

OBSERVATIONS OF A VISITOR

I am glad to respond to a suggestion of the editor of *Land & Liberty* that I might make some random comments suggested by such view of the British political scene as I have been able to obtain on my present visit to this country. This visit, as may be known, was primarily undertaken in connection with the meeting in London of the Provisional Committee of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, and incidentally to afford me the valued opportunity of attending the notable celebration of the 21st Anniversary of the formation of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values. Some of my impressions have been derived from contacts with individuals and some by observance of the passing show in and out of Parliament as it is reflected in the newspapers.

* * *

To a visitor from afar, the British political prospect seems to be both discouraging and encouraging. It is discouraging to notice what seems a very evident tendency towards political reaction as seen in the Government's Budget proposals and other legislative concessions in privileged interests. It is discouraging, too, to find the Government, without any violent opposition from opposing parties, steadily expanding its policy of "Safeguarding" industry, which is an approach toward Protectionism in its most insidious aspects. As it is in the United States, so in this country, it seems we are due for a time to witness a steady growth of the influence of selfish special interests using the law-making power of the country for their own enrichment. Of like discouraging import is the proposal from responsible sources that relief for the problem of unemployment is to be found only in deporting to the far-away Dominions those worthy persons to whom there has been denied the opportunity to make a living in their native land.

* * *

Incidentally, I read in a cable report in the *Times* of the strike that has lasted for months in the textile industries in New England—a strike against a reduction of the small wages paid to the operatives in these industries in Massachusetts. This recalls the well-established fact that nearly all the great strikes involving wages and decent living conditions for working men in the United States of recent years have arisen in the so-called protected industries. The highest wages and the most stable conditions have always existed in the trades and industries which by their nature could not participate in tariff privileges. This latter class, by the way, includes probably 90 per cent of all the persons engaged in gainful industry in the United States.

* * *

The fallacies of Protection have been completely exposed by many writers, but by none so clearly and conclusively as by Henry George in his great work on *Protection or Free Trade*. A worthy abridgment of this book, by the way, is to be sponsored by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation of New York and published later in the year. It is hoped that it may be useful to those who in Great Britain may undertake an exposure of the robbery and the fraud involved in the spread of the Protective system.

* * *

There is reason for encouragement in the continued agitation of the land question in and out of Parliament, and the insistence upon the Taxation of Land Values as a policy of both of the opposition parties. The extraordinary Budget proposals of the Chancellor of the Exchequer have served to provoke some highly illuminating debates in the Commons. I have been

impressed by the uncompromising speeches of Mr Philip Snowden, Mr Andrew MacLaren, and Col. Wedgwood and other Members of Parliament, exposing the evil social and economic effects of that system of landlordism that the present Government seems determined to conserve and protect.

* * *

Meantime, the followers of Henry George as represented in the United Committee and in the various groups of workers for social justice throughout the country seem to me to be more active, more determined and more optimistic than ever. This prospect speaks well for the success of the International Conference at Edinburgh next year.

* * *

A message that I venture to leave with my friends here is that in contending against Protectionism as in the agitation of the land question which now seems to be coming into view in British politics, the most useful and expedient appeal that can be made to the electorate is an appeal along radical lines. True Free Trade cannot be separated from the land question, for access to land is the indispensable factor in wealth production. True Free Trade relates as much to the production of wealth as to the exchange of wealth. The evils of land monopoly must be exposed. The radical line of attack against entrenched privilege is the line that can compel discussion, awaken thought, relate politics to great fundamental principles, and insure popular support and ultimate success.

* * *

He who follows the principle of Free Trade to its logical conclusion can, as Henry George pointed out, strike at the very root of Protection; answer every question and meet every objection, while appealing to the surest instincts and the strongest of motives of the masses of men.

* * *

I could not get up a great of enthusiasm for the policy of the Taxation of Land Values if it were viewed as the object and end of political endeavour. True, it may be urged as a desirable fiscal policy, because it indicates the best or most convenient source from which public revenues may be raised. But the most effective advocate is he who will make it plain that the Taxation of Land Values is the means, and the end is the establishment at the earliest practicable day of the equal rights of all Britishers to the land of their country. The far-reaching and beneficial social effects which would unquestionably flow from the gradual transference of the burden of taxes now laid upon every activity of capital and labour, to the vast unearned values attaching to the land of Great Britain, would, I believe, be quickly apprehended by the masses of the people if the land question and the taxation question in all their aspects were once brought under public discussion.

* * *

Reading the other day *The Theory of Human Progression* by that forgotten Scottish philosopher, Patrick Edward Dove, I was impressed not only with his insistence upon the evils of land monopoly, but with his argument that all the great changes in social and political life that have distinguished the civilized progress of the British people have had their origin in agitations sponsored by small groups who, having perceived some great injustice, have worked to create the public opinion that ultimately resulted in its abolition. Great beneficial changes, he points out, seldom, if ever, have their origin with the rulers of men or with the privileged interests, who are usually linked together in support of the public abuses of the day. He cites the long fight for the abolition of human

slavery, begun in this land, as across the sea in America, by a few unselfish spirits challenging a strongly entrenched and immoral institution that was supported by the law of the land and defended or countenanced by every authority of State and Church.

