm is put into good heart, or dilapidated cottages are made habitable, the rates are increased, and often very largely increased.

The taxation and rating of land values and the unrating of improvements are as vital to the solution of the agricultural problem as they are to the economic troubles of our towns. So only can the two greatest "obstacles to good cultivation" and to good housing—dear land and high rates—be removed.

LABOUR'S AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMME

By the Rt. Hon. Col. Josiah P. Wedgwood, M.P.

(Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the late Labour Administration)

In the course of a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* of 19th October, Col. Wedgwood writes:—

"While the agricultural policies of the Labour and Liberal Parties differ in some respects, they agree in two cardinal points. They both involve an infinitude of bureaucratic inspection and direction; they both make land not more but less accessible to common people. The shutting off of man from nature's storehouse is measured by the price or rent asked of the man who, having no land, wants to use some. Neither Labour nor Liberal breaks down the fence; both lay themselves out to please and help those who at present have the right to use the land, and ignore those clamouring for a share on the other side of the fence.

"Both point to that magic word nationalization; both

fail to see that it is only a word, and that the nation are still outside the fence—landless and workless. *Beati possidentes*—the present tenant farmer is made secure in his sole right to use the agricultural land. His rents are fixed, his tenure secured, his investment of capital encouraged, his industry subsidized; he, truly, 'need fear nothing.' The nation may 'own' the land, but the nation is to part with the real ownership again in return for quit rents paid by the new and real owners. It is to meet this criticism that both Labour and Liberal devise their checks and inspection to try to ensure that these secure tenant farmers do better in future; to try to ensure that the 'bad' man makes way for a 'good' man; to try to find a corner where the new man may creep into the old machine; to try, above all, to stimulate and correct and even inspire the new real owners. Instead of cheap land and free land, with its inevitable expansion and weeding-out by law of nature, the State is to regulate and coerce and take the place of nature.

"It is, I suppose, realized now that the State is the reverse of freedom. But it is still almost heresy in the Labour or Liberal Party to say that the State is not the friend but the enemy of the worker; that the State maintains the existing system of exploitation and the existing vested interests. They say in the Liberal Party that the State maintains justice and protects the worker. They say in the Labour Party that it is only the State under a capitalist Government which denies his just rights to man and fails to protect the worker. Both still rely on their own make of State to do all. Neither yet can realize that the State is always the perfect machine of civilized society by which we 'slowly broaden down from precedent to precedent,' every precedent involving fresh direction of mankind, but no precedent ever allowing the right of man to use the earth in freedom and to govern himself.

"A great deal can always be said for dictatorship against democracy. This feature will be popular in all Parties. Only a few cranks will despair.

"I do not know that they need despair. Perhaps we have to go through this stage to see its folly; this is as good an example of 'State' as we are likely to get. Or perhaps there are already too many libertarians who have found out 'the State.' Or perhaps the machine will be more difficult to make than the projectors imagine. I have known so many statesmen who wished to direct others and increase the efficiency of the machine fail when it came to drafting the Bill."

The *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), of 14th September, published an extensive notice of the International Conference in Copenhagen and reprinted a large portion of Charles O'Connor Hennessy's Presidential Address. The same issue of the paper gave publicity to the Municipal Conference convened by the Glasgow Corporation for 18th November.

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A. S., Wier, Holland, writes: "Please send me five more copies of the September *Land & Liberty*. Also I should like to be favoured with two copies of the July-August number. The article and the letter from the daughter of Tolstoi are of the greatest interest to us. We have put it in the Press throughout Holland."

Read THE PROBLEM OF WAR AND ITS SOLUTION, by John E. Grant. Published by Geo. Allen & Unwin. Reduced Price 5s. post free from our offices.