

BOOK REVIEWS

LAND INDUSTRY AND TAXATION*

Those who find themselves, as we do, in the position of being constantly asked to recommend literature on the practical policy upon which the movement for the taxation of land values in the United Kingdom has concentrated, will appreciate the great value of Mr. Verinder's new book. It comes as a welcome addition to the material which is now being earnestly demanded by the student, the politician and the propagandist, and we hope every opportunity will be given for its extensive sale and distribution. The "Land and Taxation Reform Memorial" of the Land Values Group is the text of Mr. Verinder's treatise, and he takes his readers through its several clauses with such a wealth of instruction and example that none could be excused any lack of understanding as to what it is this movement advocates. Mr. Verinder has realised the necessity for providing information on the present methods of raising national and local revenues, and so he has devoted his earlier chapters to a merciless examination of the anomalies and injustices to which these methods give rise. Once it is made clear what are the effects of taxing industry and exempting land values upon employment and the distribution of wealth, the justice of taxing and rating land values follows as a matter of course. But Mr. Verinder has rightly not stopped at this negative demonstration. He has explained what he means by "land values" and has proved both by numerous examples and in the abstract that the value of the land is the property of the community and as such should be appropriated for the common good, all other taxation being abolished.

Mr. Verinder has put much instruction within the severely restricted space of a sixpenny "people's book" and naturally must have found himself handicapped in pursuing some of the more intricate aspects of the subject. We refer, for example, to the problem of the incidence of rates, which even the most voluminous Reports of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation left unsettled, and also to the numerous considerations arising out of one essential fact, the importance of which Mr. Verinder has fully appreciated, viz., the varying proportion of land value to building value even where properties are fully developed. In the centre of cities the value of land is not only high as an absolute amount; it also makes up the greater proportion of the total value of the property. Accordingly it is never quite accurate to state that the person whose property is fully developed will suffer no additional burden under the taxation of land values. We should rather express the financial results of the change on any individual property by saying that taxes or rates on land values, as compared with the present system, will be so distributed that there will be a smaller burden where the relation of land value to improvement value is proportionately low; and there will be a greater burden where the relation of land value to improvement value is proportionately high. Accordingly, in the centre of cities, where, even in the case of a fully developed property, the value of the land is often more than two-thirds of the total value, the result of taxing or rating land values would be to take more from the centres than the existing system now takes. This is an important consideration in any discussion of the question of who is to pay the new tax or rate on land values, and it cannot be lost sight of. In this connection we should have welcomed the inclusion in Mr. Verinder's book of the supplementary memorandum

* LAND INDUSTRY AND TAXATION. By Fredk. Verinder. The People's Books, T. C. and E. Jack. Price 6d.

recently issued by the Land Values Group in which they set forth in detail the practical proposals outlined in their "Memorial," and make the recommendation that in the case of both national and local taxation, taxes and rates on land values should be paid by each person interested in the value of land in proportion to his interest. Apart from this seeming omission Mr. Verinder has most effectively employed the space at his disposal and we cordially advise all students of our question to procure a copy and make a point of placing it in the hands of their friends.

A. W. M.

Mr. Verinder asks us to point out an unfortunate printer's error on p. 23 of the book reviewed above, where it is stated that "on incomes up to £700 a year the true rate in the £, taking exemptions, abatements and allowances into account, varies from nothing at all to 12s. 6d." What he wrote was "12·6d." (i.e., a little over 1s. 0½d. in the £).

THE HOMELAND*

We have received the first number of THE HOMELAND, a monthly paper published by the Central Land and Housing Council. It deals in an interesting though extremely simple fashion with the Government's land policy. To students who wish to obtain a thorough understanding of how these proposals are likely to work and what in the long run their economic effect will be, this little paper is unlikely to be of any real assistance. It may however be useful in opening the eyes of people to the importance of the land question through the illustrations given of the wretched and tyrannical conditions prevailing on the country-side. The view of the land question presented in this first number is very one-sided, for it deals entirely with rural conditions, no reference whatsoever being made to the importance of the land question in primary extractive industries such as mining and quarrying, or in urban districts.

We can never hope to agree completely with the policy of this paper, but we hope that it will extend its view to the important matters not dealt with in this number. After the Glasgow speech this should not be difficult to the editors. Particularly we invite them to turn their attention to the un-rating of houses as a means of cheapening housing accommodation, and to the taxation of land values as a means of forcing land into use and reducing its price in the country as well as in the town, and so providing those increased opportunities of employment which alone can prevent the minimum wage scheme from proving a dismal failure.

F. C. R. D.

If Benevolence could do it, there would be no pauperism in England, for in no country I believe is there more benevolence than in the United Kingdom. But Benevolence can touch scarcely the fringe of this vast disorder. There is another virtue we could add and that quality is Justice. It is not Benevolence but Justice that can deal with giant evils. It was not Benevolence that gave the people bread twenty years ago, but it was Justice embodied in the abolition of a cruel and guilty law.—Speech of JOHN BRIGHT in Glasgow, October 10th, 1886, in Trevelyan's LIFE OF JOHN BRIGHT.

Every ardent Single Taxer has friends whom he loves and respects and whom he has yet vainly endeavoured for half a lifetime to persuade to read PROGRESS AND POVERTY just once and with the same care he would give Bergson's CREATIVE EVOLUTION!

* THE HOMELAND. Published by the Central Land and Housing Council, 38, Parliament Street, S.W. Monthly, 1d.