

GREAT BRITAIN

We talk of the movement for the taxation of land values and essay to gauge its status and progress in this or that country, but we set out realizing that what constitutes a movement is not merely a collection of the men and women actively engaged as its propagandists, but rather the general and widely-distributed sympathy with or belief in the principles it stands for. Its growth and its success must be judged by its practical achievements in public affairs and by the evidence of popular support, though of course these are gained by the efforts of its leagues and adherents. We desire not so much a history of what the teachers have taught as of what the listeners have learned. We propose therefore to deal more particularly with the results of the propaganda in Britain and with its influence upon parliamentary and municipal politics, and to follow that with a brief review of the way in which the propaganda itself has been extended.

It is not necessary to explain to the readers of the Single Tax Year Book what objects British Single Taxers have in view. They are the common objects of Single Taxers the world over, but the movement in different countries starts from very different economic and social conditions. In Britain taxation reform goes forward from the basis of free trade in exchange, an advantage (gravely menaced, no doubt, by the present reaction) which most other countries do not possess. On the other hand, the United States and most British colonies can go forward to the taxation of land values alone from a system of property taxation which already places land value on the assessment for both local and State purposes. They have greater resistance to overcome in the removal of tariffs but are much better situated in forcing the pace for transferring taxes from improvements to land values. In Britain, certain land since 1910 is subject to the "undeveloped land duty" of $\frac{1}{2}$ d in the £ of selling value, but that tax is made almost a dead letter by numerous restrictions and exemptions.

Apart from that particular and exceptional levy, the universal practice is to value land and the improvements upon it according to the annual rent a tenant would give for them in their existing condition. Vacant land and empty properties escape all contribution and the "speculator" is free of all public burdens. A condition of things exists in Britain which gives land monopoly greater power for evil than it can exert in probably any other part of the world, and the land reformer has a correspondingly harder uphill fight.

Two other points should be mentioned by way of introduction. In Britain we use the word "rate" in respect of local taxation and the word "tax" in respect of national taxation. The municipality imposes "rates," and the government imposes "taxes;" the distinction is made between the "rating of land values" and the "taxation of land values" according as the reform is discussed from the local or from the national point of view. Secondly, the term "Single Tax" has, it seems, a more specific meaning among British reformers than on the American continent. In the United States and Canada the term is not only applied to the ultimate objects of Single Taxers but is often used in the political sense to describe the partial or even purely local adoption of the principle, cities such as Vancouver and Edmonton, for instance, having been referred to as "Single Tax communities." This difference in the use of terms may explain why Single Taxers in America are sometimes surprised at the expressed hostility to the "Single Tax" of some British politicians who are known to favor a much more thorough application of the principle than has yet been adopted in any part of the American continent. In their own words, these politicians (many of them quite radical reformers) are opposed to the "twenty shillings in the pound" policy, but would readily support a large instalment of the taxation and rating of land values.

PARLIAMENTARY AND MUNICIPAL PROGRESS

COMMISSION ON THE HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES

The principle of the taxation of land values first found expression in a parliamentary document in the report of the "Royal

Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes" published in 1885. The famous passage, which was written by Lord Sheffield, has since been repeatedly quoted, and it is worth noticing that the late King Edward VII., when Prince of Wales, was a member of the Commission and subscribed to its recommendations. The Report said in regard to rating:

"At present, land available for building in the neighborhood of our populous centers, though its capital value is very great, is probably producing a small yearly return until it is let for building. The owners of this land are rated, not in relation to the real value, but to the actual income. They can thus afford to keep their land out of the market, and to part with only small quantities, so as to raise the price beyond the natural monopoly price which the land would command by its advantages of position. Meantime, the general expenditure of the town on improvements is increasing the value of their property. If this land were rated at, say, 4 per cent. on its selling value, the owners would have a more direct incentive to part with it to those who are desirous of building, and a two-fold advantage would result to the community. First, all the valuable property would contribute to the rates, and thus the burden on the occupiers would be diminished by the increase in the rateable property. Secondly, the owners of the building land would be forced to offer their land for sale, and thus their competition with one another would bring down the price of building land, and so diminish the tax in the shape of ground rent, or price paid for land which is now levied on urban enterprise by the adjacent landowners—a tax, be it remembered, which is no recompense for any industry or expenditure on their part, but is the natural result of the industry and activity of the townspeople themselves. Your Majesty's Commissioners would recommend that these matters should be included in legislation when the law of rating comes to be dealt with by Parliament."

EARLY RESOLUTIONS MOVED IN PARLIAMENT

From 1885 till 1902 little was said or done in Parliament in connection with the taxation of land values. The subject was discussed only occasionally when, for instance, Mr. A. D. Provand moved his resolution on 8th March, 1895 (toward the close of the short Liberal Administration of 1892-5), to the effect that:

"No system of taxation can be equitable unless it includes the direct assessment of the enhanced value of land due to the increase of population and wealth, and the growth of towns."

The resolution was agreed to without a division.

On 10th February, 1899, Mr. E. Morton moved his amendment to the Queen's Speech expressing the regret of the House of Commons that:

"There is no indication in your Majesty's gracious speech that measures will be submitted to this House dealing with the ownership, tenure, or taxation of land."

The amendment was defeated by 157 to 123.

On 2nd May, 1900, Mr. T. W. Nussey moved a resolution, which was defeated by 140 to 98, to the effect that:

"Having regard to the heavy and increasing burden of local taxation in urban and certain other districts, the House urges upon the Government the necessity of forthwith redressing the undoubted grievances from which many ratepayers suffer."

