

# THE COMMONWEAL

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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	PAGE
WHAT ABOUT IT? ... ..	1
EDITORIAL COMMENT ON CURRENT EVENTS.	
A PRETTY KETTLE OF FISH! ... ..	3
BY W. C. G.	
CASTLES IN THE AIR ... ..	4
BY B. BUTTERWORTH.	
AN UNSOLVED HOUSING PROBLEM ... ..	5
CHALLENGE TO SIR GEORGE COURTHOPE, M.C., M.P.	7
BY J. W. G. P.	
C.L.P. ACTIVITIES ... ..	8

## WHAT ABOUT IT?

That's Easy!

"I want to bring the empty spaces and the willing hands together," said Mr. Baldwin, at Calgary, speaking of the possibilities of the Canadian West.

Collect the full annual rent of all those empty spaces, and the holders will do the rest. Either the holders will let go, or they will offer the willing hands special inducements to come and work the land. This is obvious to all but statesmen and professors of political economy!

**"Pin Money" for Protection.**

The pinners (pin-makers) were incorporated into a city craft or guild in 1372 when pins were first used, said a lecturer at Cambridge, addressing the Drapers' Summer School there on Tuesday. In the reign of James I. an Act was passed to protect the pinners by forbidding the importation of pins. Charles I. confirmed the Act, and received annually from the pinners £500 which he handed over to his wife, Henrietta Maria, for her private purse—hence "pin money."

Protectionists do not now hand to the monarch the consideration for the special favours they seek, but contribute to the "party fund" of "honourable" politicians, who are in no doubt as to the expectation behind the donation.

**That "National" Debt.**

A White Paper issued on Friday discloses the fact that there has been an increase of £30,021,857 in the total of the "National" Debt. This fraud upon a simple people now stands at "the colossal figure," as one newspaper calls it, of £7,721,015,809. This is £168 per head for each man, woman and child of our 46,000,000 people—mostly unwise, as Carlyle might have said!

Something will happen to that "national" swindle when the people glimpse the truth that no generation can bind its successor. Something will happen, too, to the war-makers when these can no longer bind the unborn to pay debts incurred long prior to their birth, in quarrels in which they could not have had any part.

**The Poorest Children.**

It was a kindly act on the part of the drivers and conductors of the L.C.O.C. to take 1,200 "of the poorest children of Wimbledon and Merton" for an outing in Hadley Wood, Barnet, on Thursday last. There is little doubt the children thoroughly enjoyed the lunch, tea and games provided, not to mention the long ride through London out and home, but as a matter of practical business: Why are there poor and "poorest" children in this rich land? Give them pleasure, by all means; but don't stop at that! **Naturally!**

Mayor Walker, of New York City, is having a look round London. After a visit to Petticoat Lane, the famous old clothes market in the Jewish quarter, he remarked to an interviewer: "You in London have the same trouble as we have in New York." He was alluding to the "slums." We see no reason for the distinguished visitor to be surprised at his discovery. Had he thought about the matter he would have known what to expect, for we have "the same trouble" in another respect: like New York, we have Land Lords, and wherever these parasites are tolerated there are sure to be "slums"—but the Land Lords will *not* be in them; they are for their victims!

## COMMONWEALTH LAND PARTY

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### Who'd have thought it?

Further to the comments in our last issue upon the journalistic activities of the Marquess of Donegall, *The Sunday News*, quoting with unconcealed satisfaction from *Everybody's Weekly*, treated its readers to this: "Lord Donegall's weekly page is already attracting a great deal of attention, and it is, I think, the best feature of its kind in Sunday journalism. Donegall—or 'Don,' as he is generally called—does all the work for it himself. Though few would think so, he collects all the facts unaided, and writes it all down in his own handwriting, handing his copy in at the stipulated time in true businesslike fashion."

That should dispose of any suspicion that he sends his cook round to collect the information—"facts," we should have said!—from the kitchens of those he writes about, while everybody who is weakly must be relieved to think that instead of sending his "copy" along to the office of his employers by his butler or head footman, he actually runs round with it himself.

When this energetic young man has to depend entirely upon his own exertions for a living—being no longer permitted to collect that nice little rental of £83,000 for those acres he calls "his"—he should go far!

### A "Model" Land Lord.

The *Star* has a note under this head, and quotes from a letter of Professor Huxley's concerning a visit to the Yorkshire village of Harewood, the seat of the Earl of Harewood, "owner" of 29,620 acres of an annual value of some £80,000, and father-in-law of Princess Mary. Said Huxley: "There is a big lord there—the Earl of Harewood—whose ancestors must have taken great care of their tenants, for the labourers' houses are the best I have seen."

Our contemporary remarks: "So wrote Huxley just a year before the present Lord Harewood, who is 81 to-morrow, succeeded to the title, but he might have written it with equal truth to-day, for the earl loves his land and all that appertains to it, and the Harewood estate remains a model of its kind."

Perhaps it does! But the fact remains that the "paternalism" of the "model" Land Lord is an insult to the manhood of the labourer, and operates to sap his independence and natural self-reliance! A Land Lord, whether good, bad or merely indifferent, is a drain upon the vitality of the community; producing nothing of his own, he appropriates to himself the lion's share of all wealth resulting from the labour of others. He is of no use whatever; nor can any justification be found for his presence in any community. Of the two, the "good" Land Lord is the worse, for his supposed "goodness" serves to blind its objects to his true function in society. When T. P. O'Connor founded the *Star* it was a *Radical* journal!

### The Shepherd and the Common.

Mr. A. Shepherd, Labour M.P. for Darlington, whose action in cutting the wire fence erected around the 45 acres of Little Hampden Common we commented upon in our issue of July 23rd, writes to the *Daily Herald* that "the fence still remains, though not in quite such a neat, spick-and-span condition as when erected. Unlike the Walls of Jericho, it did not collapse when Lloyd George (with his pen!) led a Liberal host around it last week." Mr. Shepherd is a politician, and so quite naturally proceeds to ask: "Did they really wish it to fall, or was the demonstration just the sneaking of a mean political advantage?"

