

Free Trade Progress on Single Tax Lines.

VICTORIA, S.A.

This is what the Free Trade Democratic Association of Victoria have done:—Treated with bitter hostility by *The Age*, on account of their Free Trade principles, and eyed askance by the *Argus*, on account of their advocating a small tax on the unimproved value of land, they have held their own, and now can claim the position of the only Free Trade body in the colony with any political platform, and any attack on Protection which can hope to succeed must be made through them, and on the lines they advocate.

In May, 1890, a few enthusiasts met together and formed an association. Mr. Murray Smith, M.L.A., was elected president, and Messrs. Robert Jones and Max Hirsch respectively hon. secretary and hon. treasurer. The work before them seemed almost hopeless. Protection seemed to be immovably entrenched in the mind of the people of Victoria as the settled policy. But efforts had to be made, and the work of education commenced. This took the form of lecturing tours and the distribution of literature. The success attending these tours was so great, that in 1894 a conference of delegates from country branches was held in the upper hall of the Athenaeum, Melbourne, and the association, which had hitherto been purely educational, became a political organisation. It adopted a platform, the principal planks of which were Free Trade by gradual, not revolutionary, steps, and a tax on the unimproved value of land—both town and country—as one of the sources from which revenue to make up the loss by the abolition of Customs, should be derived.

A great aid to the aims of this association came when New South Wales practically adopted a similar policy to that they advocate. Free Trade, it is maintained, has given the farmers of the colony cheaper implements, cheaper clothing, etc., and it is contended that when the assessments for the land tax came out, all the exaggerations of the "heavy burdens the farmers would have to bear" were contradicted. The *Corowa* correspondent of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* told how in his district the farmers were delighted at the results, which taxed each of them from 30s. to £3 a year, relieved them of the much greater amount they had to formerly pay in Customs duties. It is urged that naturally a tax on the unimproved land must fall lightly on the country landholders who possess the least valuable land, and most heavily on city lands, though at present untaxed, have received the greatest benefit from public works. It is confidently asserted that sixteen acres in the centre of Melbourne will under that system pay more than all the farmers in Victoria put together.

The association has been particular to definitely state its objects. No vaguely-worded platitudes adorn its programme; it does not seek to increase its numbers at the expense of its principles. No moderate Protectionist or moderate Free Trader need apply, for, though it clearly states the reduction of duties must be gradual, at the same time it honestly proclaims that Free Trade is its ultimate aim.

—*Melbourne Weekly Times*.

Pathetic.

It is a ludicrous and almost pathetic sight to behold the economic Bourbons, who, a dozen years ago, fell into the habit of sneering at the Single Tax, still persisting in their attitude, quite unconscious of the change that has taken place in the general thought on the subject. As they never learn anything themselves, they naturally conclude that all the rest of the world is just as ignorant of the Single Tax doctrine as it was twelve years ago. They are unaware of the fact that the Single Tax thinkers, writers, and speakers have been getting in their work during all those years with a zeal and persistency that has never been surpassed.

When the husbandman goes forth to sow his seed in the field prepared for its reception, he does so in full confidence that the Lord of the harvest will see that he shall not sow in vain. Nor are they who sow sound

seeds of thought less certain of their harvest reward. For nearly two decades now the Single Taxers have sown the seeds of truth and righteousness among the people, and the harvest is at hand. As they thrust in their sickles they can afford to smile complacently upon the poor, blind Bourbons, who still persist in cursing and reviling them. Already they have the consolation of knowing that the thoughtful and well-disposed masses of the people no longer heed their revilings and misrepresentations. It will be but a few years more until the curses of even the Tories and the Bourbons will be changed to blessings.—*Joseph Leggett*.

The Difference.

A radical difference between an investment in land (or other natural opportunity) and gold watches (or other labour products) is this, that an investment in land is not really an investment at all. If A purchases land which he does not intend to use from B for £1,000, the money and the "taxing charter" simply change hands, and the blackmailing is continued by A instead of B. But the money handed over is not yet "invested" or used in the production of other wealth, for B may keep it in his safe, or lose it, or throw it into the sea. It is totally different if C buys £1,000 worth of gold watches from D. In that case C practically hands the money (through the intermediary of the manufacturer) to the workmen who produce the watches. The money is consumed, and gold watches exist in its place. By the so-called investment in land, the industrial white slaves have simply had an exchange of owners; by the real investment in watches the community has benefited by the demand for labour.—*J. M.*

Land Monopoly in Ashantee.

The following is from *The Gold Coast Methodist Times*, a native paper, and illustrates the entering wedge of land monopoly in a new colony:—

CROWN LAND ORDINANCE—FIRST READING.