On 14th May, 1900, Mr. Alfred Billson introduced a Bill which did not proceed beyond the first Reading, providing for the separate assessment of land on 4 per cent. of its capital selling value, and to amend the law relating to parochial assessments in England and Wales.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON LOCAL TAXATION

The formal reply from the Conservative ministerial benches to every attempt in those days to raise the question of the taxation of land values was that a Royal Commission had the whole subject under consideration, and members should be content to await its recommendation. This was the Royal Commission appointed on 15th August, 1896, "to inquire into the present system under which taxation is raised for local purposes, and to report whether all kinds of real and personal property contribute equitably to such taxation, and if not, what alterations in the law are desirable in order to secure the result." The First Report of the Commission was published on 18th December, 1898, the Second on 10th January, 1899, and the Final Report on 28th May, 1901. In addition to these reports, numerous separate papers and memoranda were issued independently by members of the Commission, and of these papers the most noteworthy was

the so-called "Minority" or "Separate Report on Urban Rating and Site Values," signed by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Lord Blair Balfour, Sir Edward Hamilton, Sir George Murray, and Mr. James Stuart.

The chief contribution in the Final Report of the Commissioners to the problem was their recommendation to treat as national the four services of Poor Relief (including the upkeep of Asylums), Police, Education, and Main Roads. All the other various reports were in agreement as to the distinction thus laid down. But the Final Report did not indicate any satisfactory means for providing the necessary revenue for national expenditure on these services nor propose any reform of local taxation. It considered and rejected the idea of a local income tax, and of a local rate on inhabited houses. It had nothing to suggest except that the existing system of subventions from the Exchequer in aid of local rates should be continued and that certain further revenues (increased liquor licenses and inhabited house duty) should be assigned to local authorities. The Final Report of the Majority of the Commission was against both the separate valuation of land and the placing of special rates upon land values. But the separate Minority Report recommended in favor of a special site value rate, small in amount, to fall in part upon the owners of sites and to apply to uncovered land and to unoccupied premises in town areas where there was a desire to adopt the principle.

ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH RATING BILLS

The growth of the sentiment in favor of the local rating of land values received a great impetus from the municipal agitation, which, commencing in Glasgow in 1895, had spread over the whole country and had been joined by as many as 518 local Councils, including Glasgow, London, Manchester, Liverpool, Halifax, Bolton, Aberdeen, Dundee, Sunderland, Bradford, Sheffield, etc., etc. Powers were repeatedly demanded from Parliament which would enable local authorities to impose rates upon land values, and these demands found expression in a number of Bills which were introduced between 1902 and 1905,

some applying only to England and Wales, and others only to Scotland. The English Bills, introduced in 1902 and 1903 by Mr. Chas. P. Trevelyan and Dr. Macnamara respectively, were defeated on the Second Reading by 71 and 13 votes respectively. In 1904 a Bill introduced by Mr. Trevelyan passed the Second Reading by 67 votes, and in 1905 the same Bill passed the Second Reading by 90 votes. None of these Bills was proceeded with. They were simply treated as subjects for Second Reading Debates on the broad principle. It is noteworthy that they were submitted in a Conservative House of Commons with an increasing vote in their favor, and many Conservatives supported the principles at issue. In regard to Scotland, a Bill was introduced in 1903 and another in 1904, neither of which proceeded beyond the First Reading. They dealt only with unoccupied land in Burghs. In 1904 Mr. Caldwell introduced the Land Values Taxation (Scotland) Bill, promoted by the Glasgow Corporation. It did not proceed beyond the First Reading. In 1905 it was reintroduced by Mr. Ainsworth and passed the Second Reading by a majority of 20 votes. In 1905 another Bill for Scotland called the Land Values Assessment Bill was introduced by Mr. Munro Ferguson (now Governor-General of Australia) but it was not proceeded with beyond a First Reading.

THE LIBERAL PARTY PLEDGED TO THE REFORM

The General Election in the beginning of 1906 returned to power a Government which was pledged to the taxation and rating of land values by the repeated declarations not only of the leaders of all shades of opinion, but also by the whole rank and file of the Liberal Party. As far back as 1889 the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Manchester had adopted a resolution which declared among other things that in any reform of the land laws a just and equitable taxation of land values and ground rents was an essential condition. It further affirmed its belief that the abolition of the present duties upon necessary foods such as tea, coffee, and cocoa was demanded in the interests of the people and that the remission of those duties could be effected with due regard to economy by the juster methods of

taxation demanded by the Federation. These reforms were still more emphatically demanded at the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation in 1891 in the famous Newcastle programme. Since then the numerous speeches and declarations of Liberal politicians, and the leaflets and pamphlets issued by the Liberal Publication Department, bear witness to the place held by the taxation and rating of land values in the counsels of the party.

