

4. abolition of the existing burdensome taxes and rates on industry and homes. Proposals to mend the system by buying out the landlords are like asking the victims of highway robbery to make the roads safe by paying compensation to Amalgamated Highwaymen in a sum of money equivalent to what the 'gentlemen of the road' would have been able to collect in twenty years if allowed to carry on their customary business. There is no middle course between Justice and Injustice.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT - AND ACTION.

"There are evidences far more palpable than any that can be given by statistics, of tendencies to the ebb of civilisation. There is a vague but general feeling of disappointment; an increased bitterness among the working classes; a widespread feeling of unrest and brooding revolution. If this were accompanied by a definite idea of how relief is to be obtained, it would be a hopeful sign; but it is not. Though the schoolmaster has been abroad some time, the general power of tracing effect to cause does not seem a whit improved. The reaction towards protectionism, as the reaction towards other exploded fallacies of government, shows this. And even the philosophic free-thinker cannot look upon that vast change in religious ideas that is now sweeping over the civilised world without feeling that this tremendous fact may have some momentous relations which only the future can develop. For what is going on is not a change in the form of religion but the negation and destruction of the ideas from which religion springs. Christianity is not simply clearing itself of superstitions, but in the popular mind it is dying at the root, as the old paganisms were dying when Christianity entered the world. And nothing arises to take its place ..... What change may come, no mortal man can tell. But that some great change must come, thoughtful men begin to feel. The civilised world is trembling on the verge of a great movement. Either it must be a leap upward, which will open the way to advances yet undreamed of, or it must be a plunge downward, which will carry us back toward barbarism."

It seems to-day that humanity is nearer to the brink than when Henry George wrote the above impressive words in "Progress & Poverty". There is little improvement in the general power and will to trace effect to cause, but there is yet time for "the upward leap" to safety.

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"THE MODE OF TAXATION is quite as important as the amount. As a small burden badly placed may distress a horse that could carry with ease a much larger one properly adjusted, so a people may be impoverished and their power of producing wealth destroyed by taxation, which, if levied in another way, could be borne with ease." (Henry George)

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# THE PORCUPINE

(WITH SOME TELLING POINTS)

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## WHAT IS FREE ENTERPRISE?

It is customary to speak of the Private Enterprise of pre-war days, and to make clearer the difference between that system and the nationalisation of industry, it is even described as Free Enterprise. In a recent speech Lord Woolton said that Socialism was a protest against the conduct rather than the principles of Free Enterprise. Under this system - which he was defending - he said human values had been placed behind material gain. Whatever that means, it seems to suggest that business enterprise was to blame for the conditions which led to the "protest" of the 1945 election. The purpose of government.

Enterprise in industry is merely intelligent and progressive human activity in the production of goods and services desired by the community. It was so successful in solving the problems of production that the widespread unemployment and poverty of pre-war days was attributed to "over-production". What is wrong is not the conduct of industrial enterprise, but the treatment it has received. Whatever the understanding and motives of the electors who voted for a Socialist Government, the obvious fact is that the evils they had endured were not due to freedom but to the lack of it. Unjust distribution of work and wealth does not occur among free people but is inevitable where enterprise is handicapped by extortions and restrictions. A just distribution of the products of industry is: The product (or its equivalent) to the producer, and this can be secured by correct government action, which is, or should be, mainly preventive. The Government should protect the natural right of every individual against aggression. In the industrial field this means equality of opportunity, and this is the only kind of equality which is natural, just, and acceptable to free men. Treatment of "Free Enterprise".