The hon. member should be more careful; surely he must have heard of the "mote and the beam"? Of course he is not "sneaking a mean political advantage," he wouldn't! but the implied suggestion of his concluding sentence that the shivering political adventurers whose lead he follows will bring down those "walls" is most certainly contrary to fact. Is he so ignorant of the respective proposals of the Labour Party and those for which Lloyd George is working that he does not know that both seek, in the words of Mr. George Dallas, to "put them—the Land Lords—in a better position than they are to-day"? Will Mr. Shepherd tell us where he thinks he finds a difference in principle between the two Land Policies? Our columns are open for his reply. A marked copy of this issue of THE COMMONWEAL will be posted to him in due course.

### They All have to come to It!

The latest Conference to discuss the "Land Question" is the Church Congress, about to be held at Ipswich. Among the subjects on the agenda are "The Villager and his Work," "The Social Life of the Village," "The Church, the Landowner, and the Farmer." But not a word about "The Labourer and the Land." As the largest Land Lord in Britain, the Church of England could not be expected to have any regard for the landless. To admit that these have any rights in land would be to deny the Church's own claim. It would be too much to ask of a cleric whose comfortable income is derived from the rents of some "prebendal manor," or of a dean whose "living" is drawn from the "ownership" of coal land by the dean and chapter of his cathedral, that they should condemn the system by which they are kept in luxury. That Bishop of Durham, standing on the pit-head at Stanley conducting "divine" service over the remains of more than one hundred men and boys bricked-up in the fiery pit beneath his feet,—sacrificed in the effort to earn "royalties" to keep him in ease and comfort in his palace, who coolly told the distracted relatives of the dead miners that they could not "fathom the inscrutable workings of the Divine purpose," was, no doubt, fully convinced that one of those "workings" had ordained that he should be kept at the cost of those lives. No wonder the Church has to lament the progressive decrease in its live membership. Not least of the many hopeful signs of the present day is this indication that the hypocrisy of "organised Christianity" is causing the people to turn from the institution that for centuries has exerted so baleful an influence upon the common people. With the passing of reverence for superstition will come the habit of reasoning for themselves—and with that habit, very many other things, including the restoration of the land to the whole people without compensation to any Land Lord.

### An American View of the Farmer.

According to your report of the findings of the National Industrial Board, farmers' taxes eat up a third of net profits and they have been passing through troublous times, with little hope of a brighter future. My sympathies go out to the farmer, not because of the amount of taxes he is called upon to pay, but because he is such a voting idiot.

Not in all, but in some, of the States of the Union the Commonwealth Land Party has a column on the ballot. The object of this party is to abolish taxation on all products of labour and to take, in lieu thereof, the rental value of land for revenue.

This would relieve the farmer of all taxes on his buildings, tools, machinery, live stock, etc., etc., but he would have to pay not a landlord, as he does now in most cases, but to a collective fund, in whose benefits he will share along with his neighbours the economic value of the land which they are using.

Does the farmer vote for this party that would relieve him from the "crushing burden of taxation"? He does not. He prefers to believe that because he holds the most land in terms of acreage he would have to pay more taxes than ever. He closes eyes and ears to demonstrations showing how one-twentieth of an acre of town or city land will return more in rent value than several of the 100-acre farms possessed by him and his neighbours.

At heart he is a land speculator, for he lives in the hope that some day he will be able to sell, at a profit, that which a kindly God or nature has made a common source of wealth, from which all human beings must draw their sustenance.

He will not take time to think and thereby find that the crushing burden of taxation which is holding him down is the result of his allegiance with the old political parties, and, the only way to get rid of the burden of taxes is to vote for the only party that is pledged to abolish these taxes.

The only thing the farmer knows is to kick, cuss and growl about taxes, but he doesn't know, or even want to know, how to vote. For this latter he is to be pitied, but not for the amount of taxes he has to pay, because he votes for that kind of treatment every election day.

OLIVER M'KNIGHT in the *Philadelphia Record*.

## A Pretty Kettle of Fish!

From this morning's issue of the comparatively sober daily that has my distinguished patronage I glean the following:—Panics on the New York, Liverpool and Alexandria Exchanges consequent on a sudden and enormous advance in the price of cotton; recommendation by the Master Cotton Spinners' Federation of Manchester that mills which spin American staple add another week to the usual holidays, the deplorable state of the industry having become accentuated by the high price of raw materials; increase for the past week of 92,898 in the number of unemployed, which is given as 1,119,800; general uneasiness caused by the collapse of a Cornhill building, which is not likely to be assuaged by the statement of a noted expert on unsafe buildings that "there are so many buildings in London that simply hold together for old associations' sake." I read, furthermore, that President Coolidge, of the United States, has approved the building programme developed by the General Board of the Navy Department, and that eight additional cruisers are to be constructed, the order of the day being "Full steam ahead"; that three of our largest aerial battleships are off for Northern Waters on a demonstration tour; that our air-planes have developed extraordinary speed, being able to give the fastest form of land travel a start of a hundred miles an hour; that export prices for coal are still falling, and that in Germany a film scandal has been unearthed which involves the honour and reputation of some of her most distinguished statesmen.

To the foregoing category I might have added several other items equally exciting, but, as it seems to me, of minor importance; and I have purposely excluded disturbing reports from Russia and China, because from the ordinary newspaper despatches it is impossible to discover what is actually taking place in those mysterious countries. Neither have I thought it necessary to dwell on the series of outbreaks to which the Sacco-Vanzetti case has given rise, although the press in almost every country is full of them; for on that also each of us must form his own judgment as best he may. What we may be certain of is that they testify to a world-wide unrest that armies and navies, dictatorships and drastic legislation, and all the stop-gaps of the modern politician, are powerless to check.

