

distribute the unjust burden more evenly cannot lessen the injustice which affects all the ratepayers in varying degrees. It is not enough to say that the rents of some houses are too high. What is regarded as rent is the total weekly payment which includes rent and rates. Petty reductions for some and heavier payments for others will not improve a situation which is continuously worsening. Only by abolishing the rates on houses altogether can justice be done and satisfaction secured. In Sydney, N.S.W., and rating areas elsewhere, houses and shops are rate-free; the local authorities obtain their revenues by levying their local taxes (rates) on the value of all the land. And as no land is rate-free, building and other industries are encouraged, and rents are not inflated through shortage of housing accommodation.

#### Timid approach

The Wythenshawe tenants' approval of the rating of unoccupied properties seems to be a timid approach to a better system. There are two ways of charging rates on properties, (1) on the use of land (the present system), and (2) on the value of land, disregarding its use (the Sydney system). To charge rates on unoccupied properties would continue the defect of the present system in which buildings are rated and the charge is increased whenever improvements to them are made. It would be better to do nothing.

When a house is in flames efforts are made to extinguish the fire, not to save the upper floor and leave the basement burning. If the time and energy spent in vainly trying to improve the present system were devoted to replacing it by one which accords with the highest ethical principles and the need for effective action, the first practical step would immediately be taken at Westminster towards removing the existing grievances by Rating Land Values and Unrating Homes and Industry of all kinds.

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#### MONOPOLY THE ENEMY

"... our suffering and danger do not come from Free Industrialism but from an Industrialism that is not free because it is enslaved by Monopoly and caught fast in the clutches of that invasive military machine - the State. Monopoly is the enemy, the most dangerous enemy the world has known; and never was it so dangerous as now when the State has become well-nigh omnipotent. Monopoly is State-created and could not exist were it not for the organised violence with which everywhere the State supports it. At the behest of State-protected Monopoly, the ordinary man can be deprived at any moment of the opportunity of earning a livelihood and thrown into the gutter. At the State's command, acting always in the interests of Monopoly, he can be converted at any moment into food for powder. Show me, if you can, a tyranny more terrible than that!"

(W. C. Owen)

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# **THE PORCUPINE**

(WITH SOME TELLING POINTS)

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#### TOO MANY PEOPLE

Dr. Brock Chisholme, Director General of the United Nations World Health Organisation, said in Nottingham that food supplies were not keeping pace with the growth of population. If increase of population went on at the present rate, he said, in two hundred years there would barely be standing room in the world.

#### "A MOUNTAIN OF FOOD"

The following statement by H. J. Taylor, a noted American commentator, appeared in a recent issue of a Californian journal: "We have a stock pile of wheat 122,000,000 bushels larger than on the day of Pearl Harbor; a stock pile of corn 305,000,000 bushels larger. Our own Government's hoard of foodstuffs never was higher at an all-time peak - potatoes, butter, eggs, everything. This whole gigantic mountain of food already has been paid for by the taxpayers. If it were sold, with the new crops coming on, what prices of foods would have to be controlled? None. What would have to be rationed? Nothing."

Not long ago the American Egg Board purchased more than 5,000,000 cases of eggs, apparently to hold them off the market and keep prices high. Growing crops in America and elsewhere have been destroyed, tons of fish thrown back into the sea, and compensation has been paid to farmers for not producing food.

#### Modern Jeremiahs

Modern Jeremiahs are not discouraged when reason and facts explode their fantastic theories. In days gone by it was believed that work was a penalty for man's disobedience; he was condemned to earn his bread in the sweat of his face. In these days it is the products of work (food, &c) which are regarded as penalties, and when harvests are too abundant, labour is employed in correcting Nature's extravagance. In these circumstances, threats of universal starvation do not greatly disturb us. But we may be scared by the prospect of an over-crowded world, though Doctor

Chisholme did not explain how the rapidly increasing population could be fed from a diminishing area of food-producing land during the later stages towards the standing-room limit.