For centuries industrial enterprise has been harassed and hindered by the pressure of interferences and plunder which has steadily increased since the fateful election of 1931. Previous to that time industry had been robbed by landlords and tax-collectors, but in

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the following years the Tory champions of free enterprise began to curtail the freedom that remained. It is a natural right of free people to produce wealth and to exchange their products with other producers, but freedom to exchange was destroyed by the so-called National Government of that time by means of tariffs and other devices. And in their zeal for individual liberty these people appointed officials to decide and control the kind and quantity of commodities which "free enterprise" would be allowed to produce. Producers whose too-abundant output threatened the Government's policy of high prices through scarcity were punished by heavy fines. These facts should not be forgotten. Among very many examples, the following may be mentioned: Fines were imposed on farmers for growing too many potatoes, for selling too much milk, on manufacturers for producing too much pottery and other desirable things, and on colliery owners for producing too much coal. When these people pose as the upholders of free enterprise they must be relying on the shortness of the public memory. Sickness-repentance.

Mr. Churchill's fine plea last year for freedom, and the recent speeches of other prominent Tories are reminiscent of the robust Radicalism of forty years ago. If this indicates a change of heart and policy, the Tory party could become the spiritual successor of the old Radicals, but this remains to be seen. The test of the sincerity of individuals and parties who profess to stand for freedom is simple: Are they prepared to take the necessary steps to secure it? The conditions necessary for the enjoyment of Equality of Opportunity are: Freedom to produce wealth, and justice in its distribution, and the practical steps to those conditions are the destruction of the land monopoly by Land Values Taxation, and the removal of all barriers to international trade and intercourse by means of Free Trade. If the Tory party will adopt these measures it will deserve the confidence of the public, despite its record. If not, then we must conclude that its present attitude is merely a symptom of sickness-repentance, likely to last until a return to office makes wrongdoing again possible and profitable. There is a precedent for such a course:

When the Devil was sick, The Devil a Saint would be.  
But when the Devil was well, The devil a Saint was he!

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#### PUT NOT YOUR TRUST --

The cause of freedom has been betrayed by all the parties and this will continue while so many people leave politics to the politicians. If more people had taken an intelligent interest in public affairs in 1931, this country would not have been plunged into the tariff war which led to the Armageddon of 1939. If more people

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had understood the economic foundations of prosperity and peace, the present Government would reflect that knowledge, and we would be on the high road to recovery. It is not too late to learn.

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#### LIFE, RELIGION, and LANDLORDISM.

All the material things necessary to human existence in a temperate zone - food, clothing, shelter, etc. - are produced by the application of labour (brain and muscle) to land. In civilised Britain nearly all the land is the private property of a few people who charge the rest of us for permission to live and work in our native country. It follows therefore that the standard of living of the majority of us largely depends on the landowners' terms of access to the land (rent) because the only alternative to paying what they demand in rent or capital sum for a site is to get off the earth - or that part of it belonging to them. In spite of Government planning, controls, Boards and officials, the Landlord is still the dominating factor in the economic life of the people. The religious world.

In the religious life of the community the landowner also plays an important part; he is able to make it difficult and expensive to worship God. It is recorded that when the Scottish Church was disrupted, tenants who had joined the Free Church were evicted by the landowners. Landlords would not permit the building of churches and even refused to allow people to stand on their land to pray and preach. Congregations had to meet on mountain roadsides without shelter, and a minister had to make his home in a small boat because he was not allowed to live on the shore. One ducal landowner relented - after keeping a congregation off his land for six years - and gave his consent to services being held in a gravel-pit.

A modern example of the same tyranny, though in a more refined form, was reported in the press a few years ago. A scheme for building a new Baptist headquarters in London had to be abandoned because of the onerous terms for the land. The local landlord asked the lessees to undertake to pay a ground-rent of £60 a week for 200 years and to give the building to him at the end of that period. During the 200 years, the Baptists who were to pay for the building would not be permitted to hold public meetings in it, nor to display notices of meetings on the premises. This is landlordism, but examples like those mentioned above reveal only a fraction of the evils it has caused during the centuries.

There is only one just and practical way to deal with Landlordism: to divert the ground-rents (economic rent) from the pockets of the landowners into the national and local treasuries. This method is known as the Taxation of Land Values, and it would lead to the