In the items set out in my first paragraph none is exceptionally startling, and I cannot suppose that, taken as a whole, they will cause even our most imaginative readers to lose an hour of sleep. Indeed, here lies the trouble. Daily and hourly, spiced variously and cooked to suit all kinds of palates, the same dish is served up to us *ad nauseam*. In the antics of skin-game Stock Exchanges there is nothing new, and the masses have become reconciled to the fact that over their labour—if they are permitted to labour—and over the distribution of its products, they have no longer one scintilla of control. The unemployed problem they now accept as part of what is called, with incomparable irony, the existing "order," and their own leaders teach them that it is a necessary feature of our economic system. Most of us know that as the heavy lorries and street cars pass our doors our houses shake perceptibly, and we have to admit that in the most thickly-peopled portions of our metropolis buildings have been decaying for generations past. No one of intelligence had the slightest belief in the recent Disarmament Conference, for common sense tells us that naval experts will not vote for the destruction of the means by which they live, even though they themselves may be convinced that the battles of the future will be decided in the air, and that, should England go again to war, she will be at once invaded by flying squadrons against which battleships and cruisers can give her no protection. As for the coal situation, it has been talked to death, while the whole film business is confessedly in the hands of financial autocrats whose only care is dividends.

All these things we *know*; but they have been dinned into our ears so constantly, amid the riot of so many conflicting disharmonies, and held up for our inspection under such a jumble of confusing sidelights, that we can no longer see them clearly or catch the true import of their message. We have

ceased to discriminate. "The whole thing is a muddle," we say, and "After us the deluge." I myself know many men, both kindly and intelligent, who have convinced themselves that the whole business is bound to break up in a colossal row, and declare most positively that they will not stir a finger to prevent it. That, of course, is also the fixed conclusion of those who rely on the sword; but, when I consider such outbreaks as occurred recently in Vienna and are repeating themselves continuously at innumerable other points, I begin to think that it is also the growing conviction of the masses. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? Above there is universal cynicism, and from above the poison works its way to those below.

You see, in itself the situation is simply monstrous. It is monstrous that the greatest of all our conquests, that of the air, should be making the more thoughtful tremble for the future of our race. It is monstrous that we find no hope of safety apart from the multiplication of armaments and inventions having as their definite object the obliteration of city populations. It is monstrous that the most essential of our workers, those who provide us with food and warmth, should be the shuttlecock of sure-thing gamblers; and it is monstrous not merely that we have a huge unemployment problem, which self-evidently we are incapable of solving, but that such a problem should ever have come into existence. All these monstrosities, together with others it would be tedious to enumerate, spring from the fact that we have lost control of our own lives; cannot decide for ourselves at what we shall labour; are often in the appalling slavery of having no chance to labour, and, finally, when some have produced in superabundance, have not the smallest voice as to how and on what terms the product of our toil shall be distributed. That is impotence itself; and, as Tolstoy long ago observed, our city populations are a helpless swarm of bees, glued together in one sticky mass, and incapable of individual flight. They can move only as they are driven; must run with the pack or be devoured; are driftwood at the mercy of economic currents against which they vainly struggle. But there is nothing natural about those currents. They are distinctly artificial, man-made, the logical consequence of the diversion of the stream of human energy from its eternally-appointed course.

In "The Silver Spoon" John Galsworthy puts into the mouth of a Cabinet Minister who is arguing with a land reformer, the following remark: "What you're really up against is the slow town growth of the last hundred and fifty years; an ingrained state of mind which can only see England in terms of industrialism and the carrying trade." It seems to me that there is a world of truth in that remark, and that the whole labour and social movement in this country has, of necessity, a character—peculiarly its own; for we are the only nation in which nearly six-sevenths of the population live in towns and are compelled to import some seven-tenths of the food they must consume.

On the perils of that situation I do not dwell, my one object here being to insist that social arrangements now clearly becoming more and more unworkable will have to be replaced by ones more practical, because more closely in agreement with Life's basic facts. It is imperative that our people shall be aroused to the necessity of rescuing themselves from the helpless and precarious position in which the vast mass of them at present stand, and brought to comprehend that this is possible only by their regaining possession of the illimitably-rich and still greatly-undeveloped natural resources of their native home. Before that can be accomplished, however, there must be a complete revolution in our national mentality, which is at present the mentality of the city wage-worker who thinks only in the terms of jobs and regards the opportunity of work as an end instead of a means to the one essential, and in itself delightful, end, the satisfaction of normal individual wants.

To change a people's mentality is a gigantic task, and in it we may expect no assistance from opportunists, no matter what the party to which they may belong. On the other hand, the stars in their course are fighting for us, and in a subsequent article I hope to show that the great movements now agitating all the world are at bottom directed toward a realisation of the thought for which we stand.

W. C. O.

I have before me as I write the August number of "News and Notes of the Theosophical Society in the British Isles." The General Secretary of the Irish section, Mr. T. Kennedy, devotes his time to telling his theosophical brethren how they may "remove all the problems of an economic nature from their present position of prime importance, to that of being quite minor questions of detail," as this would go far "towards the fulfilment of our task of ensuring peace throughout the world." It looks as though this removal would be difficult, but fortunately "the necessary 'genius,' in the shape of Major Douglas," is available. If Mr. Kennedy has not grossly travestied Major Douglas' proposals, I must congratulate him upon having placed the word "genius" in inverted commas. Let Mr. Kennedy speak for himself:—

"It is the holiday season, so let us build castles in the air and assume that the present financial system has been reformed.

(a) Assume that every individual man and woman (children in proportion) in Great Britain and Ireland—and in every nation where they decided to step into the New Age—suddenly found themselves possessed of a private and inalienable income of £100 per annum, in addition to their present incomes, whatever those might be.

(b) Assume that present prices of commodities remained at present levels.

(c) Assume that wherever any material need appeared, the only problems to be solved consisted in finding the necessary labour, materials and maintenance for the workers, whilst engaged in that particular production. In other words, assume that the issue of the necessary money to 'book-keep' the undertaking was automatic, and was not derived from the savings of the nation.

(d) Assume we only exported goods which we did not want and could not use at home.

Space limits prevent further visualisation of what is perfectly feasible, given a rational financial system, but readers can fill in the details themselves."

