

"OUR POLICY."

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—Henry George.

THE PASSING OF JOSEPH FELS

"Beneath things he seeks the law; he would know how the globe was forged, and the stars were hung, and trace to their sources the springs of life." And then, as the man develops his nobler nature, there arises the desire higher yet—the passion of passions, the hope of hopes—the desire that he, even he, may somehow aid in making life better and brighter, in destroying want and sin, sorrow and shame. He masters and curbs the animal; he turns his back upon the feast and renounces the place of power; he leaves it to others to accumulate wealth, to gratify pleasant tastes, to bask themselves in the warm sunshine of the brief day. He works for those he never saw and never can see; for a fame, or it may be but for a scant justice, that can only come long after the clouds have rattled upon his coffin lid. He toils in the advance, where it is cold, and there is little cheer from men, and the stones are sharp and the brambles thick. Amid the scoffs of the present and the sneers that stab like knives, he builds for the future; he cuts the trail that progressive humanity may hereafter broaden into a high-road. Into higher, grander spheres desire mounts and beckons, and a star that rises in the east leads him on. Lo! the pulses of the man throb with the yearnings of the god—he would aid in the process of the suns!"—HENRY GEORGE.

Less than a year ago a correspondent wrote to Joseph Fels: "The toilers in this country owe you a debt of gratitude that they can never repay." The reply to this was characteristic of the man. He quoted the above passage from *PROGRESS AND POVERTY* as his inspiration. "Henry George," he wrote, "toiled in the advance where it was cold, where there was little cheer from men, where the stones were sharp and the brambles thick. He built for the future as few know how, he cut the trail that progressive humanity might broaden into a high-road. He did this with rare courage, with faith and hope and charity, amid the scoffs and the sneers that stabbed like knives. In land reform I but recognise the first step to emancipation from the sin and ignorance which keeps the race in subjection; I regard our practical policy as but an opening to a wider and fuller opportunity for all. I have come to see that all we can hope to do is to develop character, and that before we can make any effective attempt to do so the monopoly of the natural opportunities to all advancement must be overthrown, and that as a means to this end our policy is in the circumstances of our life the only policy available. For myself I feel I am in the vicinity of that high-road, and feel happy in the enjoyment of so much good fellowship which comes to one who tries as I have tried to advance our cause. I am basking in the sunshine of world-wide endeavour and in the knowledge that our triumph is assured, even in our day. This is my reward. I do what I may because I must. In this I seek the gratitude of no man, nor does anyone owe me even thanks for doing what I consider my duty."

The letter, we may be certain, closed with the usual suggestion, or appeal, to his friend to join in and share to the full the joy to be had in promoting the cause. Joseph Fels felt the passion of passions to make life better and brighter for his fellows if ever a man did. He could grasp the essentials of an economic argument or explanation when he liked, but it was always the humanity, the philosophy, the poetry of *PROGRESS AND POVERTY* and its literature which appealed to him. He felt sick at times of delay caused mainly he believed by the vacillation of political leaders in the matter of radical land reform. But he could step aside from such close views of the position, get fresh inspiration from his Bible and proceed with his emancipating mission. He sounded at every turn wherever he laboured, here, or on the Continent or among his own folk at home across the Atlantic, the depths of the channel of thought on land values taxation, and he knew that for every friend and supporter Henry George could count in his day, he, Joseph Fels, or any other active Single Taxer, could to-day number a thousand.

In his work here as a member and supporter of the United Committee, as a bold, uncompromising advocate for six short years, he carved out for himself a name and a place in the movement never to be forgotten while Single Taxers are banded together to promote their ideal. In all this striving, in all his judgments as to the course he steered, he had the loyal co-operation and support of his wife. "I owe everything to my wife," he would say, and his friends knew this was no empty compliment. Their home at all times was a centre and a meeting place for the discussion of social problems. It was there, away from the heat of controversy and of business affairs, that he and his wife were seen at their best. It is hard for those intimate friends who were ever welcome at 10, Cornwall Terrace, to realise that they shall never more take the hand of Joseph Fels and hear his genuine "Come away, brother, it is nice of you to come again," or some such words. At such times one could look into his very soul and feel strong and proud of his strength and his affection. To receive such a welcome was an inspiration in itself.

He was a big-hearted man, a brave, loyal crusader in the fight for human freedom, but only those who worked with him could know his real worth. He was rightly regarded as a leader in our world-wide movement. He gave his life to its service and he wisely used his means to open up the way for others to do likewise. There are, after all, only three main things one can do—talk, write, and provide the means for others to talk and write. He did all three, and to some purpose. If ever a man stood, body, soul, and spirit for the cause he loved to serve, it was Joseph Fels. If he had any ambition for a place in the movement, it was to be known and appreciated as a worker and not as a generous subscriber to its funds. "Never mind the financial support I give," he would say to the ubiquitous interviewer; "Put it down that I work fourteen hours a day in this cause." And he did. His efforts were by no means confined to Great Britain or to his native country, the United States. He reached out to co-workers in Germany, Denmark, Hungary, Sweden, France, Spain, China, and his donations were the means of awakening new thought and activities in Australia and New Zealand. His correspondence was voluminous. It came from all parts of the globe. Wherever anything was being done, wherever a single-

taxer could be found ready to do anything to promote the policy, or one who could suggest any action to be taken, he seemed somehow to get into communication with him.