MUNICIPAL DEPUTATION TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Although the proposal for the imposition of a national tax on land values had been as vigorously urged in public as the proposal to base local rates on land values, the question entered the new Parliament in the latter form. The rating of land values was ripe for treatment, for Bills dealing both with England and Scotland had already been discussed in the previous administration. The municipal agitation, moreover, at this time dominated the situation. At the National Conference of Rating Authorities held in Manchester on 22nd November, 1905, at which the Lord Mayor of Manchester presided, it was decided to present a petition to the House of Commons praying for the passing of a Bill dealing with the provision of the separate assessment and rating of land values. A deputation of 150 gentlemen representing 118 municipal bodies, which was received by Mr. Asquith (in the unavoidable absence of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman), Mr. James Bryce, and Mr. John Burns, on 26th February, 1906, presented the Petition. The objects of the deputation were stated by Mr. J. H. Whitley, who introduced it, by Lord Provost Bilsland and Ex-Bailie Ferguson of Glasgow, and by the Lord Mayor of Manchester. Mr. Asquith said in reply:

“I have always regarded this movement properly understood as being not a derogation from, but an assertion of the rights of property. It is right and just that the community should reap the benefit of the increased values which are due to its own expenditure and its own growth. I suppose we are all agreed that as a preliminary step there should be a separate assessment (valuation) of site (land) values. We (the Government) desire to have time to carefully consider the best way of giving effect

to the principles I have enunciated. I believe we shall arrive at a more satisfactory and more permanent result if we allow ourselves a little time and patience for the consideration of this problem, than if we were to introduce a comparatively small and piecemeal instalment of the reform which we all desire."

FORMATION OF THE LAND VALUES GROUP

Soon after the Parliament of 1906 assembled a "Land Values Parliamentary Campaign Committee," under the chairmanship of Mr. J. H. Whitley, M. P., was established in order to initiate and promote land values legislation in Parliament and also to make headway with the agitation in the country. Mr. John Paul was appointed Secretary of this Committee, leaving Glasgow in March, 1906, for this post. The Committee quickly grew in numbers, and before Easter in 1906, the "Land Values Group," as it came to be called, counted as many as 280 Members of Parliament. Steps were taken at once to prepare and recommend legislation.

The Group influenced the publication of the Blue-books containing information on the working of taxation on unimproved land, both for municipal and State purposes, in New Zealand, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland. These Blue-books (Cd. 3191 and Cd. 3890) have since been republished, with papers on Land Taxes and Land Valuation in other countries in Blue-book Cd. 4750, which was issued at the time of the Budget controversy in 1909.

The personnel of the Group includes many worthy and familiar names. J. H. Whitley was its first Chairman, the post which since January, 1910, has been occupied by Charles E. Price. Its guiding spirit in forcing the pace for the 1909 Budget was Josiah C. Wedgwood, and since then his name has figured prominently in the debates and discussions whenever it was possible to state the case for the reform. But it is difficult to distribute the honors among land values men, who are all equally determined to make the fullest use of their position as Members of Parliament. P. Wilson Raffan, who for the last six years has acted as Hon. Secretary and Whip to the Group has also taken a leading part in argument and speech-making on the floor of the House,

as have Chas. P. Trevelyan, James Dundas White, Sir Wm. P. Byles, J. S. Higham, Francis Neilson, E. G. Hemmerde, H. G. Chancellor and R. L. Outhwaite. These names, with Charles E. Price, Josiah C. Wedgwood and P. Wilson Raffan are household words wherever there is knowledge and understanding of what land values taxation means as a social reform.

PROPOSED SCOTTISH LEGISLATION

During the first four months of 1906 the Group centered their attention upon the debate and discussions on the Land Values Taxation (Scotland) Bill, sometimes referred to as the "Glasgow Bill," introduced by Mr. Sutherland as a private measure, and making the same provisions as the Bill which in 1905 had received a Second Reading in the House. It would have given power to the town council of every Burgh to levy a rate not exceeding 2s. in the £ upon the annual value of all land in the Burgh. That annual value was to be calculated at 4 per cent. upon the price as between a willing seller and a willing buyer, exclusive of all buildings, etc., on or connected with the ground. The Bill passed its Second Reading on 23rd March, by a majority of 258, and on 24th April, was remitted to a Select Committee of which the following were the members: Mr. Alexander Ure (Chairman), Mr. Hugh Barry, Mr. A. Dewar, Mr. Findlay, Mr. J. Henderson, Mr. M'Killop, Mr. Mitchell Thompson, Mr. O'Hare, Mr. Remnant, Mr. T. F. Richards, Mr. Sutherland, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Dundas White, Mr. McKinnon Wood, and Mr. Younger.

In December, 1906, the Report of the Select Committee on the Land Values Taxation (Scotland) Bill was issued. It recommended that the Bill should not be proceeded with, but that "a measure be introduced making provision for a valuation being made of the land in the Burghs and Counties of Scotland apart from the buildings and improvements upon it, and that no assessment be determined upon until the amount of that valuation is known and considered." The opportunity was taken in the Report to review most fully the whole question of the rating of land values and it contained an uncompromising declaration

in favor of the placing of all local rates on land values, the rates to be paid by all owners (including the "superiors" in receipt of *feu* duties) of rights in land in proportion to the value of these rights. The Select Committee Report proved a campaign document of the utmost value for the promoters of the reform. By Single Taxers it was hailed as a "classic." It was the keynote of a long series of successful public demonstrations organized by the United Committee and the Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values, in which the then Solicitor General for Scotland, Mr. Alexander Ure (Chairman of the Select Committee), afterward Lord Advocate, and now Lord President of the Court of Session in Scotland, took the leading part.