They can! And with the permission of the Editor of THE COMMONWEAL I will attempt some of the filling in. It is assumed in (b) that prices of commodities will be unaffected by the distribution among consumers of the said commodities of over £4,000,000,000 worth of "money-tickets" in accordance with (a). If "a national financial system" can square the circle of increasing prices followed by continual fresh issues of "necessary money," which at first sight appears to be implied by such a scheme, then Mr. Kennedy is hardly making the best possible use of his opportunities. If instead of a "private and inalienable income of £100 per annum," in addition to our present incomes, we could each have an additional £500 a year, many people would discard their present incomes altogether and live upon the private and inalienable ones with which the genius of Major Douglas had provided them. Unless there is some occult significance in the figure £100, it should be equally easy to provide £500, or even £1,000. Only one difficulty arises, namely, that in such a state of general affluence the number of people that troubled to do any work would tend to zero, and hence the amount of wealth produced would also tend to zero. In such circumstances our private and inalienable incomes would be almost as valuable as so many German paper marks of the post-war inflation period. If some decrease in the purchasing power of each £1 of our present incomes as well as of our new ones is not to accompany every step on the path of Credit Reform, prices must be fixed. Mr. Kennedy is surely aware that even the redoubtable Mussolini has failed to fix prices; Italian shopkeepers have been compelled by economic circumstances either to sell above the fixed price or to close down their shops. I regret that space limits did not allow Mr. Kennedy to visualise some perfectly feasible scheme for the avoidance of a similar disappointment to himself and his fellow castle-builders when they also attempted the impossible.

The filling in of detail is most necessary in regard to assumption (c). It is to be noted that when "the issue of the necessary money" has been made automatic, the *only* problems

Twenty-four families, representing 118 persons, have been ordered to leave a tenement dwelling in Thistle Street, Glasgow, condemned as "dangerous."

A *Daily Chronicle* representative describes the "home, sweet home," of those 24 families. In many cases, walls bulging, plaster falling, floor-boards separated from joists. Recently much trouble owing to bursting water-pipes, people disturbed by water pouring into beds during night. Chimney vents choked, and when fires are lighted smoke finds its way into rooms above through flooring. It is expected homeless families will be transferred to modern accommodation under city's slum clearance schemes.

When the Rt. Hon. John Wheatley, M.P., was Minister for Health in the Labour Government, he told the House of Commons that the average price paid for land for housing was £180 per acre. At the same moment, the Glasgow Corporation, of which he was a member, was paying £1,100 per acre for one of its "slum clearance schemes." Mr. Wheatley displayed his complete ignorance of the question, by stating that if the land for housing were given for nothing it would not make a difference in the cost of the house of more than 1½d. per week per room. That ignorance is shared by the majority of our "housing reformers," who see only the site of the house as land, but are blind to the fact that the house itself is composed of nothing else but land and labour.

**Peace in Our Time.**

Towed by nine tugs, H.M.S. Rodney, the largest warship in the world, left Birkenhead, on Saturday, for speed and gunnery trials at Portsmouth. Emerging slowly from the dock, the great battleship, which has been built and fitted out at a cost of over £7,000,000, was greeted by loud cheering from spectators on ferry boats and on both banks of the river and by thousands of holiday-makers at New Brighton, as she made her way down the Mersey.

And there are those who wonder at the failure of "Disarmament" conferences, and are pained that other nations should doubt the sincerity of our loudly professed desire for peace in our time! But we *must* at all cost protect our "homes" from threatened invasion by envious foreigners, lured to attack us by such delightful pictures of the Glasgow "homes," as that appearing above.

Opinion governs all mankind like the blind's leading of the blind.

And obstinacy's ne'er so stiff as when 'tis in a wrong belief.  
Samuel Butler.

which remain to be solved consist in "finding the necessary labour, materials and maintenance for the workers." These, I presume, are the "quite minor questions of detail" to which all problems of an economic nature are to be reduced; let us try to solve these trifling problems which remain. Labour today is not difficult to find, we have a million men registered as unemployed. Materials and maintenance for the workers have but one source—the land. Perhaps in the New Age they may be supplied by "a national financial system" whose foundations are laid in the air; and again, perhaps not. It may be that even in the New Age, if men allow a few of their number to claim ownership of the land to which all must have access, if they are to live these unnaturally privileged persons will leave to Labour only such a portion of its earnings as constitutes a bare subsistence.

Mr. Kennedy says that "Knights errant will never find a mightier dragon to fight than Modern Finance: nor a fairer prisoner than Western Civilisation." If the Knights-errant would remove the barber's basins which cramp their quixotic heads they might discover that Mr. Kennedy's dragon is not an example of spontaneous generation, but the offspring of a dragon far more terrible—a dragon whose name is Landlordism. This dragon it is that lays waste our country and causes the "fair prisoner" to sicken in the cruel confines of our cities. If our Knights-errant were to attack and kill the parent they would find that the baby dragons could no longer lift their heads.

B. BUTTERWORTH.

## An Unsolved Housing Problem.

Mr. E. D. Simon, Liberal ex-M.P., writing to the *Manchester Guardian*, says: "We have really made no provision as yet for the man who cannot afford a rent of more than six or eight shillings a week, for in spite of all this great effort in building, the overcrowding in the low-rented houses is as bad as it was before the effort began."

Commenting editorially, our contemporary remarks: "Until we have found the answer to that problem, Mr. Chamberlain's hope that we can begin to clear away the slums has no very good basis. For the present obstacles to getting rid of overcrowding will remain, and so long as they remain, slums increase."

As we see it, the problem is one of wages. These are too low to permit of the worker enjoying the minimum standard of decent accommodation; he cannot afford to pay for it. Instead of seeking to provide him with housing accommodation at an "uneconomic" rent, *i.e.*, a rent too low to allow of a return upon the cost of the house, to say nothing of upkeep, a proceeding which is merely disguised almshousing at the cost of his fellows, enquiry should be directed to the reason for those low wages. In the course of that enquiry it is certain the cause of dear housing will be revealed—if the investigators keep their eyes open!

### Why "Low Wages"?

Land Lords hold land from use, or permit part of it to be used at monopoly rents. This power shuts off men from their natural opportunity to employ themselves. Such men, denied their right to go to work upon their own account, flow into the "labour market," to compete with their fellows for a buyer for their labour. The limitation of access to natural resources causes an apparent excess of men over jobs—1,024,700 now registered as seeking work but unable to find it—this competition for jobs forces down wages to the lowest figure upon which the labourer can subsist and reproduce his kind—hence "low wages"!

