

WHY WORK IS SCARCE AND HOW TO MEND MATTERS

High Rents in the Country Mean Idle Men in the Towns

It is well known that smallholders have to pay much more for their land than the large farmers. This high rent is the cause of many of their troubles. It takes money from them which ought to be spent on equipping their holdings and thus makes it impossible for them to give the orders they would otherwise give to the makers or suppliers of implements and other wares in the towns.

The blank wall of land monopoly comes between the smallholders and the local tradesmen. But for it they could carry on a much larger trade with each other, the smallholders supplying food and the tradesmen farming implements and household goods. It is said that the produce markets are already glutted, and prices often cut to nothing. But is this because everyone has all the fruit or vegetables he desires? That reply is absurd.

The true reason usually is that people are too poor to buy what is grown. Surely the idea of too much produce is ridiculous so long as the barest needs of millions remain unsatisfied.

NO GLUTTED MARKETS

If every person in London, Birmingham and Manchester who is in daily need of fruit and vegetables were in a position to spend 6d. more a day in the purchase of such goods would the markets then be glutted—would they then be over-supplied? On the contrary, there would be such a demand for farm produce as to bring miles of land into cultivation, and there would be a busy time for smallholders and farmers everywhere, provided always that the available land is not withheld. Imagine this demand being maintained day by day week in and week out, and then try to think of the glutted markets! The case need not be argued.

The object must be to increase the number of customers who can go to market with something in their pockets.

Now where are the best markets of the smallholder and farmer? Surely in our towns and cities.

Why are our town markets not much brisker than at present? Because of the masses of under-paid or unemployed men and women who can buy little or nothing.

What is the root cause of their poverty?

The answer will show that the interests of town and country are inter-dependent, and that the labour question and the land question are the same in both.

WHAT GOES ON IN THE TOWNS

Round every town is a ring of high-priced land. Rates are charged only when the land is built upon; otherwise the land is free from rates however valuable it may be. The law thus protects the owners of land who withhold it from use and demand prices which builders

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WHY WORK IS SCARCE—*contd.*

manufacturers and traders cannot afford to pay. In this way the natural, healthy growth of towns is throttled and the expansion of their industry is stopped.

This means slack trade; slack trade means unemployed men; unemployed men struggling for work means low wages all round; low wages in the towns means poor people who cannot buy what farmers and smallholders have to sell.

A typical example may be quoted. The Mitcham Urban District Council desired to purchase 17½ acres of land to develop it for housing purposes. The land was valued for local rates at £103 per annum. But the owner wanted £47,185, or about £2,700 per acre. This is how the present methods of rating help the land monopolist. While he keeps valuable land idle he pays no rates on it. When he sells he can command a monopoly price, which means high rents to the occupiers, who have to pay in addition the heavy rates levied on houses. This encourages the hold-up of land in towns, reduces employment in the building and allied trades, lowers wages, and thus prevents townsmen buying the produce of the farms and the smallholder.

LAND MONOPOLY AT THE ROOT OF THE MATTER

If we want to remove this disease we must remove its cause. The only way to destroy the land monopoly is to tax Land Values in town and country alike and so put an end to the folly of withholding land. In other words, raise public revenue from land value, because land value belongs to the public and not to any private person. In this way trade and industry could be set free by getting rid of all those taxes that now make living dearer and of the heavy burden of rates levied on houses and other buildings and improvements.

If this were done land would be put to its best use. No one could afford to hold it up against labour and enterprise. Landowners would have to pay just as much in taxes when they keep valuable land idle, or only half use it, as when they allow it to be fully used.

Under such a system workers in town and country would have such wages that they could buy all the increased produce of farmer and smallholder, and there would be a never-failing market.

ALL A LAND QUESTION AT BOTTOM

Insist on the free and full development of the land now held out of use at exorbitant prices, or only half used. Once secure that and there will be work at good wages for all.



TAKE TAXES OFF WAGES AND INDUSTRY: TAX LAND VALUES

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