Your land, strangers devour it in your presence.—*Isaiah i. 7.*

Other men have our lands.—*Nehemiah v. 5.*
The threatened Land Ordinance was read for the first time at the meeting of the Legislative Council last Wednesday the 10th instant.

All public land in the Colony may be administered by the Government.

All natives are to possess settlers rights, in fact they are to be mere squatters whose right to the soil of their own native land can be forfeited by non-use of three years.

The Ordinance professes to protect the native against the rapacious white land grabber; but the public must scrutinise the bill carefully, or they will find that the native has been extinguished for ever, on the same principle which caused the Irishman to kill his pig to save its life.

It is interesting to note that the people recognise what this policy means, and resent it. They will require to protest strongly and watch vigilantly this land legislation. It is not the first instance of legislatures voting away the rights of the people to the land under the guise of "better administration."

Liberal Organisation.

HOW TO GO EARNESTLY AT IT.

A correspondent in the West of Scotland writes:—

I have been spending a couple of spare evenings in attempting re-organisation in my own ward—just outside my own windows in Blank Street—and by a judicious use of the *Single Tax*, I had a record success. I had a canvasser pledged for every ten voters along this division of Blank Street. All seemed very interested and quite pleased to assist. I had very different accounts of an attempt to re-organise a neighbouring ward on the old *Whig* lines. I distributed twelve copies of the *Single Tax* on as many stairs, asking the canvassers to pass it on, which they readily promised. We have our canvass cards made up for five voters each, with a neat cover, cloth boards, containing directions, for each canvasser. Quite neat, and its business-like look seems to fetch. I purpose forming a small Blank Street District Committee of from twenty to thirty, and we'll meet here about once a month for discussion, etc.

We trust this will be interesting and encouraging to others working at organisation. A supply of the *Single Tax* can always be had at 56 George Square.

Henry George's New Work.

An American correspondent writes:—

Mr. George's new book will not be out for some time yet. The major portion of the book has been printed for first proofs, but must be taken in hand by Mr. George for the finishing touches that makes his literary style so perfect. When this has been done, the book will be reset for the plates. Not till the plates are all made can anyone say when the book will be ready. You know it is to be his masterpiece, and aims to be a complete philosophy of sociology, as comprehensive in its field as Herbert Spencer's synthetic philosophy. It is to be a work that college professors, statesmen, and economists can neither ignore nor refute. This is all I can tell you; and if Mr. George would set a date, even, when the book is to appear, I do not believe it could be counted on.

Modern Landlordism.

HOW IT WORKS OUT AT NEWCASTLETON.

ADDRESS BY MR. H. S. MURRAY.

Mr. H. S. Murray addressed a large gathering at Newcastleton last month on the Land Question. Referring specially to the treatment meted out by the local landowner to the people of the village, he characterised it as one of the worst examples of landlordism to be found anywhere. What were the circumstances and history of the case?

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO,

the Duke of Buccleuch of the time—who was evidently a well-meaning man—invited a number of poor people to come and settle on the land which was now covered by the village of Newcastleton. He allowed them to build houses on a ninety years' lease. Each of the houses had a small plot or garden attached to it, the house and garden together occupying an eighth of an acre. For this the settlers—who built their own houses—paid a yearly rent of 3s. or 4s., which was at the rate of 20s. or 30s. per acre, according to situation. Outside the village, the settlers also got small crofts of two, or, in some cases, four acres each, for purposes of cultivation, with the right to pasture a cow on land in the vicinity. It is not known at what rent these crofts were charged, but they must have been nominal or very low—(hear, hear)—and they were understood to go along with the houses in the village—to each house a croft. Now,

IT MUST BE CLEARLY BORNE IN MIND

that a great deal of the land at that time was heath and bog land; yet by the patient industry of the villagers it was improved and reclaimed. Well, things went smoothly enough until the year 1857, when a valuator was called in, and the rents of the crofts were all raised on the villagers, that was to say, on their own improvements. To put it plainly, they were fined for improving their land. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) About 1892, the leases of the houses in the village began to fall in, and it was intimated to the owners that the Duke of Buccleuch would allow them to retain them—that is, to retain what is morally their own property—(hear, hear)—on condition that they paid the Duke of Buccleuch three times their rental value. That value ranged from £4 to £6, so that this proposal meant that each villager should pay a sum of from £12 to £18 to the Duke of Buccleuch, in order that his Grace might do them the favour of keeping his hands off what was morally their own property. (Laughter and cheers.)