* * *

As in the case of chattel slavery so I believe that in the case of industrial slavery, traceable to the appropriation by a few of the natural resources in which all should have a share, it is necessary that men should be aroused to a realization that they are standing in the presence of another great moral iniquity that must be rooted out. If we can but present this question to the minds of men in its radical aspect I am sure that all the power of government and all the wealth and influence of entrenched selfishness will be compelled to yield to the power of an enlightened and aroused public opinion.

* * *

I have read that more than ordinarily eloquent address of Mr Lloyd George in Wales recently, in which, according to the report of the *Manchester Guardian*, he evidently aroused his auditors to high enthusiasm by his denunciations of the Tory Government's shortcomings. His delineation of the social evils of the day was vehement and striking, a dark and menacing picture of unemployment, of slums and of disheartening poverty in town and country alike. He exhibited deep feeling in the picture he drew. Liberalism, he promised, was going to tackle each and every problem and set things right, "for it had principles and a program." The principles, he declared, were, in substance, those proclaimed in the French Revolution: "a restoration of the rights of man."

* * *

All of this from Mr Lloyd George is exceedingly interesting to me, on the assumption that the former Prime Minister was sincerely in earnest in the feeling and eloquent address he made to his friends in Wales. I can hardly believe he is indulging in mere rhetoric to win the plaudits of the crowd. Unless, then, I am deceived by the logical and necessary implication of the promise made by Mr Lloyd George, the next election campaign in Great Britain should be the greatest ever—a campaign to deal with the cause and cure of poverty, with the restoration of the rights of man.

C. O'C. H.

BATTERSEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

At its meeting on 18th July (as reported in the *South Western Star* of 20th July) the Battersea Borough Council debated the Government scheme for relieving certain ratepayers of local taxation at the cost of the general taxpayer. The Council appointed a special committee of nine members to go into the matter.

Debate took place on a motion submitted by Alderman (and ex-Mayor) F. C. R. Douglas in the following terms:—

"This Council considers that the Government's scheme for reform of local taxation and local government is based upon false principles in that it fails to distinguish between the value of land and the value of improvements erected thereon, does not relieve the occupiers of houses, shops, and other premises from the heavy burden of local taxation falling on them, imposes new indirect taxation, reduces still further the share of local taxation borne by land-ownership, and will tend to increase rents and land values; and that the Council reaffirms its demand for a fundamental reform of the rating system by levying rates upon site values which are created by the industry and enterprise of the community."

Mr Douglas said that although the Council had appointed a committee to deal with practical questions which would arise affecting the Council, yet at the same time the Council did not approve of the principles involved in the legislation. The Council's object was merely to make the best of the inevitable. The Government's proposals would not achieve the objects which were held out to be their aim. The principles on which the relief was granted were entirely wrong and misleading. Instead of relieving improvements, plants and factories, relief was granted by reducing rateable value. It was proposed to relieve agricultural land entirely. Taxation would be riveted on the poorer classes of the country in order to produce results which meant in the end increasing rents and land values. The essence of the legislation was entirely unjust and economically unsound. It was proposed to transfer more power to the County Councils. It was undemocratic and removed control from the hands of the people into the hands of officials or bodies whose constitution was entirely Conservative and reactionary. It was going to cripple the hands of local authorities and especially progressive local authorities. The ultimate result would be an increase of about tenpence in the pound in the rates of Battersea. The legislation was a gigantic piece of political corruption in order to advance the fortunes of the Conservative Party.

Mr Humphreys seconded the resolution, which was carried by 28 votes to 15.

THE RATING RELIEF FORMULA Mathematics of Treasury Grants to Local Authorities

In the House of Commons, on 9th July, Miss Susan Lawrence asked the Minister of Health whether, in order to facilitate the studies of Members, he will give the algebraic formula of which paragraph 23 of Cmd. 3134 is a paraphrase?

Mr CHAMBERLAIN: The formula is as follows:—

Let p = the population of a county in the standard year as estimated by the Registrar-General.

Let c = 50 or the number of children under five years of age per thousand of the population, whichever is the greater.

Let a = 10 or the rateable value in £ per head of the population according to the valuation list in force on the 1st October, 1929, whichever is the less.

Let u = 1.5 or the percentage of unemployed men calculated as explained in Cmd. 3134, whichever is the greater.

Let m = the number of persons per mile of public road.

Then (1) if m is greater than or equal to 100, the weighted population is

$$p \left(1 + \frac{c-50}{50} + \frac{10-a}{10} \right) \left(1 + \frac{u-1.5}{10} + \frac{50}{m} \right)$$

(2) if m is less than 100 the weighted population is

$$p \left(1 + \frac{c-50}{50} + \frac{10-a}{10} \right) \left(1 + \frac{u-1.5}{10} + \frac{200-m}{200} \right)$$

In the case of London and the county boroughs, the last term in the second bracket is always taken as zero, as there is no weighting for low density of population in those cases.

* * *

The problem of the "readjustment of national and local finance" is not so difficult after all! It was only waiting for a mathematical genius to take the job over from the politicians.