

HOUSING AND LAND MONOPOLY IN OUR VILLAGES

A Word to the Cottager

The people of these islands are bound in the bonds of land monopoly and nothing short of bursting those bonds will set them free. Were it not that land—the free gift of Nature to all—is tightly held by the few, the people of this country would be enjoying an independence at present utterly beyond their reach. But it is, no matter to what heights invention may soar, no matter what the advances of science may be, the plain fact is that so long as the masses are landless, the lot cannot be improved however hard they work.

A landless population is, and always must be, an oppressed and poor population.

THE COTTAGE PROBLEM

Take the case of a typical English village in no way different from thousands of others. About 400 people dwell in this village, which lies in the heart of beautiful country, 40 miles from London. Cottages are so scarce that often two families are forced to live in one cottage. The local builder would gladly build cottages, but he does not do so. Why? Everything needed for the building is to hand. There stand the joiners, the bricklayers and the builders with their capital all ready to set to work on the job. Nor is there lack of suitable land. But still the cottages do not appear; a spell seems to have fallen on the village.

THE REASON

The plain reason is that no land on the road can be got for less than £2 10 per foot frontage, or at the rate of about £250 per acre. Think of that in this little village of 400 people! Reckon it up and you will find that if four cottages go to the acre, it means a charge of about £60 per cottage for land alone. To an agricultural labourer that is an impossible charge, and so the cottages remain unbuilt, the villagers overcrowded and the building workers unemployed.

Many vacant sites line the roads. Why are they withheld from use till someone agrees to pay a price of £250 per acre? The reason is that under our

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present laws, **so long as sites are withheld from use the owners pay for them not a farthing to the rates.** They are able to hold out for £250, because while they are withholding they lose nothing. Yet the value of land, which is steadily rising, is not due to anything they do; it is due only to the presence, growth and activities of the whole people.

THE TRUE REMEDY

The only effective remedy is to Rate and Tax Land Values, which means that if the land is worth £250 an acre, as the owners declare it is, they would be called on to pay rates and taxes on that value. The local rates in this village are 9s in £, and under the Taxation and Rating of Land Values, the owners of this land would have to pay nearly £6 per acre every year in rates alone, whether they use the land or not. Under these just conditions the land would not long remain idle. Rather than suffer this drain on their purses the owners would reduce rents so as to get their land used. Not only would rents of cottage sites fall, but rents of quarries, brickfields, sand pits, etc., would also fall for the same reason, and so reduce prices of building materials. **That** is the remedy for the house famine in every village and every town.

TAX LAND VALUES— NOT HOMES

Ask your Candidate: "Are you in favour of the Taxation and Rating of Land Values in both Town and Country as a means to raise wages, so to deal effectively with housing and employment?"



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