### High Priced Houses.

Out of his low wages the labourer cannot purchase the necessary house-room—and so begins overcrowding. But there is another factor: the high price of the house. Here, again, those with eyes to see will detect the influence of the Land Lord. A house, whether built by "private enterprise"—whatever our Socialists understand by that—or erected by municipal or other public authority, is only *land on land*! By their so-called "ownership" of land, Land Lords not only *force down* the wages of Labour, but they *force up* the cost of the house. They control not only the sites, but, also, every description of land that goes into the construction of the house itself. Such is their position as monopolists of natural resources, that they stand to gain immensely by the very activity in building for which all sorts of politicians take credit unto themselves. The more houses built, the more land wanted to build them, and the higher the price those who hold land are able to charge. From this position there is no escape—so long as there are Land Lords! This explains the "Unsolved Housing Problem," and should indicate to all the utter hopelessness of present methods of approach.

### Problem Not Insoluble.

But the "problem," though "unsolved," is not insoluble. As we have seen, both low wages and high priced houses are due to the one cause—the monopoly of land. Land being something man cannot make, is for the free and equal use of all men. This cannot be denied, for to do so would be to assert that Nature has made special provision for some of her creatures, and has left the many totally unprovided for. Such an idea is unthinkable! What, then, ought we to do about it? The obvious thing is to restore Nature's provision to its original purpose—the free and equal use of all mankind. Land Lords are a malignant growth that must be excised from the community. And their excision must be ruthless and thorough; no half-measures; no easy stages; but prompt and entire removal—as Land Lords. The monopoly of land must be smashed; this done, and *the cause of low wages and high priced houses will have gone*. A reversal will set in and high

### A Hint to American (and Other) Readers.

According to *Reuter*, Chicago bankers are puzzled over the action of a man there who has deposited a dollar (4s. 2d.) in a local bank, with the stipulation that it shall be left to draw 3 per cent. interest, compounded half-yearly, for 500 years. In the year 2427 the resultant fund—which, it is calculated, will then be £580,000, is to be distributed among his male descendants.

If enough of our American readers will deposit their dollars with the C.L.P., we can promise them a far better return than that, and in a much shorter time. We can promise complete emancipation from the economic bondage of to-day, freedom from the fear of want, and equality of opportunity for themselves and those who shall come after. The value of these three is far beyond any sum that can be expressed in figures.

All we need is sufficient money to enable us to get our Message of Deliverance to the people; they are ready for it.

### Mr. Hoover's Ideal.

We should strive that there shall be no child in America that has not been born under proper conditions, that does not live in hygienic surroundings, that does not have prompt medical attention and inspection, that does not receive instruction in the elements of health; that there shall be no child who has not the complete birthright of a sound mind in a sound body and the encouragement to express in fullest measure the spirit within which is the final endowment of every human being.

If Mr. Hoover will consult with our colleagues of the C.L.P. on his side of the Atlantic, they will tell him how to realise that beautiful "ideal" of his without very much "striving." Collect the rent of America for the people of America, and let the people of America spend that rent upon their own public services, thus making it possible to abolish every tax, tariff, and other form of hindrance to the full, free and unfettered self-expression of a virile and resourceful people now held in check by the operations of a set of land thieves seconded in their work of plunder by the operations of the Tariff thieves.

### It Provides Work.

The recent case of a stag chased into the sea by "sportsmen," then hauled into a boat and killed, has led to an outcry against this barbaric survival, apologists for which are now reduced to arguing that the "sport" "makes work." This can be no more denied than could the assertion that an increase in the list of offences punishable by death would "make work" for the public hangman. But that would be no sufficient reason for extending the scope of capital punishment.

Such an "argument," if that be the correct word, is possible only because of an ignorant notion that "work" is a desirable thing in itself; it was the argument used by Mrs. Philip Snowden, of all persons, in defence of the Court functions which the MacDonald Government of 1924 supported—and attended—as religiously as any of the "bloated capitalist" Governments which preceded them. Mrs. Snowden actually declared the Courts "made work for poor dressmakers." If the lady had paused to consider how those functions are paid for, and by whom, she might have learned the reason why dressmakers (and others) are "poor."

wages will rule at the same time as low priced houses—and the problem will be no more.

### The Way Out.

To smash this immoral monopoly, the C.L.P. advance the suggestion that all holders of land shall be required to pay the full annual rental value of their holding into the Common Land-Rent Fund; the rent to be paid in any case, quite regardless of the use or non-use of the land. Present holders—no longer Land Lords—may continue to hold; but they will have to pay rent to us for our land, instead of making us pay rent to them for our land, as now. With that Common Land-Rent Fund available, all rates could be abolished, thus further lowering the price of house-room. Ultimately the Land-Rent Fund would be the *sole source of public revenue*, and each citizen would receive in public services the equivalent of his share in his native land. There is no other way.



### "The State Will Benefit Largely"?

The London Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, in his notes for August 13, says of the £638,432 unsettled estate of the late Duke of Leeds, that "the amount seems to have created some surprise in Mayfair, but not so much surprise as the amount, £1,044,613, left by the late Lord Lansdowne." We commend the following, from the same authority, to those "economists" who seem to see complete salvation by way of "higher taxation on the rich."

"In these days of terrific taxation and many opportunities for rich men to divert their surplus money before the end, it is thought surprising that both these estates ran to such great sums. It is, I believe, now the practice with the heads of many great houses to distribute at the end of each year among their family all their surplus income. With the Duke of Leeds and Lord Lansdowne there must have been a pretty high surplus income, for neither has entertained on any scale since the war, and Lord Lansdowne had let Lansdowne House at large rent and lived in a comparatively modest way. The State will benefit largely by the careful life of these noblemen."

### The State Will Not Benefit!

The Duke of Leeds held 5 estates, totalling 24,237 acres. The annual rental of these was over £67,000. Lord Lansdowne held 10 estates. His acreage was 142,916, and the annual rental £125,000. Neither of them gave the community any value for the toll of rent they drew, consequently "the State"—by which we understand the whole community—did not benefit by their life as Land Lords. To say that "the State" will benefit largely because of taxation that will deprive their heirs of a part of what the deceased have had to leave behind, is to miss the point altogether. Whatever is now paid back is but a microscopical part of the tribute previously extorted from the community by the departed. Let us face the facts. "The State" has been a loser all the time. It cannot gain from the life or death of a Land Lord: only from the abolition of such useless persons who function only as parasites upon the body of the community.

