

Who's Who in Georgism



Few present day adherents to the philosophy of Henry George can boast as long and active an association with the founder's principles as Francis Neilson. As actor and playwright, music critic and stage director, as Member of Parliament, journalist, editor or writer of books, Mr. Neilson, who was born in Birkenhead, England, in 1867, has ever been active in promoting the teachings of George.

At eighteen, Neilson came to America. Working in Washington Market in New York, at various jobs on the wharves and as store clerk, writing articles, "singing" on the New York stages, his contacts were ever-widening. During these

early years he studied assiduously and attended labor meetings in New York and Boston. At one of these meetings in Union Square in 1888 or 1889, the speaker dealt with "Progress and Poverty." Neilson secured a copy. He says: "It was this book that gave me the zeal to go after knowledge. . . . No matter where I went, for years, I studied it conscientiously. Here was the reply to Marx; here was the reply to the protectionists."

Before the election of 1906 in England, to which he had returned in 1897, Neilson was coupling the taxation of land values with free trade in all his speeches. In the Budget of 1909, the British Government asked for a valuation and levied sundry taxes upon the value of the land. The important part that Neilson played in drawing up the Land Values Manifesto and in the innumerable debates now reads like an exciting bit of history.

In 1912 Neilson, again in the United States, gave thirty-two addresses in twenty-nine days and travelled over ten thousand miles. On returning to England, he was made President of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values.

In 1914 Mr. Neilson wrote his sensational exposé, "How Diplomats Make War," and returned to America the following year, where it was published. He became an American citizen in 1921, editor of the "Freeman" (New York) and "Unity" (Chicago). Of recent years he has published "Duty to Civilization," "The Old Freedom," "The Eleventh Commandment," "Control from the Top," "Sociocratic Escapades" and "Man at the Crossroads."