

The American Committee

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"THE GREAT WORK OF THE PRESENT"

*The great work of the present for every man and every organization of men who would improve social conditions, is the work of education,— the propagation of ideas. * * **

—HENRY GEORGE

IS BRITAIN ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM?

Both the Land Question and the Tax Question are Soon to be Chief Issues in the Nation's Politics

AN unprecedented campaign of education in economics is on in Great Britain. That the Land Question in its fundamental aspects, as taught by Henry George (and the related taxation question, as well) are soon to be forced to the very center of public discussion in a fierce election contest for the control of Parliament seems now certain.

It is a situation offering the greatest opportunity for that "*propagation of ideas*" which Henry George declared to be the great work in which socially-minded men or organizations seeking the improvement of social conditions should engage. Millions of intelligent people will soon be participants or listeners in a great debate upon the root causes of UNEMPLOYMENT, TRADE DEPRESSION, and of POVERTY—and upon the remedies proposed for the intolerable conditions that now threaten the disintegration of a great nation.

Upon the Henry George followers of Great Britain, under the direction of their UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES, great and unprecedented labors, responsibilities and opportunities are now devolving. Avoiding organized affiliation with particular political parties, the Georgists, under the lead of John Paul and his associates, have created and are constantly extending the public opinion that

has sustained the proposals of the radical fundamental democrats in both the Labor and the Liberal Parties. Proof of the efficiency of this work is evidenced not only in the recent Parliamentary debates, but in the steadily increasing sales of the books of Henry George, through *Land and Liberty*, and the United Committee.

But the UNITED COMMITTEE is poor. The business depression has vitally affected its income. It has growing numbers of devoted adherents throughout the country—men willing to work and suffer and sacrifice for their faith in Social Regeneration through economic justice. But it has the support of no rich men. The Rich and the Powerful and the Privileged are lining up on the other side. The needs of the United Committee for its educational work, quite dissociated from party politics, are now greater than at any time within 25 years.

That is why an American Committee, named above, representing followers of Henry George in the United States and Canada who know the needs and the educational opportunities presented by the British situation are issuing this as an appeal for funds to be sent to the aid of the United Committee and "*Land and Liberty*", in their work of extending the spread of the teachings of Henry George among the British people at this critical time.

A GREAT EDUCATIONAL EVENT

Incidents of the Passing Through Parliament of the Finance Bill that is Bringing the Whole Social Question into Politics as Never Before

The Finance Bill, passed by a vote of 274 in the affirmative and 222 in the negative through the British Parliament during July, after a bitter opposition by the Conservative Party, is undoubtedly opening up a new era in the political life of Great Britain. In order to provide the basis for the taxation of land values for national purposes, and the future rating of land values by municipalities, the Bill, which is now a law, provides for the valuation of every separately owned parcel of land in Great Britain, with certain exceptions which need not here be enumerated. These exceptions, which have been frankly criticized by many British Georgists, do not affect the main purpose of the law, which is to bring land values into the scope of national, as well as local taxation. The Bill, incidentally, levies an opening tax of one penny in the pound for national purposes, effective on the completion of the valuation. The speeches in and out of Parliament, and the editorial pronouncements for and against the measure, have frankly recognized the radical implications of Chancellor Snowden's proposals, which are described as "*the entering wedge for the adoption of Henry George's economic system in Great Britain.*" Some extracts of the Parliamentary debates are here given.

MR. SNOWDEN SUMS UP

He Accepts Henry Georgism and Asserts the Rights of the People

Chancellor Philip Snowden, winding up the great debate said:

"The land clauses in this Bill have emerged in a somewhat different form. I have never expected that I should be able to carry them without making some concession, but I was determined to maintain intact and unimpaired the essential principles of the Bill—and the Bill, as it will pass, does maintain those principles. It maintains the principle which was defined by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George), of a tax upon all site values, and it maintains wholly intact the principle and practice of a valuation for arriving at the real value of all the sites which will be subject to taxation, excluding, of course, those which are exempted under the Bill. A first Measure dealing with a great and complicated subject like this is bound to show imperfections.