### Hence Their Independence.

The following very interesting letter reaches the Editor from a reader at Karufontein, Northern Transvaal:—

Dear Sir,—I bought this farm of 5,000 acres four years ago with the intention of growing cotton.

There were 12 families of natives here, in all about 50 or 60 souls, owning over 300 head of cattle. As is usually the case when farms change hands in South Africa, the natives put up a passive resistance against the new owner, possibly due to an instinctive belief that the land is rightfully theirs. Anyhow, I had to make a living on the place, so called them all up for an "indaba." I had then been here, with my family, for over a month, and had been unable to get a native, for love or money, to hew a bit of wood or draw a drop of water.

By law, all native male squatters have to give 90 days' free labour, and for this they are allowed free grazing for stock and free land to plough.

I told them that we all had to make a living off the land: that I intended to grow cotton, a crop that required a lot of labour and that, in addition to their 90 days' free labour, I wanted those who wished for further employment to give me the first option of employing them at current rates for farm labour, but that I would compel no one to work for me who did not seek employment. One said that he could earn more elsewhere than he could earn on a farm, so I told them that those who could earn more elsewhere might do so, but that any who wished to work on neighbouring farms had to give me the first chance of employing them. They would not agree to this proposal and the whole lot left the farm. Two months later one, who had over 100 cattle and over 100 sheep and goats, asked me to take him back as, with so many stock, he had a difficulty in getting another place. He is still here, the only help I have on the place, and had it not been for a small trading store I run I'd have starved. These natives belong to the Bechuana-Basuto tribes and are not far from the border—and free land. Hence their independence.

Yours faithfully,

MATHER SMITH.

30 July, 1927.

### Shambles Street.

At an inquest on Saturday on the nine-weeks'-old child of a bricklayer's labourer, of Shambles Street, Barnsley, Yorkshire, the father stated that he rented one room with two beds, in which his family of nine lived, and paid 12s. per week rent. He was out of work, and received 37s. per week unemployment benefit. After expenses, they had 21s. per week to live upon. The Coroner said that "the case was a very shocking satire on our so-called civilisation. It was impossible for such a family to live on 21s. weekly. The question of the rental ought to be ventilated in public."

The jury found that the child died from pneumonia "accelerated by the unhealthy conditions of the home."

It would be more to the point, Mr. Coroner, to ventilate in public the reason for a "bricklayer's labourer" being out of work and receiving 37s. a week unemployment pay, drawn from the earnings of his fellow-workers, at a time when there is an admitted shortage of hundreds of thousands of houses. In the course of such an enquiry there would be discovered the explanation of that "rental."

### "Honest Poverty."

The *Sheffield Property Owners' Journal* describes itself as "a journal for the defence of the rights, and the redress of the wrongs of property owners." On the subject of "Slums," it has this to say: "Property owners do not want slums to exist. Who ever heard of a property owner deliberately creating a slum so as to depreciate the investment upon which he relied for an income? Tenants have made the slums. There are tenants who would make a palace a slum inside twelve months, and concurrently there are tenants living in slums, or what are popularly considered to be slums, whose houses are as neat and tidy as those of their more well-to-do confrères. Honest poverty is no crime."

On this point *The Lancet*, June 25, 1927, had this to say: "The problem is not as hopeless as is supposed by those who hold that the slum-dweller carries the slum to whatever surroundings he is moved. Experience in Glasgow has convinced Dr. A. S. M. MacGregor that rehousing does eliminate the greater part of their 'slum qualities.' Out of 835 removals, the results were reported as very good in 510, and only 44 were 'dirty' after the change."

Quite a comfortable bit of reading for the good, kind slum-owners, who only wish to draw that "income" without inconvenient questions being asked! It is a pity the writer did not define "honest" in relation to poverty. Once accept his dictum that honest poverty is no crime, and it is an easy step to the conclusion that all poverty is "honest," and so there is no call to worry—unless you happen to be poor! Such talk savours of the cant of the Victorian novelists who invariably introduced the hero of their story as "born of poor, but honest parents," the villain, presumably, for they never said so, being the son of rich, but dishonest parents! We have no use for such silly phrases.

### Poverty Is a Crime!

Poverty is a crime—not of the individual victim—but of the society which condemns him from birth to go through life begging another's leave to toil, because prevented by society from employing himself in the satisfaction of his needs. The same social crime that denies him his equal right to use the earth is the cause of "slums," including what this apologist for "Proputty, Proputty, Proputty!" to quote Tennyson's Northern Farmer, describes as "what are popularly considered to be slums." Just as no property owner deliberately creates a slum, so no slum-dweller deliberately seeks such places for his habitation. The existence of Land Lords claiming "property" in land first makes poverty, and these parasites, by charging monopoly rents for building land, crowd houses together and force up the rent of housing accommodation beyond the capacity to pay of those they have made poor. For smug writers to pen the sort of stuff we criticise is to add insult to injury! They should try living amid the sordid, depressing, soul-killing conditions of the slum to see for how long they, themselves, would retain that sense of self-respect manifested by the heroic tenants whose houses are so neat and tidy.

## Our Challenge to Sir George Courthope, M.C., M.P.

Sir George L. Courthope, M.C., Conservative M.P. for Rye, member of the Executive of the Tariff Reform League, and of the Executive of the Central Landowners' Association, Land Lord of 630 acres in Kent and a further 3,026 acres in Sussex (3,656 acres in all) of a combined annual rental of about £9,000, has an article in *John Bull* headed: "I Disagree with the Editor." The disagreement is over the matter of "Land," a subject upon which this Land Lord *should* be an authority.

