

so beneficially in Germany that we read of rural communities which not only defray all the expenses of local government out of the revenues from the communal lands, but actually distribute wood, turf, and even money to householders as their share of the proceeds of the communal estate.\*

Whereas in this country so little intelligent or active interest is taken in local government that many men who have not the excuse of being "large ratepayers" actually propose that the expense of rehousing the working class shall be put upon imperial taxation. A "large ratepayer" must have started this proposal; for rates are mostly paid by the well-to-do, while taxes are mostly paid by the working class.

Some thirty years ago municipal housing schemes were started here and there up and down the country, and all of them have done well. Despite the low rents which have ruled, these properties have paid interest and sinking-fund charges, have been well let, are in demand by tenants, and if in some cases a slight burden has been put upon the rates, we can't expect to get houses for nothing. The stone-and-lime is there as an asset, and I have investigated cases where an extra sixpence put on the weekly rents would still have left them quite moderate, and would have obviated the trifling deficit.

If we want the land we must pay for it. If we want houses we must pay for them. There is no way of getting anything for nothing. We may feed the dog with his own tail by creating land scrip, just as it is proposed to get rid of the railway shareholders by creating railway bonds, and redeeming them out of the profits gradually.

And we must not only pay but work for the civic re-awakening in local government. At present, with a Liberal Administration attempting so much, the tendency is to look to Parliament to do everything that is required in the sphere of public affairs. The return of a Labour Party in 1906 helped to confirm this impression that all social reconstruction was an affair of Parliamentary politics. The result is that there is less Collectivist initiative among the municipalities now than there was in the eighties and nineties, when nobody was afraid of Socialism, and things that seemed good were done on the merits whether they were Collectivist or not. Since 1890 two Housing Acts have been passed, and the facilities for municipal house-building are greater than ever they were and the house famine is more acute than ever it was. Yet there is more disinclination to embark on housing

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\* See Appendix.