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"I hope more courageous Parliaments will in the future deal with this problem more drastically than we have done. The land monopoly is the greatest burden on industry. It imposes a tax of hundreds of millions a year upon the productive enterprise of the country, and, instead of this tax being an additional burden upon industry, it is designed for and will have the effect of lightening the burden upon industry.

"The principle underlying this Bill is to assert the right of the community to the ownership of the land. I have never made any question about that, nor that that right should be expressed in the form of a rent paid by the occupier or rather the owner of the land to the community. As I said just now, this is only the first step in the reform of our land system. The effect of that system has been to place a burden on industry of hundreds of millions a year. It has crowded our people into pestilential slums, and it has driven hundreds of thousands of people from the land into the towns to compete with the town workers, with the result that wages have been depressed and unemployment has been increased.

"The party for whom I speak have always put the question of land reform in the forefront of their programme. Although I may not live to see the step that we have taken this afternoon advance still further, at any rate I submit this Bill to the House of Commons with the satisfaction that I believe that we have begun a far-reaching reform which some day will liberate the land for the people and abolish once and for all the tyranny under which the people in this country have suffered."

GLIMPSSES OF THE GREAT DEBATE

Chancellor Snowden: The scandal of the private appropriation of land values created by the enterprise and industry of the people and by the expenditure of public money, has been tolerated far too long. In asserting the right of the community to a share in what has been created by the community, we are taking a step which will be approved not only by the Labor and the Liberal Parties, which have long advocated this reform, but also by a large number of Conservatives, whose sense of justice is outraged by glaring examples of the exploitation of the public by private land monopolists. The present system stands in the way of social and economic progress, inflicts crushing burdens on industry and hinders municipal development. When we have carried this measure, as I am sure we shall, and as we are determined to do, we shall look back upon the Budget of this year as a landmark on the road of social and economic progress, and as one further stage towards the emancipation of the people from the tyranny and the injustice of private land monopoly.

Colonel Wedgwood (Labor): I am indeed glad to have this opportunity of congratulating the Chancellor of the Exchequer for doing something which in the long run must be of definite and permanent advantage to employment in this country. It is not the actual incidence of the tax or the amount of the tax, but the fact that for the first time there is a chance of levying an annual impost on the value of land which is not being put to the best use at the present time. That annual tax will act as a perpetual incentive to the owners of such land to allow people to use that land on cheaper terms than they can obtain at present.

Sir Herbert Samuel (Liberal): We rejoice that the right hon. Gentleman is proposing to carry into effect a reform which has been advocated by us for so many years—the taxation

of land values. As my right hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Sir D. Maclean) said yesterday, we on these benches will support these proposals, because in regard to the taxation of land values they will take a necessary first step toward the adoption of a reform for which we have very long contended, and which is generations overdue.

Mr. Milner Gray (Liberal): I would like to see the land taxes speeded up. That may not be possible, but at any rate we can promise him and his colleagues that in pressing through that legislation and this Budget, which we are glad is a Free Trade Budget, he will have the full support of members of this party.

“A GREAT LANDMARK”

But this is not the moment for fault-finding. The proposals constitute the greatest advance in the history of the movement towards a radical change to the basis of Land Value Taxation. Free traders who are alive to the situation will recognize what this development means as a practical contribution towards real Free Trade. It is the answer to the Tariff Reformer. Here is the way towards the freedom to produce that must of necessity accompany the freedom to exchange. The just source of revenue—the public value of land—is now to be drawn upon, preventing the imposition of injurious and inequitable taxes that hamper production and restrict trade. The Finance Bill is to be heartily welcomed. In this measure, making the beginning he has made, Mr. Snowden deserves the gratitude of his country. This 1931 Budget is, in the Chancellor's own words: “A landmark on the road to social and economic progress, and a further step towards the emancipation of the people from the tyranny and injustice of private land monopoly.”—LAND AND LIBERTY.