#### Profitable Scarcity

To the normal man or woman the destruction of food while millions are hungry is a crime against humanity and common-sense. But it is not nonsensical. Though scarcity is disastrous to the many, it is profitable to the few. Scarcity raises prices, and that is bad for the masses; but high prices are good for those to whom they are paid. Easy fortunes are made through scarcity, and therefore scarcity is brought about by those who have the power or opportunity to do so when conditions are favourable - sometimes with the assistance of governments.

Abundance or scarcity of good things such as food and homes is in relation to the effective demand for them, and demand is measured by purchasing-power. Prices rise or fall as demand increases or decreases, as for example when the supply of potatoes or eggs is unusually large and the demand for them has not increased proportionately; prices then are comparatively low. And vice versa. In the unsatisfied needs of the poor in every country there is an enormous potential demand for goods and services, but it is an ineffective demand and has no influence on production or prices. This is the poverty problem which can only be solved by removing its cause - the Land Monopoly - and thus freeing the people for greater production and consumption. It is because land can be withheld from use that conditions of real or artificial scarcity can be created, and the removal of the legal barriers which prevent idle and ill-paid men from producing useful things from unused land would open unlimited new opportunities for production and service, and bring prices to a just level.

#### General Well-being

To bring about conditions of abundance and general well-being the equal rights of all men to share the free bounty of Nature in mother-earth (land) must be recognised and implemented. As the surface of the earth belongs by natural right to all its human inhabitants, they, the people, are entitled to demand rent from every individual who holds exclusive possession of a site, whether it be a ducal park, a small-holding, or a cottage plot. The collection of this rent would provide a revenue to maintain the public services which are now financed out of the local and national taxes and rates; this would reduce or abolish the taxes and rates which now impede progress and burden the useful members of society. This policy is known as Taxation of Land Values; actually, it is the public collection of the nation's rent. Its justice is obvious and undeniable, and its beneficial effects

can be seen in the Dominions and Denmark where it has been partially adopted. When by means of this fundamental reform, poverty and the fear of poverty have been banished, a happier generation may find entertainment in discussing the perplexities and scares of a period when men had learned to measure and weigh distant stars, but were ignorant of the elementary fact that conditions of human life on this planet depend, primarily, on the terms of access to land, land being the workshop provided for man, and the source of all the material things necessary for human existence and happiness.

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#### "UNEMPLOYMENT ABOLISHED"

In a message to a candidate for Parliament in November, Mr. Attlee, Prime Minister, said "unemployment has been abolished," and "the fear of destitution banished." Figures issued by the Ministry of Labour show that in this period of so-called "full employment" there were in this country in October 304,100 registered persons unemployed. The number of unregistered unemployed was not stated. Perhaps the existence of a few hundreds of thousands of people denied opportunity to earn their livelihood is as unimportant to a Prime Minister as small change to a millionaire. To the victims of social injustice - which is the cause of involuntary unemployment - it is a tragic reality.

Mr. Attlee and his party advocated the true remedy (Land Values Taxation) when they lacked opportunity to place it on the Statute Book. Now they have the opportunity and lack the will.

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#### PASSING THE BUCK

Tenants of the Wythenshawe Housing Estate are alarmed by a suggestion that the rents of Corporation houses in Manchester might have to be increased by 4/- to 8/- a week. At a representative meeting of the tenants it was agreed not to resort to a rent strike, and a proposal that any deficit in the Housing Department's accounts should be borne by the city's ratepayers as a whole was approved. Among long-term proposals considered, the meeting favoured the revision of the De-rating Act of 1929, and the levying of the rates on unoccupied properties in the city.

#### Redistributing an Injustice

Under pressure of a threatened increase in their cost of living, these people are neglecting the policy which would give them substantial relief without adding to the burdens of other ratepayers. The present rating system is unjust; it takes from the ratepayers a growing proportion of their earnings to finance the public services, while leaving for the private enjoyment of a few people the land-values which are created by the community. It ought to be used for the benefit of all. Efforts to