

Labor's Land Policy

THE New Zealand Labor Party is to be congratulated on being the only important party in the Dominion with a land policy that is worthy of the name. The Liberal Party, instead of following the lead given by the Hon. George Fowlds in 1911, stopped still, and has been marking time. It will never regain its vigour unless, and until, it comes out boldly with a policy of "the land for the people."

This league, while differing with the Labor Party, recognizes that that party proposes to make a genuine effort to free the land and give equal rights to natural opportunity to all citizens. Its aims are largely influenced by the teaching of Henry George, indeed without him it is doubtful whether they or anyone else, would have yet heard of the "unimproved value" of land.

We note with pleasure the Labor policy as regards National Endowment lands, the need for an up-to-date valuation of all the land of the Dominion, their appreciation of the evil of speculation, their recognition of the private mortgage system as ownership disguised, and their general policy of tenure based on occupancy and use.

While paying this tribute to the Labor Party we would like, in a friendly way, to point out where they depart from, or fail to appreciate some of the fundamentals of the question.

In the first place the payment of compensation by the State denies "the right of the people to the land" since if this right exists at all it cannot be equitably bought. For the State to buy out the owners is merely to change a rent charge for an interest charge, except that it secures future increments. Even if the Government of the country were to issue bonds for the purchase price of land and afterwards redeem them, the community would still not be free of the interest charge since the money which redeemed the bonds would be reinvested (possibly in State securities, but in any case invested) and earning interest, thus enabling ex-landlords, their heirs and assigns for ever, to possess an income for which no service is or has been rendered.

Where population and land values were stationary, no goodwill would result. Another point is that the Labor policy is powerless to secure future values for the people unless the land is acquired by the State. If increment values accrue to the owner, by selling, they also accrue to him by occupancy. Land—other things equal—confers just the same privileges and advantages upon a man who continues to be the owner-occupier, as the money he would obtain upon sale at any time would secure him. He obtains all the advantages of community created values, all increases in values, by occupancy and use without selling.

Finally, we doubt whether the people of the Dominion would consent to such an extension of bureaucratic control involved in wholesale purchase or resumption. The rights of the people to the land can be fully conserved by

taking the annual rent. The State would then have the kernel and the landowners the shell.—*The Liberator* Auckland, New Zealand.

From An Argentine Socialist

IF Alberdi (our great Argentine economist) in his "Economic and Revenue System," did not declare himself a partisan of the Single Tax which according to Professor Colmeiro, in a phrase quoted by Alberdi, is in political economy somewhat similar to the squaring of a circle in geometry, he was in a measure justified by the economic situation of the country at the time when he wrote the splendid work to which we have referred. At that time, the land did not have the value which it has now and could not consequently produce rent sufficient to support the whole taxation system. Today, circumstances have changed by virtue of the increase in land values, and it may be affirmed that a tax upon these values would have no repercussion, since, as the economist Henry George has shown, the direct tax is the only one which has any influence on the amount of the income, and not the tax on increment values or the Single Tax, because these operate on real estate in the same way as a mortgage. That is to say, they would never fall upon the consumer, nor upon the wealth producer, but only upon the purchaser of the real estate or the speculator.—From a speech by Senator Iberlucea, Socialist member of the Argentine Senate.

A Ballad Of The Briny Deep

Quoth the shark to the whale, "Let's be Lords of the sea—
Methinks 'tis a capital notion;
We have only to make up our minds and agree
To get a big rent from the ocean.
We will claim it as ours, from Equator to Pole
(As the big men on earth claim the land);
Every fish that can swim shall first pay us toll—
By jingo, our life will be grand!"
So the whale started off to rent out the North Zone,
The Shark for the Mediterranean;
And he tied up the ocean, and leased off alone
The sea, from Gibraltar to Canaan.
Ho! Ho! laughed the shark, in his ravenous glee,
As the whale spouted high in his joy!
"Daddy Neptune's a fool, sir, to you and to me,
Now, we'll gorge on the masses, my boy!"
Then old Neptune arose, and he cried in loud wrath,
"How dare they thus treat my domain?"
And he shouted these words, from the South to the North,
Till the echo rang loudly again:
"Know once and for ever, ye fish of the sea,
From the whale to the minnow so small,
That none shall oppress, for the ocean is free;
The sea was created for all!"

Commonweal, London, England.