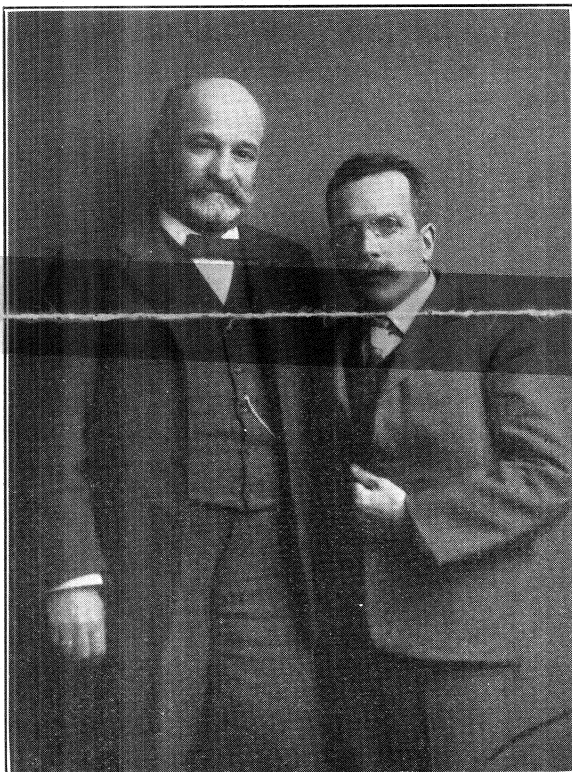
CHEERS, AND THE LAND SONG

While the Third Reading Vote on the Finance Bill was being taken the Government Lobby in the Houses of Parliament resounded with the chorus of the Land Song: “The Land, the Land, 'twas God that gave the Land.” When the result was announced it was hailed with loud cheers, and the demonstration was renewed when Mr. Snowden left the Chamber.

“Land and Liberty”



THE FIGHTING CHANCELLOR



JOSEPH FELS :: JOHN PAUL

"FREEDOM'S BATTLE ONCE BEGUN"

(Extract From a Recent Private Letter to a Friend.)

. . . I have the confident belief that we have by this Finance Act begun a great work of social justice This measure is only a beginning, and, like all beginnings in a great effort, is imperfect and incomplete, but it is a logical and consistent scheme, and we can build on the foundations we have laid the complete structure It now remains for us all to work with renewed energy to educate public opinion still further on this fundamental reform.

"Freedom's battle once begun . . .

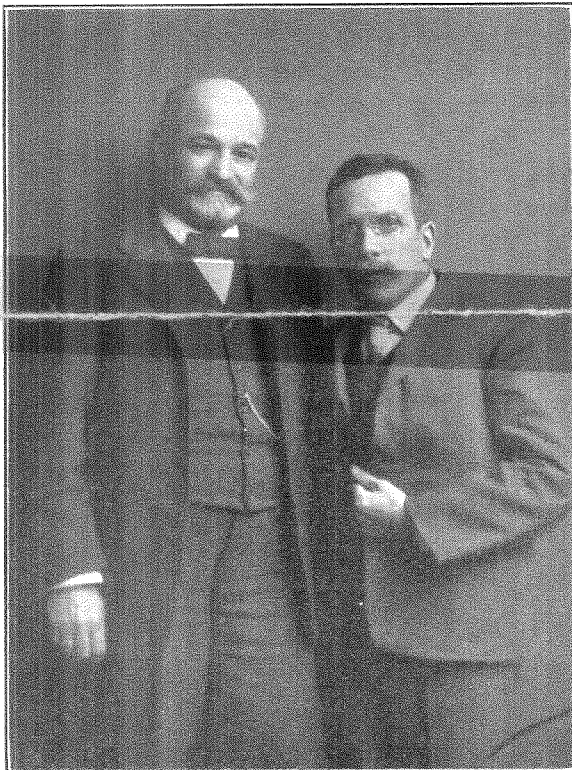
Though baffled oft is ever won."

(Signed) PHILIP SNOWDEN

(American and Scotsman—chief partners long ago in organizing the British campaign for economic education. Fels, noble spirit, has gone. If he were only here! Paul still fights.)



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