On 13th May, 1907, the Land Values (Scotland) Bill, providing for a valuation of the land, was introduced into the House of Commons as a Government measure by the then Lord Advocate, the Right Hon. Thomas Shaw (now Lord Shaw), and it followed the recommendations of Mr. Ure's Select Committee. The Bill passed the Second Reading by a majority of 194 votes and the Third by a majority of 139. It was rejected by the House of Lords. It was reintroduced into the House of Commons on 19th February, 1908, and passed the Second Reading by a majority of 273 votes. In the House of Lords it was so mutilated as to be nullified in effect. The Government therefore decided to abandon it.

THE BUDGET OF 1909

Definite promises had been given in 1906 that a Valuation Bill for England and Wales would be introduced, but despite agitation on the part of the Group and renewed promises and pledges the Bill, for some reason or other not fully understood, was never tabled.

The 1907 session went by without any sign of the proposed legislation; 1908 brought more promises and a final abandonment, it being announced in October that the Bill would not be introduced.

The supporters of the taxation and rating of land values being thus thwarted in their efforts to secure Valuation, on the one hand for Scotland by the House of Lords, and on the other hand

for England by forces outside the House of Lords, turned to the Finance Bill as a means of placing their principles on the Statute Book. In 1908 a vigorous agitation was prosecuted all over the country for a tax on land values to be embodied in the Budget of 1909, and with it as a matter of course a universal valuation separating the value of land from all the value of improvements on or attached to the land. In Parliament the Land Values Group organized a petition on these lines to the Government, which was signed by 250 Liberal and Labor members and presented to the Government on 24th November, 1908.

On 29th April, 1909, Mr. Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced his historic Budget, upon the provisions of which it is not necessary here to dwell at any length. They are familiar even to those who take but a superficial interest in British politics. The clauses in the Bill most welcomed by land reformers and especially by the advocates of the taxation of land values were those which at last provided the "preliminary step," in the form of a universal valuation throughout the United Kingdom, separating the value of the land from the value of improvements. The "Land Value Duties" (an increment duty of 20 per cent. on increase of land values, a duty of 10 per cent. on the value of reversions, a duty of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ on the value of urban undeveloped land, and a mineral rights duty of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £) were warmly accepted by many sections of land reformers, but they were never considered by the advocates of the taxation of land values as either an instalment of or equivalent for the straight tax on land values, which had been demanded in their agitation both inside and outside Parliament.

A very able analysis and criticism of the Government proposals and of the unsatisfactory and in many respects objectionable Land Value Duties (which friends of the movement abroad should understand have done the British Single Tax cause anything but a good service) will be found in *Land Values*¹ of July and December, 1909, contributed by Mr. Frederick Verinder, Secretary of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values.

¹*Land Values* is the organ of the British Single Taxers and is published at 20 Tothill Street, London, England.

The landed interests were bitterly opposed to the whole scheme and contested it clause by clause. Their prolonged agitation wrung from the Government a number of concessions, the most important of which was the change in the method of valuation. The original proposals would have compelled owners to declare what they thought was the value of their land, and it is contended with sound argument that if this "owners' valuation" had been retained, the valuers could have carried through their work with much more expedition. Unfortunately the Government gave way on this vital principle and the result has been five years of trouble, expense and delay. Even now the work is incomplete and in a state of much confusion, further obstacles having been placed in the way by decisions in the courts upsetting the valuers' assessments.

During the passage of the Finance Act through the Commons considerable alterations were also made in the Land Value Duties. These are too numerous to mention, but the general effect was a reduction in the taxation the duties aimed to collect. The mineral rights duty was entirely remodelled; it ceased to be a tax on the capital value of minerals, likely to have a stimulating effect in the development of mines, and became merely an extra income tax of 1s. in the £ on mining royalties.

The Budget emerged in its final state from the House of Commons on 2nd November, 1909, after a Third Reading majority of 230 votes. The House of Lords set at nought the long-established financial control of the House of Commons. They rejected the Bill, precipitated not one but two General Elections, brought to an issue the long standing quarrel between the two Houses, and suffered defeat in a drastic curtailment of their own powers.

THE LAND AND TAXATION REFORM MEMORIAL

After the General Election in January, 1910, the Bill was forced through the House of Lords and became Law on 29th April, 1910, exactly one year after its introduction. The Valuation commenced forthwith and the necessary machinery for the reform of local and national taxation being set in motion, the Land Values Group immediately considered the next progressive

step to be taken, by which the Valuation should be used to carry out much-desired and long-delayed reforms. A comprehensive policy was proclaimed which, based upon the land valuation and urging both its early completion and its results being made known to the public, proposed legislation for the local rating of land values, a national tax on land values, the remission of the breakfast-table duties, and the redistribution of local and Imperial taxation so as to do justice as between one district and another and prevent the benefit of the relief to the poorer districts going where it was not intended to go, which had been the net result of the policy of "doles." This programme was formulated in the now well-known Land and Taxation Reform Memorial of the Land Values Group in Parliament.

THE DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE ON LOCAL TAXATION

In April, 1911, a "Departmental Committee on Local Taxation" was appointed, composed of Government officials, and officials of local rating and other authorities, and its terms of reference were "to enquire into the changes which have taken place in the relations between Imperial and Local Taxation since the Report of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation in 1901, to examine the several proposals made in the Reports of that Commission, and to make recommendations on the subject for the consideration of His Majesty's Government with a view to the introduction of legislation at an early date."

