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THE PORCUPINE

(WITH SOME TELLING POINTS)

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WE STAND FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE.

It is not possible to state our policy in every number of "Porcupine", nor is it necessary. But a New Year may be well by quoting the following brief statement of the method by which economic freedom and justice can be won by practical means. the policy of a world-wide movement for the abolition of poverty and war. Readers are invited to write for information

that the people of England are entitled to by natural right what we propose by the Single Tax (Taxation of Land Value) for their use, is the value of land as it is, exclusive of value of improvements as they are in or on the land privately owned. What would thus be left to the landowners would be their personal moveable property, the value of all existing improvements in their land, and their equal share with all other citizens in land value resumed. This is perfectly clear, and if not perfectly fair, is only so because it would leave to the landowners in personal property and the value of their improvements much more to any exertion of labour by themselves or their ancestors, than has come to them through the unjust appropriation of the product of others' labour." (Henry George in "A Perplexed Philosopher")

BROKEN PLEDGES.

In the new Local Government Bill there is no indication of the Government's intention to redeem the Labour Party's pledges about the rating system. Instead of lightening the ratepayers' burden by proposing to redistribute them; instead of tapping a new source of revenue - which alone can give relief - it undertakes to help "poor" districts by plundering the "rich" ones, and incidents add to the benefits already conferred upon the local landowners by the Town and Country Planning Act. Redistribution of the rents will automatically redistribute rents. The relief promised to Mr

example, is about 15/- in the £, and this will, sooner or later, be appropriated by the landowners of that town in increased rent. The first five years every authority is to benefit, and after that there will be a constant distribution of grants from central Government approximately £45,000,000 per annum. To congratulate the ratepayer would be satirical since the ratepayer and the taxpayer are the same person. Government generosity in the form of grants and allowances is simply a repayment to some of the people of what the government had previously taken from all the people.

One of the serious defects of the Bill is that it will weaken the central authority (the State) by weakening the local authorities; it is another step towards the urban and rural authorities; it is another step towards the Totalitarian State. This, perhaps, is the aim of the Government. Under the pretence of handing out millions in relief of the people, the Government's grip on the management of local affairs will be tightened, and as usual, the one who pays the piper (a mere contractor in this case) will call the tune.

The Bill's reception is not friendly; the Manchester Guardian has expressed its strong disapproval and others, no doubt, will follow in similar action. The character of the Bill is not affected by the subsequent appointment of a Committee to consider the practicality and desirability of land values rating. Such "Inquiries", whatever their findings, are resorted to when governments wish to shelve awkward questions. The practicability of Land Values Rating is an open question, and the municipal agitation in its favour shows its popularity. Nothing less than a measure of the Rating of Land Values will solve the pending un-rating of homes and industry will solve the rating problem.

ECONOMIC BLOCKADE.

Trade barriers are a menace to peace because they increase the natural difficulties of some countries to obtain essential goods. They also prevent the abundance of some countries from reaching in need elsewhere. A recent announcement from Argentina showing that owing to an economic blockade (tariffs, etc.) the government of that country had been compelled to burn grain crops worth £125,000,000.

Whatever may be thought of this deed and its perpetrators, the fact is that the people really guilty of the crime are those who are responsible for the existence of the blockade. It is this which prevents the abundant food in Argentina from reaching the hungry millions in other countries. The choice before the world is either Peace and Plenty through Free Trade, or Strife and Famine through governments attempting to suppress good neighbourliness.

CHRISTIANS & PLANNING.

In a booklet entitled "Christians & the City Plan", published by the Dean and Canons of Manchester, the Rev. Ronald Allen discusses the contribution which Christians should make towards the rebuilding of an industrial town. Quoting the author of "The City of Man Plan" Mr. Allen says its main object is "to enable every inhabitant of the city to enjoy real health of body and health of mind." The booklet is mainly a review of the Manchester Plan and the Church's function in a planned society.

Unfortunately, Mr. Allen gives little attention to the un-economic causes of the poverty which for generations has deprived the masses of health of body and mind, and which the Manchester Plan is intended to correct or alleviate. Leaving out of consideration the effects of two great wars - dreadful but transient - and the resulting shortages and austerities, Church leaders should face the fact that while human ingenuity constantly makes the satisfaction of material needs easier, something at the same time makes it increasingly difficult for many people to get a living and to enjoy their earnings. Why is this? God's bounty does not diminish.

The Creator's material gifts to man reach him in the form of opportunities, not wealth. Food and homes do not drop like lightning from above, but opportunities for their production are provided in unlimited numbers. Earning a living by producing things or services is as natural to human beings as is breathing, and in favourable conditions it is performed without help or encouragement. The condition necessary for its healthy exercise is opportunity; it means access to the natural resources for all men on equal terms. But equality of opportunity is denied by a system which treats natural resources (land) as the private property of a few of God's children. That this is contrary to the divine order is obvious and undeniable, but its connection with the problems of unemployment, poverty and human degradation is not as easily recognised. In "Progress and Poverty" Henry George answers the 'riddle of the Sphinx': Why, in spite of the increase of productive power do wages tend to the level of a bare living? This book contains the answer.

If justice is not the highest quality in the moral code, it is at least the first. Tolstoy rightly denounced the impious monopoly of the divine bounty as The Great Iniquity. To fulminate against human nature or endeavour to abolish the effects of injustice without removing the cause is foolish and ineffective. Land Monopoly is the most powerful of vested interests, but having become accustomed to it many people take it for granted. To persist in this attitude is to court disaster. The city in which health of body and mind is to be enjoyed by all, must be built on the foundation of justice.

But whatever its merits or defects the Manchester Plan threatened, as Mr. Allen points out, by strongly entrenched interests. "Dominating everything," he says, "is the prob inflated urban land values," but this threat is not to be compromise or by running away from it. Land Monopoly is s be regarded as respectable, and the treatment suggested (qu Mr. Allen) is "honestly to persuade the creditors (landowne a fraction of the original land values." If ever burglar vested interest, someone will want to persuade the creditor to take only a fraction of their accustomed hauls !

Private appropriation of economic rent (land values) right or wrong. If it is right, the landowners are entitl in every pound of it; if it is wrong, they have no moral claim part of it. To end the wrong unconditionally would not be as it appears; it can be done locally and with the minimum disturbance by rating all the land in each area on its unit selling value, and un-rating, proportionately, homes and in

When the Church gives critical consideration to plans building our cities, it can no longer be argued that the ec politics of communal life are outside the realms of organis. The great obstacle to the brotherhood of men is the injusti involuntary poverty, and when that has been removed, the id will develop wherever men congregate for business and socia course. Only on the basis of economic justice can a Chris civilisation grow and flourish.

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CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

"Thoreau found that there were thousands 'in opinion of slavery and war, and yet in effect, doing nothing to put an them.'" These men were ready to 'wait, well disposed, for remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret'. said Thoreau, 'if the injustice is of such a nature that it you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, b law. For eighteen hundred years the New Testament has been yet where is the legislator who has wisdom and practical tal enough to avail himself of the light which it sheds on the of legislation? There will never be a really free and en State until the State comes to recognise the individual as and independent power, from which all its own power and au derived, and treats him accordingly. Under a government wh imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is al prison. The true patriots, reformers in the great sense, State with their consciences as well as their heads, and so resist it for the most part.'" (F.D.P. in "Land & Liberty"