

The Single Tax.

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Will Correspondents who send us Newspapers please pencil-mark the matter they wish us to notice.

Wanted, a Liberal Policy.

The Political Committee of the National Liberal Club have just issued a circular to the Liberal and Radical Associations throughout the country, inviting opinions as to a new Liberal Policy. It is a frank enough statement they have to make. They believe that both the present Government and its policy are unpopular, and cite as evidence the various bye-elections during the past two years. Yet, they affirm—

"There has been neither official nor collective declaration of future policy by the Liberal party, nor even any indication of preference on the most important points. It is, therefore, a mere matter of conjecture what may be propounded at the last moment as the authorised battle cry when next we go to the country. And, in the meantime, the field is open to the disquieting activity of those who, often with the best intentions, try to induce our party to withdraw from projects to which they have been long committed, not because they are improper, but merely because they provoke influential opposition. It appears to many that whether or not there are advantages, they are outweighed by the disadvantages attending this policy of reserve, at all events unless supplemented by outspoken expressions of opinion in non-official circles."

It is assuring to find the Political Committee of the most influential Liberal Club in Britain pronouncing in favour of a declaration of policy. The Liberal leaders who do not believe in pledging themselves definitely to carry certain measures of reform, are not likely to inspire much enthusiasm and confidence even among their own immediate followers; and certainly they cannot hope to have the support of the vast body of Radical reformers outside the party by reducing their political aspirations to Parliamentary expediency.

Moreover, what are the credentials of the present Leaders of the Liberal party to such a vote of confidence? And what is the use of putting them in power unless their intentions in the matter of legislation are known and have the approval of the electors? We refuse to believe that the coming battle on behalf of Liberalism will be run on any such lines, and if the victory is to be for Liberalism, the sooner the electors have the Liberal programme before them the better. But let us hope, for the sake of reform, to say nothing of the policy of the Liberal party, that the views of Liberals generally on social questions are above the level of the members of the National Liberal Club as expressed by their Political Committee. Referring to the various questions in the circular, they say:—

"Our land laws in town and country in many ways are mischievous, and require drastic changes. Our poor law system is most unsatisfactory. The incidence of taxation is unfair. Much might be done for the welfare of the community by the State undertaking obligations that it has heretofore ignored."

This is delightfully vague. How would they settle the Land Question, the Poor Law system, and the Incidence of Taxation? We would have thought that some mention would have been made of the programme of the Metropolitan Radical Federation. The more important planks of this programme are Registration Reform, Payment of Members, Second Ballot, Abolition of the Breakfast Table Duties, Old-Age Pensions, and the Taxation of Land Values. These are all questions of primary

importance and are up for discussion in all active Radical and Liberal Associations. To say that the Land Laws in town and country are mischievous and require drastic change, may suit the political taste and convenience of a well ordered club, but when the man in the street has to be interested, such ambiguities are worse than useless. If the politicians of the National Liberal Club desire to do some real, effective service to the party and to the cause of reform, let them take up the matter of propaganda in earnest.

Anyway, the land reformers (and they are becoming more and more numerous, inside as well as outside the Liberal Associations) will not be satisfied by such vague references to the Land Question and the question of the Incidence of Taxation, and those who appreciate the efficacy of the proposal to Tax Land Values mean to see that the candidates or party they support are pledged to give legislative effect to it. We are quite prepared to go with the Liberal party. Single Taxers generally are on the side of those who are for radical reform, but we want to know, and we are not alone in this regard, what kind of reform we are to have. The programme of the Metropolitan Radical Federation has one advantage—it can be understood readily, and it does not go beyond the Liberal and Radical sentiment of the country.

If the Liberal party are to win in the coming campaign, there must be some work done in educating the constituencies. To merely point out the sins of the Tory party is so much waste of time and energy. The people will only vote for reform when they understand the nature of the reform, and what it will accomplish. It is the duty and the privilege of the Liberal party to do this work.