The appointment of this Committee was obviously an opportunity to postpone action and to enable more time to be consumed in unnecessary inquiries and reports. But it had its compensations in keeping up discussion and possibly delaying proposals for Exchequer grants in aid of local rates until the land valuation was completed. With the Valuation an accomplished fact it would be easier for land reformers to insist upon land value taxation and land value rating as an essential part of any scheme for readjusting the complicated problem of national and local taxation: in its absence, or before land valuation was completed, the reactionary interests might get all they had been striving for—subventions out of general taxes in aid of local rates, which would

have the same results as the Agricultural Rates Act (1896)¹ in raising rents and prices of land and ultimately enriching the landowners. There were therefore important issues at stake and the Government would have been obliged to take the one road or the other.

By invitation, the Land Values Group submitted written and oral evidence to the Departmental Committee, and the witnesses examined were able to make a complete and convincing statement of the policy embodied in the Land and Taxation Reform Memorial. Other associations and public bodies interested in the question of the relations between local and national taxation appeared before the Committee, and prominent among them were several recognized defenders of the landowning interests (*e. g.*, The Farmers' Club, the Central Land Association, the Surveyors' Institute and the Central Chamber of Agriculture) who were driven to pay attention to the powerful arguments put forward by the Land Values Group, and had to submit a hostile case, which only gave the greater prominence to the proposals of the Group. The memoranda of evidence and oral examination of all the witnesses were issued in June, 1912, in the two official publications (Cd. 6303 I and Cd. 6303 II) and provide much instructive reading to students of the tax laws, their administration, and proposed reforms in the United Kingdom.

The Departmental Committee issued its Final Report on England and Wales (Cd. 7315) in April, 1914. The report dealt with a number of administrative matters, such as the machinery of valuation and the general arrangements affecting Exchequer grants in aid of local rates. Like the Royal Commission of 1901, the Committee was divided on the question of taxing land values. The majority was opposed to the policy, but the expression of more hostile than friendly views was not surprising, since the Committee was composed purely of permanent officials, a body who in the United Kingdom are notorious for their sympathy with conservative ideas. In the circumstances it was a distinct triumph to get from such a Committee a separate report, signed

¹Which provides that agricultural land shall be assessed to poor rates at only half its value.

by six of the thirteen members, disagreeing with the declarations in the main report against the taxation of land values. The separate report recommended that one-tenth of the amount required out of rates should be obtained by a rate on land values. They declared further that the valuation should be published—a very important point for which the Land Values Group have been working ever since the days of the 1909 Budget.

Although the separate report approached the rating of land values in a timorous and characteristically “official” fashion, it made handsome concessions to the general principle of the reform, using arguments which were equally applicable to the complete public appropriation of the rent of land. The case they stated is criticized fully in the May (1914) issue of *Land Values*.

THE LIBERAL LAND CAMPAIGN

The land question by this time was once again in a fair way of engrossing public discussion to the exclusion of all other political topics. With Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment and other long-fought party issues on the point of settlement, Liberals urged by Mr. Lloyd George were preparing for their next great task—a thorough reform of the land laws. A national campaign was announced and a Land Enquiry Committee representing the Liberal Party was entrusted in July, 1912, with an investigation into the conditions of land-holding, housing and overcrowding, wages, unemployment, rural emigration, etc. The Committee went about their work in a painstaking way and between October, 1913, and April, 1914, issued four lengthy reports full of extraordinary revelations. These reports deal with England (Rural), England (Urban), Scotland, and Wales and may be procured for 25c. each from the publishers, Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, London.

The Land Enquiry Committee advocated a number of remedies such as rent courts, State purchase and reclamation of “waste” land, statutory minimum wages, State cottage building, national inventory of slums, each of which was thought to be a specific for the particular evil examined. But it is not necessary to deal with these proposals here; the important fact is that in their

second Report (England, Urban) the Committee devoted 200 pages to a description and condemnation of the existing rating system. They recommended that all local authorities should be compelled to impose a penny rate on capital site value, and to derive any new revenues from site values only; they should also be empowered to raise, by a rate on site values, any further part of their revenues they thought fit. Although the proposals were partial and halting, the Report vindicated all the contentions in favor of the taxation and rating of land values and is a notable contribution to the literature of the movement. It is fully discussed, along with the Report of the Departmental Committee, in the May (1914) issue of *Land Values*. The Scottish Report of the Land Enquiry Committee was equally emphatic on the urgency of land values taxation as an essential reform.

THE BUDGET OF 1914

In connection with the Budget introduced in May, 1914, the Government announced two important measures—a Revenue Bill to rectify the Valuation and bring it up to date, and a rating Bill designed to establish some instalment of the rating of land values. The legislation contemplated by the Bills was not regarded by the Government as a matter for separate treatment deserving to be pushed through for its own sake; it was intimately associated with and dependent upon the acceptance of a large and involved scheme for readjusting the relations between national and local taxation and giving grants out of the Exchequer in relief of local rates. The Government, however, soon found itself in difficulties with the super-income taxpayers upon whom the main burden of the grants would have fallen, discussion exposed the absurdity of the plan for distributing the grants, and the scheme was deferred for future consideration. The result was that both the Revenue and the Rating Bills were postponed, the one to be taken up the following Session and the other during the “next year.”

