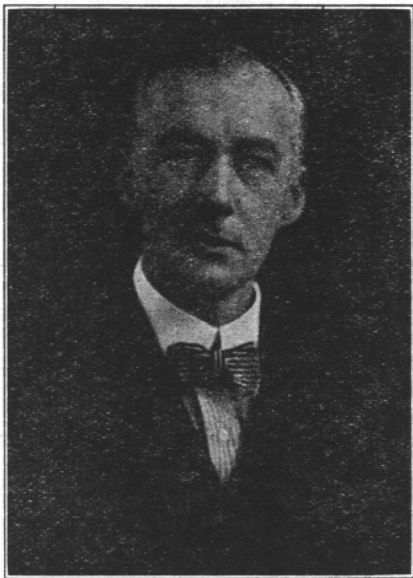


H. D. ROOME



In the tragic death of Mr H. D. Roome, the well-known Treasury Counsel, the United Committee has lost a staunch supporter and one of its most promising advocates. Motoring with Mrs Roome for a brief holiday, Friday, 9th June, both occupants of the car were thrown into the roadway as the result of a burst tyre. On Saturday morning an operation was performed on Mr Roome, but he grew weaker and died on Monday evening. Mrs Roome was seriously injured but there is good news of her recovery.

Mr H. D. Roome had been a senior prosecuting counsel for the Crown at the Central Criminal Court since 1928—he had been a junior counsel since 1920—and had recently figured in many important cases. He was born in 1882 and educated at Winchester College and Merton College, Oxford. He was called to the Bar (Middle Temple) in 1907, and was the author of a work on criminal offences in bankruptcy.

It is freely admitted by his legal friends that Mr Roome was a man of high standing at the Bar and they looked with interest and approval on his advance in recent years. The Attorney-General, Sir Wm Jowitt, said "he had the greatest regard for Mr Roome personally and for his judgment in all legal matters." Justice Humphreys said: "He was a very able and charming man, a very good lawyer, and very popular with the Bar." At the June session of the Central Criminal Court (*Times*, 25th June) the Recorder said:—

Since the Court last met there was a vacant place caused by one of those tragedies which appeared to human understanding so unnecessary. Snatching a well-earned few days' vacation, there died, in most distressing circumstances, their dear friend Henry Roome. He was a distinguished Oxford scholar. He was almost at the zenith of his forensic career. He had been a Treasury counsel since 1920. He was a painstaking editor of *Archbold*. As they all knew, he was an indefatigable worker. He was a model to all prosecuting counsel, and they had lost a dear friend and the profit of a fine example.

"Mr Eustace Fulton, on behalf of the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions, associated himself in the Recorder's expressions of regret at the death of Mr Roome."

These fine tributes to the character and the ability of Mr Roome go to show the manner of man he was and the place he held in his profession. I knew him well and had learned to regard him as one of the coming outstanding men in the movement for the Taxation of Land Values and real Free Trade. But in this connection he can best speak for himself. Addressing the Henry George Club at 11, Tothill Street, London, February, 1926, Mr Roome said:—

"The keynote of an enlightened land policy is emancipation, liberation, and relief. Merely to speak of taxation or rating of land values suggests to the uninitiated a new form of tax or, what is even worse, a new rate, and arouses no interest at all. It is important, therefore, to emphasize that the rating of land values, far from imposing a new rate, would afford relief to many existing ratepayers by bringing into contribution land which at present is unrated or inadequately rated, and thus spreading the amount that has to be raised by rates over a wider circle of ratepayers. Similarly, with regard to taxation of land values the object is to shift the centre of taxable gravity from earnings, food, and shelter to values which are not created by private agency.

"Bringing all land into use is an essential part of the policy of Free Trade. Freedom of exchange is only one-half of Free Trade. The other half is freedom of production. Both are vital. Tariff tolls on exchange are the exact counterpart of monopoly tolls on production. Both make for scarcity and dearth. In both cases the whole tax falls on the community, while only a portion of it goes to revenue.

"Unemployed land connotes unemployed men and perpetuates the worst of all lock-outs—the lock-out of productive labour from natural resources. Land monopoly lies at the root of economic evil by blighting the prospects of employment both in the primary and secondary industries, among miners and quarrymen, agricultural labourers, transport workers, builders and factory operatives.

"Just as the unemployed man outside the factory gate fixes the wage of those who are working inside, so the belt of accommodation land round the outskirts of municipal boroughs and urban districts fixes the rental value and selling price of land more advantageously situated. It is both just and expedient to levy taxes and rates upon the unimproved value of land, created by the presence, activity and expenditure of the community, and thereby to emancipate productive areas, to liberate labour from involuntary idleness, and to relieve enterprise from undeserved burdens and penalties."

This uncompromising statement can be taken as the well-thought-out belief of a brilliant student who was out for the truth on social problems, and who was not afraid to say what he thought. In his busy life at the Bar Mr Roome kept in touch with Tothill Street and this journal had no more constant subscriber. In a recent letter enclosing his donation for the year he wrote: "This is to *Land & Liberty*, in appreciation of the extraordinary high level at which its articles are maintained."

Mr Roome was a Liberal in politics and unsuccessfully contested Reading at the 1922 General Election. He had no doubts whatever of the ultimate acceptance of the land value policy. In the making of opinion to this end he will be missed, but his charm and fine spirit is still ours. His friendship has strengthened and enriched the campaign for economic justice. We extend to Mrs Roome sincerest sympathy in her irreparable loss.

J. P.