

was "called to order" by the Speaker who remarked that the Bill was confined merely to the question of agricultural returns.)

COLONEL WEDGWOOD (Labour): The collection of statistics is a step in the right direction, but I hope we will go a little bit further than this Bill provides for, and say that the special survey asked for by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George) is gone on with. If we could have a special survey such as he mentioned, dealing with selected areas, we should learn far more than we are likely to get by this general Bill. When he is making that special survey, I hope he will also make inquiries as to the rates levied upon various classes of property, and the rents charged to the tenants of different classes of land. . . . Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the question of rates and rent at the same time?

MR. WOOD: I am not going to attempt to commit myself now to any formal or suggested schedule of inquiry. I can only say it will be my duty to have regard to what the hon. and gallant Gentleman has urged along with the various representations which have been made from all quarters of the House. My object is the same as theirs, to secure as much relevant, true, valuable information as it is possible on a reliable basis to obtain.

A PROPOSED LAND SURVEY

The Records of the Land Valuation Department

By SIR EDGAR HARPER, F.S.I.

(In the *Times*, 11th April.)

In the House of Commons on 8th April the Minister of Agriculture undertook to consider the possibility of making a land survey with the object of discovering land which is not now used, but is capable of being used, as arable or grazing, meadow or pasture land.

Will you allow me space to point out that the basis of such a survey already exists? When in the middle of the war Lord Ernle was working out his scheme for increasing the home production of wheat, he contemplated a somewhat similar survey. Before undertaking it he sent for me in order to ascertain what information was already in the possession of the Inland Revenue Valuation Office. I was able to show him that the district valuers had accurate plans and records of all the land in Great Britain, with particulars of the uses to which it was put. This information enabled him to put his scheme into operation forthwith, no further survey being necessary. Lord Ernle repeatedly expressed his appreciation of the assistance rendered to him by the district valuers and their records—which are still available. Naturally they are now a few years out of date as regards the uses to which lands are put; but the particulars of ownership, situation, and area are still useful, and would have been even more so but for the repeal in 1923 of the provision requiring owners to supply particulars of all sales, etc., to the Inland Revenue.

Not only do these records and plans remain in the custody of the district valuers, but there is also a small staff in each district office; and this, with some additional temporary assistance, would be best fitted for the duty of obtaining information as to the uses to which land is put to-day. For those records and plans are the foundation of the daily work of the Valuation Office, and no one could complete the particulars now required so easily or so quickly as the staff which is continually engaged upon them.

The utilization of this staff and their records for the Minister's present purpose would not only prove economical financially, but—what is far more important—would produce the most useful information in the shortest possible time. When compiled by experts like the district valuers—of whose capacity I speak from 14 years' experience—the returns are likely to be more complete, uniform, and reliable than anything based upon forms filled up by occupiers.

ROADS AND LAND SPECULATORS

By Col. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P.

(From an Article contributed to *JOHN BULL*, 4th April.)

All over England we are building new roads, a grand development of other people's property. We buy the land for the road at a fancy price, get the unemployed to work at last, pay fancy prices for the road material to the quarry-owners, and when the road is built the lords of the adjoining land go off to Monte Carlo with the profits. Houses and factories can spring up alongside the road, if those who want to work will pay the enhanced price. If they won't or can't, then they can go without.

When I left the Liberal Party, because they "ratted" on the land question, and joined Labour, I thought that, for this reason and for other good and sufficient reasons, my constituents would dispense with my further services. So I looked round for a pleasant spot whereon to spend peaceful autumn years, cultivating cabbages and becoming a cabbage. I hit on Peacehaven on the Sussex coast, and bought a patch of land. The land was worth nothing on earth. I paid a handsome price for the fresh air, and the view of the Channel, and the ships upon the sea.

Then my constituents decided to make the best of a bad job and re-elected me. Peacehaven was not for me. I sold. I had never been near the place. I had not turned a sod or laid a brick or paid a rate—but others had. Houses were springing up, roads were made; I think there was a bandstand. So I sold at a nice little profit of £50.

I have a conscience, and I presented the ill-gotten gains to my constituents. They had been making one of these expensive new roads, nearly bankrupting themselves in the effort. Real estate was booming alongside the road, so I earmarked the gift for seats along the road, with a little label on each. The old folk who sit on the seats are invited to watch land value rising across the way.

Land value is what the public makes it. Labour is going to have that value for the public. It is monstrous that there should be idle land when there are idle men, but it is even worse that the price to be paid for idle land should be increased by the ratepayers, while the owners actually escape paying any rates in respect of that land. We propose that they should pay rates and taxes upon their land value, whether they use it or not. That will fulfil the double purpose of getting back the value for the public, and of making all land cheaper.

The lords of the land will want to get out when they find that it no longer pays to keep men and land idle. They will throw in their hands, the bottom will drop out of the land market, and those who want to use it will get it cheap.

The freehold farm of Emerick, near Norham, Berwickshire, extending to over 219 acres of arable and old grass land, was sold on Saturday to Mr. M'Kennell, acting on behalf of Messrs. Thompson, Wheatrigg, Longniddry, for £6,450.—*GLASGOW HERALD*, 3rd March.