The preceding brief sketch of the parliamentary and political growth of the movement for the taxation of land values brings us to the fateful 4th day of August, and to the tragedy that has

engulfed Europe. At that moment all political discussion of land and social reforms ceased; such questions were put aside as party issues under a declared "party truce" and it is impossible to say when or in what manner they will be resumed. The taxation of land values, as the most controversial of all domestic questions, is not likely to be advanced as long as the international conflict continues. The Government may be driven by force of circumstances to take some part of its enormous revenue requirements by a direct levy on the value of land, but at present there is little sign of that. The task of reformers is to see that there shall at least be no sacrifice of the objects already attained in so far as the Valuation and the Valuation Department are concerned, and fortunately the Land Values Group in Parliament have meantime fought successfully all the insidious attempts to destroy the machinery so laboriously built up and so essential for future legislation.

THE GROWTH OF SINGLE TAX CAMPAIGN WORK

THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH LEAGUES

The early history of the educative forces that helped to make the public sentiment for the taxation of land values centres in the main round the activities of the Leagues in Glasgow and London. Henry George had paid his first visit to Ireland and Great Britain in 1881-2, but the country was not roused to his ideas until he undertook his great speaking campaign in 1884. At his second Glasgow meeting in that year the "Scottish Land Restoration League" was formed. This organization with Henry George as adviser and chief speaker, opened up the ground throughout the length and breadth of Scotland, and in this pioneer work the late Edward McHugh, Richard McGhee (now M. P.), the late John Ferguson, Peter Burt, and David McLardy took a prominent part, as they have since. Edward McHugh gave his life for a period of thirty-two years to the cause, and his death in April, 1915, was a grievous loss to its fighting strength. John Ferguson and Peter Burt are two names most closely associated with the agitation that has made the Glasgow Town Council, as a public authority, a protagonist for the reform

among British municipalities. James Alston, now deceased, Wm. D. Hamilton and John Muir carried on the work at the Council for a time; Mr. Hamilton has since resigned.

In England, Henry George's lecture tours were assisted among others by the late William Saunders, Rev. Stuart D. Headlam, Miss Helen Taylor, Thomas F. Walker, J. C. Durant, and Frederick Verinder. They were some of the founders of the English Land Restoration League—now called the English League for the Taxation of Land Values of which Frederick Verinder was elected general secretary at its first annual meeting in 1884, and at that post he still exercises his gifts as a speaker and writer with undiminished alertness and enthusiasm. In 1887, the English League concentrated its efforts on the agitation in London for the rating of land values, and with the co-operation of the Municipal Reform League a "United Committee for the Taxation of Ground Values" was formed. This committee (which is not to be confused with the existing United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, founded later and under quite different auspices) had a brief existence, but it did great service in the publication and wide distribution of Mr. (now Lord Justice) Fletcher Moulton's pamphlet on the "Taxation of Ground Values." The result of these activities was that the great majority of the members elected to the first London County Council (1889) were pledged to the reform, and the Council thereafter did much to advance the question by deputing representatives to submit, to Parliamentary committees and to the Royal Commission on Local Taxation, most valuable evidence in favor of the rating of land values.

The real lead, however, in the municipal movement came from Glasgow. There the propagandist forces had been reorganized. The "Land Restoration League" had become defunct although much missionary work had been going on under the auspices of the Henry George Institute and sundry minor bodies. In 1890, after a great meeting in the City Hall, addressed by Henry George on his return from Australia, a new organization was established and has been in constant and continuous activity ever since. At first called the Scottish Land Restoration Federation,

its name was changed in 1899 to the **Scottish Single Tax League** and since 1904, it has been known as the **Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values**.

In 1894 the Scottish League founded as the *Single Tax* (the name which it bore until 1902) the monthly journal of the movement, now known as *Land Values*. It was first started in the struggle and determination to spread the knowledge of taxation of land values among Glasgow people and to gain a hearing for the case at the Glasgow City Council; but its circulation has long since extended much beyond these bounds. Its twenty-first birthday was celebrated in the special number of June, 1915. The messages printed therein from all parts of the world are an eloquent testimony to the influence it has gained, to the valuable work it has done as an educator of public opinion, and to its indispensable services as a binding link, giving instruction, help and encouragement to its readers everywhere whether working in union or in some isolated quarter. *Land Values* has in fact become recognized as a chief, if not the chief, standard bearer and news-giver in the world-wide crusade for the Single Tax.

The formation of the Scottish League and the establishment of the monthly journal are associated with the names of John Paul, William and Norman McLennan, J. O'Donnell Derrick, David Cassels and his sons John, William, Robert and David, Thomas Cameron, Harry Llewelyn Davies, Wm. McKeown, John McTaggart, F. S. Mein, William Harrison, William Reid, and James Busby. These early promoters of organized effort, of whom John Cassels, William Harrison, and F. S. Mein have since passed away, were joined almost immediately by the two leading members of the previous organization started in 1884, Peter Burt and David McLardy. Later came Harry S. Murray, W. D. Hamilton, W. R. Lester, James Fairlie, Alex. Mackendrick, John Cameron, John Gordon, Graham Cassels, fifth and youngest son of David Cassels, and of course many others who after many years of activity equally deserve the title of veterans. Want of space forbids a personal tribute to all who have labored ceaselessly but there is one name above others to which a special

measure of respect and affection is due—that of John Paul, editor of *Land Values* since its inception as the *Single Tax*, secretary of the Scottish League from 1894 till 1907, and since then secretary of the United Committee. He had joined the Glasgow Henry George Institute in 1889, and had been its secretary after 1890, but soon the Scottish League absorbed all his energies.

