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## The Week in Review.

### NOTICE.

The Editor will be pleased to receive for consideration Short Stories and Descriptive Articles illustrated with photos, or suggestions from contributors.

Bright terse contributions are wanted dealing with Dominion life and questions.

Unless stamps are sent, the Editor cannot guarantee the return of unsuitable MSS.

### The Land Question.

HERE is no question that the statement of Government's Land Policy forms the most interesting section of the Budget speech, and no doubt the debate will concentrate chiefly round this point. For the new proposals involve a great deal that will satisfy neither party in the House or country and much that, in our opinion, is open to serious criticism. As our readers will have realised by this time, Government has made a valuable concession to the freeholders by granting the right of purchase under entirely new conditions, and in cases in which the right to obtain the freehold has hitherto been resolutely refused. Lease-in-perpetuity tenants are to have the right to purchase their land at the original valuation, subject to five contributions to the Crown on account of the “unearned increment.” If the tenant and his heirs pay one-tenth of the increase on the unimproved value of his land every 33 years for 105 years, the land becomes their freehold property. Tenants under the renewable lease, now subject to recurring valuation every 60 years, may purchase at the original valuation subject to a charge to the State of one-fifth of the “unearned in-

crement” every 33 years. And finally, tenants of lands acquired under the Lands for Settlement Act, and hitherto held solely as leasehold, may purchase the freehold at the original valuation, but subject to double the contribution demanded in the case of ordinary Crown lands—that is to say, on condition that every 33 years the State is paid two-fifths of the increase in unimproved values since last periodical valuation.

### Highly Controversial Subject.

We admit that the question of the best form of land tenure is even among economic experts a highly controversial one; and it is particularly so under our complex land system here. But there are certain general principles on which the Liberal land policy has been based here for the past fifteen years which seem to us unmistakable. The hypothesis that the increased value added to land by the progress of the community and the natural development of the country should not be monopolised by the land holder, is at the back of the whole of the Liberal land policy; and this view we have consistently upheld. We have always admitted that the primary object of the land policy in a young country must be to promote settlement, and therefore we have argued that to induce settlers to go out into the back blocks and clear away the bush, the freehold should be offered as a special concession. But as regards highly-improved land, such as is always resumed under the Lands for Settlement Act, there is no need for such an inducement to encourage the demand. Such land, we have always contended, should in the interests of the country be retained permanently by the State, and occupied only on leasehold tenure. It seems to us a mistake in principle to allow even a fraction of the “unearned increment”

to fall into private hands in such cases; and the changes proposed by the Premier serve to emphasise the importance of the unearned increment to the country, while handing a portion of it to the individual owner. As regards the suggestion to grant right of purchase at the original value, we consider that serious exception can be taken to this on the same ground that the subsequent increase in value has been chiefly due not to the landowner but to the progress of the whole country. But quite apart from this, we consider that whatever arguments can be used to justify the concession of the freehold as a means of encouraging settlement, they fail entirely to apply to the case of Lands for Settlement Act lands. The precise effect of the Government proposals requires further consideration and elucidation, but so far as they have been disclosed they appear, in some respects, to conflict with the principles which have hitherto governed the land policy of the Liberal party.

### The Port of Foxton.

For a long time the aim and ambition of the Manawatu was to have a Harbour Board to control the port of Foxton. The summit of that ambition was attained by the passage of an Act for the purpose last year, and soon after the beginning of the present year the Foxton Harbour Board was duly constituted. But, alas, trouble has dogged the footsteps of this infant board, and the whole question was ventilated some days ago, when the Hon. J. A. Millar visited Foxton and received a deputation bursting with grievances. It is the old story—no funds. It appears that the total revenue of the Board amounts to about £400 a year, and as the current expenses of the Board absorbs that amount there is nothing left to carry out harbour works. The Board, unlike those formed some twenty or thirty years ago, has no endowments, and apparently its fond anticipation of receiving a subsidy of some £700 from the Government proved altogether too sanguine. Moreover, it seems that the Board also indulged the vain hope that it would derive revenue from the wharfage dues. As, however, the wharves were constructed and have been maintained by the Railway Department, naturally that Department claims, and, in fact, collects, the dues. And so it is that the Foxton Harbour Board has no funds, and might as well not exist at all for all the good it can do. This sorry condition of things was volubly explained to the Minister by various members of the deputation. Mr. Millar's reply was, to put it mildly, exceedingly candid. He told the deputation that the settlers in the district knew quite well what the position would be when they agitated for the establishment of the Board. They knew what revenue could be expected, and what the expenditure would have to be. They knew that if they wanted to carry out improvements that were absolutely necessary there would have to be a rating clause in the bill, but this they had declined to have. It was just as well for him to be per-

fectly candid, and tell them that if they wanted the Government to help them they would have to help themselves. There would have to be a rating clause, for they need not expect the Government to do everything. As for the wharfage dues, the Government could not accept the view taken by the Board, because if they did they would have to do the same at Port Chalmers. They could not deplete the railway revenue in that way. Foxton was only an instance of what was going on all over the country. As for endowments, in the early days lots of land was available, and it was a good thing to give some of it to the local authorities. But if they looked at the more recently formed harbour boards they would find that rating clauses had been included in every case. In fine, the Minister pointed out the simple solution of Foxton's trouble. That district, like so many others, will have to resign itself to being rated for its privileges.

### Advance, Gisborne!

Every city and town has its own particular municipal problems. At the present time Gisborne, the chief town and port of one of the most rich and fertile districts in New Zealand, miscalled Poverty Bay, is peculiarly engaged in solving the details of an all-round development scheme which will involve considerable expenditure. Both the Gisborne Borough Council and the Gisborne Harbour Board have obtained comprehensive reports upon contemplated improvements from Mr. F. W. Marchant, M.I.C.E., of Timaru, and to judge from these, published in a recent issue of the “Poverty Bay Herald” it is apparent that Gisborne will shortly be a very up-to-date town indeed. The report sent to the Council deals with the metalling and formation of streets, the farring of street surfaces, electric lighting, sewerage, tramways, and a new reservoir. The report sent to the Harbour Board deals with the question of extending the breakwater. In summarising the report on the street work, Mr. Marchant gives some good advice to small municipalities. “In carrying out work of the character considered,” he says, “the organisation of the plant is of the first importance. Gisborne has practically speaking, a clean slate in this respect, and I advise that nothing but the best and most complete arrangement should be made. Generally speaking, the smaller municipalities get through their work with a small capital expenditure on plant and arrangements, but expend a considerable total amount in small sums at different times, and see very little return for it comparatively.” On the question of electric light, the Engineer notes that it is proposed to use suction gas engines. If that is done, he says, the greatest care must be taken to prevent “flicker,” which is ruinous to eyesight. Personally, he prefers a steam engine as a prime mover for electric generators. The light is absolutely steady; there is always a reserve of power for sudden demands,