Sir George begins thus: "From time to time most countries pass through periods of political agitation about the ownership of agricultural land. We are in the midst of one such period now." If he thinks that "we" are half-way through that "period" he is sadly mistaken. As a politician, he appears to be as short-sighted as the rest of his order. It is not a "political" agitation that is on, but an economic one; neither is it concerned with the "ownership of agricultural land"; it raises the fundamental issue of the "ownership" of any land by any so-called "landowner." Sir George had better know the worst—that is if he really is as innocent as he would wish to appear. As a member of the Executive of the Central Landowners' Association, he must know there is a widespread and rapidly growing conviction amongst all classes that the day of the Land Lord must pass. No longer are the dispossessed—whose right to free and equal use of land is just the same as that of any member of the C.L.A.—going to be fobbed off with specious arguments and special pleading by those who seek to defend an indefensible position. To-day, the common people know that, as a Land Lord—a mere receiver of rent for land—Sir George is not only of no use to the community, but is an actual injury, since he functions (we hope he will not mind plain speaking, but cannot help it if he objects!) always and only as a parasite, taking something for nothing. If he thinks we are in error as to his "function," our columns are at his disposal for a full reply. Let him show what a Land Lord *qua* Land Lord gives in return for the rent he takes. We should be very interested to learn that he gives anything!

"The reasons for this agitation are many," he proceeds. "To begin with, land is owned by a minority of the nation, and consequently excites the envy of those who have none." This sort of thing reminds us of the ignorant speakers employed by the Tariff Reform League who sometimes interrupt us with the remark: "You would not talk like that if you owned any land!" Sir George should be above their level. Does he really think it is only "those who have none" that are taking sides against Land Lords? If so, he has a lot to learn. We could tell him of some who "own" land yet who agree with us that every child coming into this world comes with an equal right to life, and, *because no child can live without land*, an equal right to free access to the land that Nature provided, not for a few Land Lords, but for *all* her children.

This is the issue raised, and we shall be interested to learn how he and his fellow "landowners" propose to meet it. They dare not deny the truth we affirm: for they cannot!

His second reason for the agitation is a strange one. "It (land) yields so poor a return as an investment, that it can only be owned by those who can apply capital and labour to its cultivation, or by those whose means enable them to be content with a very low rate of interest." If this be the case we should not have expected it would "excite the envy of those who have none," for they would seem to be better off without it.

Thirdly, as the parsons say: "Owners of property, in the natural desire to protect and preserve what is their own (!) are the stoutest opponents of nationalisation and other destructive doctrines, and therefore arouse the enmity of the Socialist Party."

Fourthly, and lastly, brethren, "The landowner is a convenient 'Aunt Sally' for the missiles of every empty-headed seeker after political excitement who has no sensible policy of his own." That's a nasty one for Lloyd George, anyhow!

We give his "reasons" in full, that our readers may judge

the value of the answer this champion of Special Privilege deems the best he can make. His second "reason" is the only one that has any seeming weight. Will he tell us what "capital and labour" the Duke of Westminster has applied to the cultivation of the 600 acres in West London that yield him £1,000,000 yearly as rent? But he may reply: "I am speaking only of agricultural land." Very well; tell us, please, just how much "capital and labour" he, as a Land Lord of "agricultural" acres has applied to their cultivation. If he personally farms any of "his" land, he does so *not* as a Land Lord but as a *land user*. There is a vast difference. Let him tell us where we are wrong in stating that the notion about the Land Lord's function being to supply the capital is a fallacy. The mere Land Lord—that is the man who just "owns" but does not himself farm "his" land—does not supply *any* capital. He keeps buildings, fences, drains and so forth more or less in repair. Not that *he* does the work involved—he simply pays the bill! But, as he pays the bill with part of the rent taken from the farmer, it follows it is the farmer, not the Land Lord, who supplies that capital.

He next invites us to "look at the present position and at the proposals of those who wish to change it. Good. Let's! So far as can be ascertained, the "present position" is this: 38,229 persons hold about three-fourths of England and Wales; the remaining fourth is held by 919,692 others. Less than one million of the population claim to "own" the whole of the land upon which the other 37,000,000 have to live. For mere permission to live, these landless are paying an average of £15 per head, man, woman and child, as rent this year to that "minority" to which he referred. Does it not strike him this is another "reason" he should have taken into account? He can hardly be expecting that people who now can read and write and, consequently, are beginning to think, will be satisfied with his alleged "reasons," nor are they likely to rest content much longer under the injustice he and his fellow "landowners" inflict upon them. Sir George should not deceive himself; this is no "political" agitation he has to meet; it is a demand for justice; and a demand that will brook no delay!

He is, indeed, a simpleton (excuse this frankness!) if he imagines the matter is disposed of when he writes so airily: "For practical purposes it is quite immaterial whether land is held in theory from the Crown by virtue of various forms of service or of grant." And again: "Nor does it concern us whether the Enclosure Acts were justified or not, any more than it matters to-day whose land William the Conqueror gave to the great religious orders, or to whom Henry VIII. granted it when he dispossessed the monasteries." It *does* concern us to-day that all "titles" to land are based upon force, fraud and "legal fictions." That being so, his own "title" is no more valid than was that of the first "grant" upon which he seeks to base it. His parchment deeds are of no value in the eyes of those who understand, and who refuse to be hoodwinked by hired lawyers.

He had better face the fact, for, whether *he* cares to admit it or not, it is a fact that the disinherited masses are now seeing through the colossal fraud of "Land Owning," and if Land Lords do not go quietly, they will assuredly be assisted to vacate the position they now hold. Not for long will an awakened people, smarting under a keen sense of injustice, tolerate their claim to a greater right to life than any other.

Against his present view of the Enclosure Acts we set the opinion of the Central Landowners' Association (of which he is an executive member), as set forth by an apologist in a two-column article published in the *London Times* on December 16th, 1924. Concluding his observations, he wrote: "It may be admitted that the proceedings of the Enclosure Acts were high-handed . . . that a Parliament composed of landowners may not always have been disinterested; that there was room for favouritism; that mistakes and injustices were done." Let him make no mistake about it, the restitution of our stolen

land—all of it—and without compensation, is the demand he is confronted with to-day, and it will take very different reasoning than he seems capable of offering to explain away the fraud. Nor must he think to shelter behind his other remark. "What matters is that land has been freely bought and sold for centuries," he says, "and that private ownership has been recognised and regulated by many Acts of Parliament and by countless legal decisions." What of that? Not one of those Acts on which he would rely was ever submitted to, or approved by the community. He should know this, and should also know that, this being so, the Acts, with all the "legal decisions" founded upon them, are of no value whatever. The people have the right to repudiate all such Acts, and to refuse to be bound in any way by them. He knows that in English law no buyer can acquire a better title than the seller has to give! So much for any reliance upon that defence!