The story of the municipal campaign has already been told in part in the first section of this article. The Scottish League conducted its popular appeal so energetically that within a few years it captured the Glasgow Corporation and secured its powerful aid as a propagandist body, stirring English and Scottish rating authorities to action. In 1896 the Council was able to report that "sixty-two Scottish assessing authorities consisting of seven Town Councils, eight Police Burghs, one County Council, and forty-six Parish Councils had intimated their approval of making land values the basis of local taxation and their willingness to join with Glasgow in seeking the necessary powers from Parliament to give effect to it." In October, 1899, the Scottish League convened in co-operation with the Council, a national Conference at which 216 of the 557 delegates represented 116 rating authorities from all parts of the country. This Conference marked a turning point in the history of the land values movement in Great Britain; it proved beyond a doubt that there was a great body of opinion in the leading municipalities in favor of the reform; and it brought the question at a bound from the propagandist stage into the political arena. It led, moreover, to a series of important municipal conferences in London and Manchester, which prepared and promoted the Parliamentary Bills already referred to, and they gave an enormous impetus to the popular campaign in the constituencies, resulting in the enthusiastic reception of the Budget valuation proposals in 1909.

The Scottish League had not confined itself to the municipal aspect of the question. It had exerted its influence with equal success in national politics, and its speakers and supporters had always been in the forefront making clear to the public what true

radicalism meant. The result is seen in the determined stand repeatedly taken by the Scottish Liberal Association in favor of land values taxation—proof positive that among the rank and file the principle is now a matter of conviction that will brook no compromise.

OTHER LEAGUES

The English and the Scottish Leagues were the forerunners of similar organizations that from time to time were formed in other centers. Yorkshire was led in this way by such men as Charles H. Smithson, whose name and work have been and are an inspiration far beyond his home in Halifax; Ignatius Singer, William Thomson, Fred Skirrow, and the late Lewis H. Berens, who subsequently moved to London and whose death in November, 1913, after thirty years of rare devotion, was another of the severe losses the movement has sustained. The Yorkshire League, which now has its offices at Keighley, grew quickly in membership and already in 1898 had called a national Conference in Bradford, the first meeting of its kind to bring Single Taxers from all parts of the country to a joint session.

In 1898 a vigorous band of men, led by James McGuigan and A. W. Withy, established a "Single Tax Union" in Portsmouth, and in few towns in England has more determined and more effective work been done for the taxation of land values. The Edinburgh League and the Northern League (in Newcastle) also belong to the older organizations. The younger Leagues (formed between 1906 and 1910) include those in Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, Inverness, Birkenhead and Liverpool.

THE UNITED COMMITTEE

The great Liberal victory known as the "landslide," in 1906, was a signal for greater organized efforts than had as yet been made, perhaps even contemplated. It was a case of new occasions teaching new duties and it can be, and is, frankly and freely acknowledged by those competent to judge that the leaders of the movement rose to the occasion. The Parliamentary Campaign Committee referred to above, composed of members of Parliament only, was found to be unworkable as an agency

to cope with the many sided propaganda. The driving power for the policy had to be created in the country and directed to the Commons. The other way—to take a lead from the seat of legislation—was found to be impossible, if not fatal. It is a wise reflection that the people make a Parliament and not the Parliament a people; and the inferences are obvious to all who would begin by seeking light and leading on one special subject from men who are publicly pledged to advance many causes. This is a tempting diversion, but space forbids a continuation of it. With the approval of the few friends then members of Parliament, and with the extra financial support of old steadfast friends the United Committee was instituted at 14 Barton Street, London, on 23rd March, 1907. It was and is now composed of representatives of the various Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values. The constitution of the Committee is the Taxation of Land Values and the corresponding untaxing of industry. It organizes meetings and demonstrations to explain the policy; it publishes and circulates most of the literature of the movement, including the monthly journal *Land Values*; it helps the existing leagues in their local efforts and promotes the formation of new leagues; it institutes classes in political economy and reading circles and provides the teachers; and it co-ordinates and directs the activities and strengthens the hands of the many isolated honorary workers through the country.

The history of the movement since 1907 is fully recorded in the annual reports of the Committee. After the publication of the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Land Values (Scotland) Taxation Bill mass meetings were held in most of the big towns in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales with Alexander Ure (late Lord Advocate), the Chairman of the Select Committee, as chief speaker. Many special campaigns were carried through in town and rural districts not hitherto cultivated by local leagues. A press bureau was established, and by its means upwards of 300 papers throughout the country were regularly publishing, in many cases twice a week, informing articles on the relation of land values taxation

to unemployment, low wages, overcrowding and social conditions generally. A literature department attended to the sales of books and pamphlets and a well-organized house-to-house visitation placed leaflets in the hands of all the voters in 234 Parliamentary constituencies.

This special effort must have a place to itself. It yielded splendid results. The "enemy" became alarmed and indignant and a mob of howling wild dervishes were let loose in the Tory press to make out the United Committee to be the lineal descendants of Ananias. The Liberal official pro-landlord press hung its head in shame or at least affected the part. But the literature went forth up and down mean streets and across hill and dale to our entire satisfaction. The press could howl, or slink round the corner afraid to acknowledge or recognize the men who took their leaders, the Asquiths, the Greys, the Haldanes, the Lloyd Georges and all the rest, to be in earnest when they pledged the Liberal party so engagingly to the Taxation of Land Values. We certainly could and did rejoice exceedingly for the people heard the news gladly. It was propaganda on a big scale and it cost something. There were other two-thirds of the constituencies in need of this message of hope and encouragement, but lack of funds compelled the Committee to stop. Some day and soon we trust it may be resumed. Even the great and bloody struggle now going on to the better end has not wiped out the memory, nor the effects for good of this lively and accurate aim at the ramparts of monopoly. Those responsible for this special literature campaign did a service for the movement which constitutes in itself a glorious page in its history.

