

THE BREAKFAST TABLE DUTIES AND FOOD TAXES.

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**T**HE Breakfast Table Duties are Customs taxes on Sugar, Tea, Cocoa, Coffee, Chicory, Currants, Figs, Dried Plums, Prunes, and Raisins. The revenue derived last year (ending March, 1911) by levying taxes on the importation of these articles was £9,930,298.

## **THE PRESENT REVENUE (1911) FROM FOOD TAXATION IS £9,930,298.**

Some speakers, when declaiming against the taxation of the people's food, miss the fact that the people's food is already taxed to a considerable amount by the Breakfast Table Duties.

## **THE BREAKFAST TABLE DUTIES ARE TAXES ON EARNINGS—TAXES ON THE PROPERTY OF MANY WHO HAVE TO WORK HARD AND LONG FOR THEIR WAGES.**

One of the Breakfast Table Duties is

### **THE TEA TAX.**

On every pound of tea a customs duty of 5d. is levied, and every year

### **TEA DRINKERS PAY £5,930,000.**

This is what is collected by the Customs House, but the *consumers pay very much more* by the time the tea reaches them, for the importer, the merchant and the shop-

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keeper must *make their profit*, not only on the cost of the tea, but also *on the cost of the tax*, and the cheaper the tea the heavier is the tax on it in proportion to its value!

We are taxed when we buy tea just as we are taxed when we buy coffee, cocoa, sugar, raisins, and all the other articles on which the "Breakfast Table duties" are levied. There is no use trying to defend these taxes by saying they are raised for revenue purposes only, or that they represent the "share of the working classes." These taxes on foods and comforts are

## **TAXES ON LABOUR AND TAXES ON WAGES.**

and fall with peculiar severity on the poorest of the poor. Why do we have to suffer such burdens? The State, failing to go to the proper source when levying taxation, must get revenue from somewhere, and it forces tea drinkers to make a very considerable payment to the Exchequer.

These vicious indirect taxes have been defended on the ground that they are "purely revenue producing." They have even been justified as a means of reaching the working classes, and thus making "the less well-to-do" contribute their "fair share of taxation." And so the Protectionists or "Tariff Reformers" charged with being "Food Taxers," are ready with an obvious retort which they have used with more effect than some Free Traders care to acknowledge.

## **THE HONEST COURSE IS TO DENOUNCE ALL FOOD TAXES, AND TAXES OF ALL KINDS THAT AFFLICT TRADE AND INDUSTRY.**

To do so is to be free to face up to the Protectionists with clean hands. No sound Free Trader can meet the proposal to put taxes on Breadstuffs, Meat, Dairy Produce, &c., unless he is prepared to denounce the existing food taxes. All of these taxes are part of an iniquitous policy which will put money into the pockets of a favoured few at the expense of the great body of the people. Such taxes are mean and contemptible, falling as they do so severely on the scanty earnings of the poor.

## **THE REAL FREE TRADE POLICY.**

Free Trade rightly understood means trade which is free from all taxation. The great bulk, however, of our present

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revenues are obtained by interfering with and restraining trade and production. This is true of our national revenues, and truer still of our local revenues.

**Cobden** and the early Anti-Corn Law Leaguers as far back as 1838 demanded :—

**The repeal of all laws relating to the importation of foreign corn and other foreign articles of subsistence, and the carrying out "to the fullest extent, both as affects agriculture and manufactures, the true and peaceful principles of Free Trade, by removing all existing obstacles to the unrestricted employment of industry and capital."**

That is to say that taxes of every kind which stand in the way of labour ploughing the land, of industrious and enterprising men sinking mines, building homes and factories, and erecting machinery, and of their selling and receiving payment for the wealth so produced, shall be abolished.

## **FREEDOM TO EXCHANGE WITHOUT FREEDOM TO PRODUCE IS NOT FREE TRADE AT ALL.**

Before any article can enter into commerce and become a thing to be traded with it must first be produced, but land monopoly everywhere exacts its enormous tribute, and production is hampered and often nearly strangled by a fiscal system that taxes every farmstead, every house, every shop, every factory, every building, and every improvement that comes into existence. In face of these obstacles, the mere freedom to exchange is after all a small part of the great freedom which you have to fight for, and which should be boldly advocated by every Free Trader.

You have to fight for Free Production and for real Free Trade by insisting that the land be taxed according to its value, so that it may be put to its best use, and industry be relieved of the burdens it has to bear. Break down the unjust laws by which landholders are permitted to appropriate the value of the land, pocketing what is morally not theirs, obtaining untold wealth, and rendering no service in return for what they receive. It is because they (the landlords) take and keep the land value which is made, maintained, and

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enhanced by the community, that the State, compelled to get revenue from somewhere, at present forces industry, forces labour, and forces capital to provide the moneys it requires.

As far back as 1899 the present Lord Advocate (Mr. Alex. Ure, K.C., M.P.), pointed out the iniquity of the breakfast table duties, and pleaded for their complete abolition. Speaking at Stoneyburn in July of that year, he said:—

**“The taxation of Tea, Coffee, Tobacco, Dried Fruits, and other commodities at present paying Customs duty should be entirely taken away, and there should be no taxation upon these commodities. At present (1899) the income was something like eighty-eight millions, fifty of which was raised by indirect taxation—that is taxation upon Tea and other commodities. Working men, who used as much if not more of these commodities, therefore yield the greater share of the taxation of the country. The extent of the income which could be derived from Land Value taxation was enormous—besides it would tend to brisk building trade.”**

It is for you, therefore, to uphold this policy of freeing the Breakfast Table; to declare emphatically that this unjust deduction from your wages must be stopped, and that

**LAND VALUES MUST BE TAXED, NOT  
FOOD, NOR COMFORTS, NOR ANY OF THE  
FRUITS OF LABOUR.**

**The community creates Land Values. The community makes Government expenses necessary. Pay the one with the other, and**

**STAND FIRM FOR THE TAXATION OF  
LAND VALUES.**

[A. W. N.]

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Published by the UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES,  
Broad Sanctuary Chambers, 11, Tothill Street, Westminster, London, S.W.  
Telephone: Gerrard 8323 & 8331. Telegrams: "Eulav, London."  
Printed by the LONDON COLOUR PRINTING CO., LTD., Exmoor Street, North Kensington,  
London, W.  
25m/2/12 Price 2/- per 1,000.