The working classes have no permanent interest in Conservatism. They have simply got tired attending Liberal meetings to be fed on stale platitudes about "the evacuation of Egypt," and "the large and sweeping issues that are behind the vested interests, and which will have to be faced in the interests of the toiling masses." It is this "Liberal" treatment of politics that has forced many supporters of the Liberal party into the Socialist camp; and so long as it is continued just so long will the Liberal party continue to shed its members and strengthen the hands of its avowed opponents. The people must be educated on the principles and aims of Liberalism. What is wanted in the first place is a frank expression of opinion—what is the Liberal policy, and when may we expect to have it earnestly advocated by those who presume to guide the destinies of the Liberal party.

Here and There.

In connection with the visit of the Colonial Premiers, the National Liberal Club, London, gave a banquet to those gentlemen. *The New Age*, 8th July, commenting on the attitude of the Australian Colonies in the matter of Radical legislation, says—"Landlordism, before which British Liberalism cowers as before omnipotence, has met something more than its master in these Colonials, and Henry George will probably see in the seven Colonies of Australasia—soon to be known as 'the United States of Australasia'—the earliest realisation of his splendid dream."

Russia has probably the most curious tax in the world. It is called the "amusement tax," and was instituted a year or two ago to found an institution for the poor, under the title of the "Empress Marie Foundation." The tax is laid upon every amusement ticket sold, and the managers raise the price accordingly.—*Scottish Co-operator*.

A Tax on Land Values is the only just tax, and it can't be shifted on to the user of land. It will fall exclusively on the consumer of land values.

"How much will you carry our potatoes to New Orleans for?" asked the California farmers of Mr. Huntington, the railway manager. "What are they worth here?" asked Mr. H. "Ten cents," was the reply. How much can you sell 'em for in New Orleans? was the next question. "One dollar." "All right," replied the generous railway manager, "the rate will be ninety cents."—*Farmer's Voice*.

It will be found that the true method of levying taxation carries with it at the same time the solution of the land question. The measure has become known as the Taxation of Land Values, and when understood and grasped in its full significance it is at once seen that it forms a complete solution of our problem. It consists in placing a tax on the value of land apart from improvements.—*H. S. Murray*.

Mr. John S. Neil's article on "The Land Question and the Taxation of Land Values," which will be found in another column, also appeared in a recent issue of the *London Echo*.

The Farsley District Council have unanimously decided to petition Parliament in favour of the Taxation of Ground Values, royalties, and wayleaves, and to ask the local member of Parliament to support any measure authorising such taxation.

The *North British Daily Mail* says—"There is nothing impracticable in the land reformer's idea of having a separate valuation of the ground apart from the value or cost of the building."

The value of our annual exports to Germany amounts to £22,000,000, and our imports to £27,000,000. The idea of the protectionist seems to incline to reverse these sums so that we may have the work and the Germans the £5,000,000 profit.

Mr. Gladstone is of opinion "there will always be much to deplore in the lot of our labouring fellowmen." If labour is the producer of all wealth, it is difficult to understand this philosophy. What is most to be deplored in the case of the labourer is that he has to maintain an idle class of drones. The Single Tax will remove this burden, and leave the idlers to the commiseration of the philanthropist.

Mr. T. S. Cree, Glasgow, writes to the daily papers that "Landowning is a business requiring for its proper conduct the same qualities that lead to success in other walks of life. The landlord is as honest, useful, and necessary as any other member of society, and a great deal more so than some." Mr. Cree is an enthusiastic correspondent on economics to the daily papers.

The Springburn district of Glasgow is to have a new public hall. Fourteen shillings per square yard is the price of the site. We don't quite see it is necessary that the ratepayers should pay a landowner this sum for the privilege of putting this vacant ground to such uses; and we fail to see the virtues of "usefulness and honesty" in the landowner taking the amount. But Mr. Cree is against "confiscation," unless the "honest and useful" landowner is the confiscator. Mr. Cree, like his friend Herbert Spencer, is a stickler for ethics—"Pickwickian ethics."

"De great trouble," remarked Uncle Rastus, as he put coal on the fire, "de great trouble am dat some of de reformers do not begin wid demselves."

"Yes," said the mine-owner, as he marked up the price of the coal a dollar a ton, "if these reformers would take care of themselves they might leave me to take care of the price of coal."

A popular English weekly journal, mostly patronised by railway travellers, is responsible for the statement that the people of Glasgow are to be exempt from rates next year.

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