If he did not lay the foundation of an international movement for industrial emancipation on the lines of land values taxation and the untaxing of the work of man's hands, he opened up the ground for it. Because of his efforts the organised forces making for this ideal in so many different countries are no longer isolated, but in close touch one with the other, a striking testimony to the wisdom, the statesmanship, and the tireless energy of Joseph Fels. He was a man with a faith that knew no geographical boundaries, nor frontier lines. He would set out cheerfully to some conference to be held on some phase of the social problem, in some foreign land, with the deliberate intention of finding someone who would do something to voice his views, as readily as he would go to speak at a meeting at his own door.

Joseph Fels lived and had his being in this missionary atmosphere. He was no politician, and rejoiced in the fact. When some Whig or Tory mud-slinger or some party newspaper held him up to the public gaze as an "American politician with designs on our pure and incorruptible British politics," he would smile, and most likely proceed to invite his "enemy" to come for a cup of tea and a talk with Mrs. Fels and himself. Politics were not in his line. He cared as much and bothered his head as much about British politics as he did about French, German, Swedish, or Chinese politics. He was a man with a mission. He was out to make known the gospel set forth by Henry George in *PROGRESS AND POVERTY*, and if this gospel had worked its way into politics it was for the politicians to look, to reflect. In a sense he regarded the politicians as a bad lot, as an unreliable quantity. Wherever he went he advised his audiences to beware of them. All he asked from the people he met was that they should read *PROGRESS AND POVERTY* and the other literature of the movement, to keep on distributing the literature, and keep talking about the subject, and some day they would realise that this was the right thing to do. He did not object to propaganda being carried out in political circles, as such, but he absolutely refused to accept or recognise any dividing line in party politics. His gospel was for the Gentile as well as for the Jew, and nothing pleased him better than to get into personal touch with some Tory or Socialist with sympathetic leanings towards the taxation of land values. As he said in his "Letter to an Enterprising Business Man":—

"This (the taxation of land values) is no party question except in the sense that, like all questions requiring legislative enactment, it must be taken up and put through Parliament by some political party. This we must recognise cannot be avoided. It is in the nature of things. . . . But I am a business man with no interest whatever in the fortunes of one political party or another. To me it does not matter which party gives effect to this policy. I want the policy; the circumstances can take care of themselves. This question must appeal to business men, for, whatever their politics are, they must remain keenly interested in good trade. It is obvious that the existing system of rating is a hindrance to trade and a menace to all industrial aspiration. The rate-collector dogs the footsteps of the man who would do things for his own benefit and for the benefit of the community. Is it not about time the rate-collector was directed to look for his revenue in the value of the land which is created by the community as a whole?"

This was his practical policy, the policy of the Land Values group in the House of Commons, and of the United Committee, and Joseph Fels did one man's work to advance it in the public mind these past half-a-dozen years.

Whatever company he found himself in, whether at a conference convened specially to consider the practical policy, or at any kind of public demonstration, he fearlessly proclaimed himself as an unfettered disciple of Henry George. He knew that a beginning must be made in the direction of the practical policy advocated by the land values movement, but it was the ideal of complete industrial emancipation that inspired him. He looked on kindred democratic movements with much sympathy, but with a profound conviction that the best way he could help them was to promote the agitation to free the land from the bondage of monopoly. This was his religion, and he lived up to it. In his death the Radical movement the world over for the restoration of the land to the people has lost its greatest advocate.

He was rightly regarded as a great advocate and a great fighter, but in all his strivings he bore no malice. He was a simple minded, lovable character, one whom it was a privilege to know and have as a friend. Like most men who occupied the position he held, he was frequently misunderstood, but he accepted this with much philosophy, and never neglected an opportunity to have a frank talk with an opponent. He loved his fellow-men in whatever walk of life he found them. He gave much from his store of worldly goods to spread the light on his cure for social problems, and along with his devoted wife he generously helped many other causes as well. He gave himself, he gave his life, ungrudgingly to the cause of human progress.

We mourn the loss of a thorough-going uncompromising supporter, a tireless worker, and a warm personal friend. Since the death of Henry George some sixteen years ago the movement has not suffered as it has in the death of Joseph Fels. But we can rejoice that we had him with us in such brilliant and successful endeavour, and be grateful for what he did accomplish. His coming into the movement here in Great Britain marked a new era in our activities. It was the signal for strenuous effort by voice and pen, and the opposing forces of every kind had to reckon with a volume of sentiment for land values taxation for which they were ill-prepared, and when he passed beyond our ken our more far-seeing opponents had to admit that he was the direct means of advancing our ideas quite beyond their power to gauge or control. What Joseph Fels achieved for the cause he lived and died for, constitutes a striking and an all-enduring tribute to his memory.

JOHN PAUL.

MEMORIAL MEETINGS

In a large number of American cities Joseph Fels Memorial Meetings were held, of which we are unable to give any report in this issue of *LAND VALUES*. Mr. Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., went over to represent the British movement and spoke at meetings in Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, Cleveland, Chicago, and New York, and also at a meeting in Toronto.