

LAND-VALUE RATING

The advocates of rating reform ought to feel a debt of gratitude to Mr F. C. R. Douglas, M.A., for the work he has just published,* for it is a brilliant exposition of our policy as a practical proposal, capable of immediate application to this country. The author is a member of the London County Council and is Chairman of the Finance Committee of Battersea Borough Council of which he has been a member for many years. Always keenly interested in questions of rating, he is particularly well qualified to deal with this subject which to most people seems so intricate.

His explanation of the broad details of rating practice and how the present objectionable system could be replaced by one, at once more just and more expedient, will appeal with special force to those concerned with rating administration. It ought to be in the hands of every member of a town council, county council or other administrative body.

But it should appeal to a much wider constituency still. In these days when the annual howl at the enormity of the rates is getting louder and louder, such a book should be widely read and one could wish it were possible to distribute it much more widely than it is likely to be bought at 2s. 6d.

The chapter on "Definitions" is an excellent, concise statement, and should be read again and again by those who wish to grasp the fundamental principles underlying this reform. Correct definition on this subject is so important that we could have wished this part to be even more fully treated. It does seem as if the ordinary man had great difficulty in grasping the restricted, and at the same time extended, meaning of the words "land" and "rent" in the discussion of economic questions. Yet on a correct appreciation of this depends whether a man is going to stand for freedom based on the recognition of natural rights, or the denial of these rights and the subjugation of everyone to the State.

The chapter in which objections are dealt with is admirable. All these, even to our old friends the widows and orphans, are answered in a succinct and devastating manner.

We cannot see how anyone can read this book and fail to be convinced of the justice and wisdom of the land-value system of rating. Certainly this is a book to be treasured by the earnest reformer and one which he can ask any of his friends to read, for it deals pleasantly with a subject which the uninitiated usually avoid as dry.

JAMES F. HAXTON.

THE PATH TO PROSPERITY†

Mr Gilbert M. Tucker has made a notable contribution to Single Tax literature in his book *The Path to Prosperity* which is written in a fresh, vigorous style. For some generations Mr Tucker's family have been conspicuous in the field of agricultural journalism, and he has knowledge at his fingers' ends that others discover only towards the end of a lifetime. His father was Editor of the *County Gentleman*, and Mr Tucker himself, since his graduation from Cornell University, has been associated with that journal, and on the practical side has engaged in farm management. He is a keen follower of Henry George, none the less zealous because his understanding has been clarified by business experience. It is a pleasure to watch him handle facts and figures, clothing them in living tissue, thus giving

* *Land-Value Rating*. The Hogarth Press, 2s. 6d.

† *The Path to Prosperity*. Gilbert M. Tucker. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London. \$2.50.

dynamic force to arguments that otherwise would be dull.

For the reader in Great Britain *The Path to Prosperity* has a valuable story of the N.R.A. efforts of the U.S.A. Government to improve the welfare of the Nation by the destruction of wealth within the States, and by the prevention of wealth entering from other countries. All nations at the present day are engaged in this form of insanity. Government officials are paid high salaries to organize comparative famines throughout the country by means of tariffs, licences, quotas and restrictions of all sorts in order to exalt prices. The average trade unionist is blind to the fact that by these means wages are being steadily reduced, and that owing to lessened effective demand for commodities there is more unemployment except for bureaucrats.

It is in America that the measures of national dishonesty have been so thoroughly carried out in broad daylight, and students of political economy in Great Britain can find in Mr Tucker's book all the details of currency "management," and of how governments plan prosperity. It is not sufficiently realized that governments to-day are only carrying out the choice panaceas of the State-Socialists, and it is easy while we see the mote in our brother's eye to ignore the beam in our own. Some of the tricks of our National Government have been more skilfully executed under the guidance of our modest Mr Walter Elliot than similar acts of the N.R.A. administration. The latter has aroused the opposition of the Supreme Court, but Mr Walter Elliot's name is scarcely known even to the man in the street so cleverly has he escaped hostility. Americans have a secret admiration for the methods of the gangster. They like to be robbed grandly by force, while we prefer the softer methods of the pickpocket.

Mr Tucker sees the connection between the intense growth of the protective spirit in exchange throughout the world, and the renewal of the armament race, and he understands that free trade cannot be fully beneficial without free production. In a book like Mr Tucker's it is unexpected to find him occasionally talking about taxing land instead of the values of land, and he is more concerned than he need be about the privilege of inheritance. The malignant aspects of inheritance will disappear when the value of land is vested in the public.

JOHN E. GRANT.

A RETROSPECT FROM THE YEAR 2000

Many years ago in one of our leading magazines a series of articles appeared in the form of a discussion between John Beattie Crozier and H. G. Wells on the question as to whether a science of society is possible. Mr Crozier argued affirmatively that such a science is not only possible but necessary, and may be built upon a few obvious postulates, such as disciples of Henry George would readily assent to. Mr Wells, on the other hand, maintained that because of the unpredictability of men's actions and the uncertainty attending future changes in the climate of opinion, no principles that may properly be called scientific can be laid down; and that therefore the best we can do is to dream dreams and see visions of what a perfected society ought to resemble, and work our way to such ideals as rapidly as may be possible. If memory serves us aright it was about this time that *A Modern Utopia* was published.

Since that forgotten date the dreamers and visionaries have not been idle, though the spirit of the age has favoured the view supported by Crozier. *News from Nowhere* and *Looking Backward* are still read with avidity,