THEY HAD SOMETIMES HEARD

of men being attacked with a threat of "your money or your life;" but in this case it was "your money or your property." But this was not all. The plots where the houses stood were also to be made the most of to take the money from the pockets of the villagers and put it into the pocket of the Duke. The villagers got the offer to feu the small plots, the sites of their houses, at a price which was almost six or eight times the old rent, and, besides these extraordinary generous conditions, they were to be charged with a sum of £8 in each case for a feu charter.

To sum up, the position amounted to this— the villagers, who were already paying increased rent on their crofts improved by themselves, in order to prevent the confiscation of their houses built by themselves, had, in round figures, to pay this Duke of Buccleuch—1st, a feu duty increased six times on the original rent; 2nd, a

Ask all Candidates for Municipal and Parliamentary Honours this Question—

sum of £3,600 redemption money; and 3rd, £1,500 for feu charters.

From the beginning of the village, the Dukes of Buccleuch had extracted nearly £100,000 of hard earned wealth from the labour of the villagers, and now these were the terms offered to them. This was the alternative offered to them, between clearing out or being allowed to live—if living it can be called—on what the Duke is pleased to call his land. A more

GLARING EXAMPLE OF LANDLORD ROBBERY

as proposed in these conditions could not possibly be conceived, and yet a person of the name of Yorston had the effrontery to stand up before the Feu Commission and say he considered it justice. But fortunately for the villagers the whole thing was exposed before a public commission, and in the press. An election was coming on in which the son of the great Duke wanted to get in for the county, and new terms are offered to the villagers, which allow them to remain on at the old rents on a 33 years' lease. (Cheers.) This was a sample of the landlord system whereby a whole village lay at the mercy of one man who had no more right to the land than the humblest individual in that audience. (Cheers.) They were told in the Scriptures that "the heavens are the Lord's, yes, even the heavens, but the earth hath He given to the children of men." Now, who were the children of men? (Laughter.) No doubt this Duke of Buccleuch was one of them, but so were the rest of his hearers. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) According, however, to the present iniquitous laws, in Newcastleton the Duke of Buccleuch was the only child of man, and the rest were all dummies. (Cheers and laughter.) As long as the people of this country allowed this monstrous land monopoly to prevail, they would look in vain for an improvement in their condition. It must be the work of the Radical party to sweep this gigantic injustice away.

Single Tax v. Socialism.

Both the Single Taxers and Socialists present at the debate between Mr. J. W. S. Callie and Mr. Leonard Hall, which took place last month at Keighley, express themselves pleased by the discussion.

Referring to the debate, the *Keighley Labour* (Socialist) *Journal*, a local advertisement of *Clarion* Socialism, has some remarks on the Single Tax and the dismal Science, which resemble the efforts of a beginner at a village Mutual Improvement Association. "For all practical purposes," says the *K. L. A.*, "Land is Capital. We may call it 'sunk' or fixed Capital, or whatever we please, but Capital it is, notwithstanding."

The editor writes this, in setting out, "to clear up one or two points which were left a little obscure by the debaters." It reminds us of "Nunquam's" statement, in "Merrie England," "that all Capital is produced by Labour, and that Land is Capital."

We don't quite know whether to laugh or be sad at the following statement—"If the Single Tax were instituted, there would be nothing to prevent a syndicate of capitalists from buying up the land and paying the tax to themselves, for they would then be virtually the State, and the land monopoly would remain just the same, only more so."

The genius who wrote this, also says that "Mr. Hall had the best of the arguments, and was much the abler of the two combatants." We can only sympathise with Mr. Hall, and apologise to the beginners at Mutual Improvement Associations.

In an article to the *Clarion* last year, Mr. Leonard Hall said:—

"All monopolies rest upon private land ownership. With the transfer of the rent of land to the State, monopoly and interests inevitably disappear, leaving to the industrious free choice either to work for themselves, for an employer, for co-operative concerns, or for the public service."

Does Mr. Hall still hold this opinion? If he does, he is a good enough Single Taxer, for the Single Tax is but a method of transferring the rent of land to the State. The fact is, Mr. Hall, like his friend the editor of the *Keighley*

Labour Journal, in his opposition to the Single Tax, "dunno where 'e are."

It is to be regretted that the Socialists don't and won't understand the Land Question. They howl at the leaders of the Liberal party even for not tackling the question; but heaven preserve society yet awhile from the efforts of the Liberal leaders, if their views are on a par with the Socialist leaders, for such a medley of confused thought never yet was brought to bear on any question, as the Socialist leaders bring to bear on the Land Question. What mental condition on economics the rank and file of the party are in can only be surmised with resignation by Single Taxers. Hope is still with us, that some day some man or woman of importance within the Socialist camp will see the truth—will see the harmony and beauty behind the far-reaching effects of the Single Tax, and boldly declare for it. We heartily compliment Mr. Callie on his part in the discussion.