"Another important fact," he asserts, "is that the value of agricultural land has been created by the past expenditure of successive owners upon such things as drainage, roads, bridges, fences and buildings." With great respect, the value of any land is created by the presence of the people, their need for land, their expenditure upon public services, which usually includes "roads and bridges," for these are *not* provided by Land Lords. Mere "ownership" adds nothing to the value of any land. We are not concerned with any improvements in or upon the land, these are rightful property of the person whose labour produced them, but the land is not the result of any man's effort, therefore it cannot belong to any man against his fellows.

He seems to prove too much when he says "the full market value of agricultural property is expended upon its maintenance and improvement every thirty years. This heavy expenditure," he adds, "is a serious burden upon owners of land, but it provides a strong argument for private ownership." If it is really so bad as all that, we wonder at all the fuss. Why not get out while Lloyd George and his fellow-Socialists of the Labour Party are bidding against each other to offer the most generous terms?

With his conclusions re the proposals of the two political parties to which he, as a Conservative, believes he is opposed, we are in general agreement. So do we agree most heartily with two observations which follow: "British ideas of fair play are opposed to confiscation of any kind," and "the British people would never tolerate such robbery." That's just our case!

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What you do not see, Sir George, is that *you* are a confiscator now. We state the fact, while freely absolving you of wrongful intent. You have just accepted the position into which the accident of birth has placed you. That confiscation which you practice against the rest of your fellows, by holding as yours those acres that God (or Nature) gave for the use of us all, is an outrage upon the British sense of fair play to which you, and we, appeal. It is the robbery that this people will not tolerate once enough of them see that it is robbery. It is the special purpose of the C.L.P. to open their eyes to the facts, and we are doing so very rapidly. They will do the rest. We do not advocate violence; nor are we preaching revenge for past wrongs. But we are *preaching immediate restitution without any payment to you of compensation* for the loss of your present power to charge some of us rent for the use of our property. We demand that you shall pay us the full annual rent for your (our) land—and just the land; and we propose that our rent shall be the national revenue from which the cost of all necessary public services shall be defrayed; all present rates and taxes being abolished. Revolutionary, Sir George, yes! but we challenge you, when you have read the copy of this issue of THE COMMONWEAL that you will receive in due course, to meet us anywhere and anywhen upon the one simple issue—that of the Justice of our demand. Our columns are at your service or, should you prefer, we would meet you in public debate. Our one object being to know the Truth. What about it?

J. W. G. P.

## C.L.P. ACTIVITIES.

Our readers will be interested to learn that 187 addresses have been delivered by C.L.P. speakers since January 1st.

The area covered by meetings includes Dorsetshire, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Kent, Liverpool, London, Middlesex, Norfolk, Staffordshire, Surrey, and Wiltshire.

Our speakers were D. Baxter, T. Watson Collin, Captain H. H. Druitt, Mrs. Druitt, T. C. Francis, E. G. Gaff, J. E. Grant, A. H. Jones, H. Knowles, C. Leahey, H. J. Lockwood, J. W. Marsh, Mrs. Marsh, W. C. Owen, J. W. Graham Peace, Dr. R. E. Pearson, Dr. S. V. Pearson, C. L. Radges, T. Raymond, S. R. Sargeant, W. A. Tarling, and A. J. Wright.

Special distributions of THE COMMONWEAL were made at Liberal, Labour, and other Conferences, etc., in various centres, and these efforts have led to an increased sale for the paper.

### Open-Air Fixtures.

Readers are asked to note the following definite fixtures for a regular weekly meeting in each place named.

Sunday.—Finsbury Park, 11.30 a.m.; Finsbury Park, 6 p.m.

Wednesday.—Tower Hill, 12.30 p.m.

Friday.—Hyde Park (Marble Arch), 7 p.m.

Saturday.—Wood Green (opposite Public Library), 7.30 p.m.

Arrangements are in hand for the rest of the week and due announcement will be made here as these are completed.

In this connection, our readers will be interested to learn that the Executive have appointed Mr. Edward G. Gaff, as Assistant Secretary. Besides helping with the growing work of the office, Mr. Gaff will have charge of the Open-Air Meetings, and he particularly invites all sympathisers to rally round and help by their presence and, of course, in any other way they may feel able to do, to make these meetings a great success.

Many more speakers are wanted, and any who have inclinations for that form of service will find the Open-Air a splendid training ground.

Let no man think he is without influence: there is a place and a work for every one in the great Cause the C.L.P. seek to serve.

### Sparing the Rod.

"Nowadays children are getting nothing but talk, but there is nothing like the cane," said Mr. Shaw, presiding magistrate at Walsall; "the only boys who are beaten nowadays are noblemen's sons at schools like Eton and Harrow, and it does them good, just as it did me good when a boy." Because we are not beating them as of old, this magistrate says we are "producing people who are content to live idle lives at the public expense." But surely it is the "noblemen's sons" who do this, in spite of the cane!

### The Land or the Rent?

From a Finsbury Park colleague comes this note. "In the Park on Sunday, the Editor of THE COMMONWEAL made an exceedingly illuminating statement, opening up the very heart of the C.L.P. proposal: a constructive Revolution based on Reason as a preventive of the impending Revolution resulting from the recent world-madness of rule-by-murder leading to chaos. This most vital statement was from Lenin; made direct to Mr. Graham Peace's informant. 'Our mistake was,' said Lenin (would to God the world had statesmen ready to admit mistakes!) 'Our mistake was in taking the land instead of the rent of the land.' Making the present holders pay the rent to the whole community, to whom it belongs, will automatically work to compel those holders to use the land. Men who are not worshippers of Mammon must surely agree to this obvious step in the direction of Eternal Justice."—T. Raymond.

It is, for instance, of no avail that thou worshippest Truth, if thou seest thy brother men ruled by Error, and dost not endeavour, so far as lies in thy power, to overcome that error.—Mazzini.