The inspiring and sustained effort in the years succeeding 1907, and especially during the period of the Budget and General Election fights of 1909 and 1910, carried everything before it. Two historic events were the Hyde Park and Glasgow Land Demonstrations, called to protest against any surrender to the House of Lords on the question of the Budget and its land clauses; but the success of the Committee and the Leagues may be said to have reached its climax in the notable victories in

North West Norfolk (May, 1912) and Hanley (July, 1912) when E. G. Hemmerde and R. L. Outhwaite were returned to Parliament not merely as candidates "pledged" to the reform, but as out-and-out land values men, preaching the unadulterated Single Tax doctrine. Hanley was certainly a surprise if not a shock to the ordinary plodding Liberal who, with the official cast of mind, had not gauged the progress of the demand for the reform nor realized how far public opinion had traveled in advance of Parliament.

JOSEPH FELS

Among the men attached to the United Committee, the name of one who has lately passed away deserves most grateful recognition. On the 22nd February, 1914, the movement was bereft of Joseph Fels, who in his work as a member of the Committee and as a generous supporter gave such service as will never be forgotten while Single Taxers are banded together to promote their ideal. He came to the Committee in 1908 and during six short years—those fruitful years of rapidly ripening thought for land values taxation—he was to be found always feverishly active in voicing his convictions as an unfettered disciple of Henry George. His efforts, as is well known, were by no means confined to Great Britain; he had a voluminous correspondence with all parts of the globe and he divided his time between Great Britain (or Europe) and his own country, the United States. But we write of his devotion to the movement in Britain, and all that it meant in strengthening the forces and advancing the cause. In all this endeavor his wife Mary Fels was by his side. She continues his and her work with the same spirit of determination and of certain faith in its ultimate triumph.

SIDE LIGHT ON THE LIBERAL LAND CAMPAIGN

The account already given of the Liberal land reform campaign in 1913-14 would be incomplete without a reference to the pressure which Radicals had to bring to bear upon the Whigs in the party. It was another sign that the leaven of

Single Tax propaganda was at work. Mr. Lloyd George's series of speeches between October and Christmas, 1913, had been frankly disappointing—a catalogue of mere patch-work schemes for controlling and supervising land monopoly, with only passing observations on an out-of-date rating system and nothing tangible in the way of promised reform by means of a tax or a rate on land values. The Land Enquiry Committee, in spite of its admissions that the land must be taxed or rated on its value, sought (when it formed into a "Central Land Council") to put that question on one side and instructed its speakers to popularize the patch-work proposals. But the speakers speedily returned from the constituencies thoroughly discouraged with a hopeless task, reporting that the sentiment for land values taxation at their meetings was too strong for them. Mr. Lloyd George himself should have proceeded to Glasgow at the end of the year, but he repeatedly deferred his visit, an intimation from the Scottish Liberal Association to the Cabinet expecting a land values declaration probably having dissuaded him from appearing on the platform until he was prepared to talk the kind of land reform a Glasgow audience would demand. Just about this time the patience of the Single Taxers became exhausted and the United Committee promoted a vigorous counter-agitation. A campaign was specially organized by the United Committee in Aberdeen on 9th December, Glasgow on 11th December and Dundee on 15th Dec., and at great mass meetings an effective demonstration was made which had a powerful influence on the further development of Mr. Lloyd George's policy. He ultimately went to Glasgow on 4th February, 1914, and there, in an historic pronouncement, definitely pledged the Government to the taxation of land values. What that pledge meant and how far it would have carried the Government can only be surmised from the subsequent proposals made in the 1914 Budget, but which, owing to the war, were not proceeded with. The essential fact to be recorded, however, was the signal victory won by the movement under the test of popular support. All the years of its strenuous campaigning had been ignored, counted out, or were perhaps unknown to the

wrong-headed organizers of the 1913 Liberal Land Campaign. These all-round Liberals, safe men—safe to take the party back into the wilderness—most of them of mushroom growth, appeared at the green-room door of the Liberal theatre in 1906 when the complete rout of the Tories put it beyond peradventure that Liberalism was once again in fashion. But these innocents must be held blameless for the new venture on land reform which was to keep the Whigs (the moderates) within the building by the simple method of putting radical land and rating reform outside. The blame must be charged to those who were in power and in authority and to no one else. The Liberal party has always been afflicted with the threat of the well-to-do supporters to leave camp whenever it seeks to do some measure of justice to the people. This generates much heat, a fever setting in when the democratic side finds a popular leader like, say, Lloyd George, in his Budget campaign days. The rich man generally wins. He retains the substance, and the rank and file the shadow, or some framework upon which they are told something can be built some other day. It is about here that the Labor party should come in to back up the Radicals; but alas for one's expectations in that direction. In the case of land values taxation they were up against their own economic creed, and the most prominent of them were up against their own public record as opponents of the Single Tax principle.

Such in brief is the story we British Single Taxers have to tell at this stage of our movement. We can bring no gifts to the altar in the form of any legislative achievement; but we have, we believe, accomplished something by way of creating and strengthening the now quickly-growing public opinion for our ideas and our practical policy.—A. W. M.