COMMENTS ON THE DEBATE.

Following the debate, Mr. Fred Skirrow reviews the situation in a letter to the *Keighley News*, from which we take the following:—

The recent debate between Mr. Leonard Hall and Mr. J. W. S. Callie will have done much good, if those who heard it will only think. Mr. Hall and his associates, Keir Hardie, Ben Tillet, and Tom Mann, have for a number of years been advertising, amongst other things, an eight hours day, a minimum rate of wages, taxation of large incomes to extinction, finding of work for the unemployed, etc. Mr. Hall now admits that if the Land Question was settled on a just basis, the Labour Problem would be solved. This is practically an admission that all the years which have been spent in agitating for the aforementioned reforms have been wasted, and that Single Taxers have all along been right in saying that the primary cause of poverty was the private ownership of land, and that until this was remedied nothing else would bring relief.

THE RANK AND FILE OF THE I.L.P.

Have followed their leaders with a devotion which does more credit to other qualities than the mental, only to be told—in effect—that they have been led astray. Of course Mr. Hall doesn't accept the simple method of taxing land values as the solution of the Land Question. But I would ask the members of the I.L.P. to investigate our methods before going off on another wild-goose chase with men who in the past have proved incompetent leaders; who, after having wasted time, money, and energy, have practically said that they have yet to take the first step forward. The Single Tax method of solving the Land Question is too slow for men in a hurry like Mr. Hall and Mr. K. Hardie. Well, progress on Single Tax lines is slower than I care for, but, after all, it is better to travel slowly on the road to freedom and equality than to travel at express speed on the lines of restriction and coercion, in the hope that somehow or other we may reach economic freedom in the end. I am afraid that

THE I.L.P. LEADERS HAVE BEEN

In such a hurry that they have not had time to find a firm foundation on which to build their social system; hence we find them at the present time dropping reforms (so-called) for which they have agitated for years. The debate on the 12th inst. made it quite clear that Mr. Hall has not yet any clear, definite scheme which is workable. He objects to the Single Tax because we propose to begin by a tax of 4s. in the pound, and gradually increase it till the whole rental value of land is taken for common purposes. To my mind this gradual process has many advantages, and none of the disadvantages of a scheme of land purchase advocated by Mr. Hall, who holds that rent and interest are robbery. If it were found that the effects of a tax of 4s. in the pound was a good thing, the electors could then go in for another 4s., or more. If its effects were bad, it would not be a difficult matter to repeal. But, says Mr. Hall,

THE NEXT GOVERNMENT MIGHT REPEAL THE TAX.

Well, if the people were foolish enough to return a Government to repeal a tax which had

brought peace and plenty, what guarantee have we that if we bought out the landowners the people won't return a Government who might again make private property of land? Mr. Hall said that if Single Taxers would go in for a tax of 20s. in the pound, he would join us. But in his second speech he asked at what sum in the pound it was proposed to begin the Single Tax, and, said he, "If 20s. in the pound, it would be absolute and utter confiscation, the wildest confiscation ever suggested."

Again, some of those who bought the land have in rent, or by the sale of a part of their land, received far more than they originally paid for it. What have these people to lose by the Single Tax? To what amount of compensation are these people entitled? But Mr. Hall would point to those who have recently bought their land, and he would say (as, in fact, he did on the 12th),

"WOULD YOU ALLOW THE SELLER TO GO OFF

with the whole swag, while the poor fellow who paid for it must be robbed?" The answer to the question is, that men who are to-day buying land are doing so in the face of an agitation for the Taxation of Land Values. In other words, they are simply making bets that society will continue to allow themselves to be fleeced. If they lose, why should the people who have suffered be called upon to compensate them for their loss? Is Mr. Hall in the employ of the land speculators, that he looks after their interests with such tender regard? No. But he does not yet see the beauty, the harmony, the simplicity, and far-reaching effects of taking for the use of society that common fund, rent, and leaving the individual free from all monopolies, State and private, and in the enjoyment of the full earnings of his labour. That is why we see Mr. Hall and his friends floundering about on a sea of economic troubles, not knowing how to reach the port of peace, brotherhood, plenty, and happiness.

Scottish Land Restoration Union.

Mr. G. B. Waddell, hon. treasurer of the Scottish Land Restoration Union, acknowledges the following Subscriptions and Donations:—

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"Are you in favour of Taxing Land Values?"