

DUMFRIESSHIRE.

YOUNG LIBERALS LAND REFORM CAMPAIGN.

DEMONSTRATION AND CONFERENCE.

The Annual Conference and Demonstration of the Dumfriesshire League of Young Liberals was held in Dumfries on June 29th. As in former years the Annual Conference was followed by a great procession culminating in an open-air demonstration at which Mr. Chas. P. Trevelyan, M.P., was the principal speaker.

For a fortnight previous to the Conference and Demonstration a campaign of open-air meetings was carried out in support of the Taxation of Land Values. Mr. Harry de Pass, of the United Committee, Mr. Harry L. Davies, and Mr. Norman M'Lennan were the principal speakers at these meetings, which were held in the following places:—

- June 14th.—Ecclefechan (The Fountain).
- „ 14th.—Eaglesfield.
- „ 14th.—Waterbeck.
- „ 17th.—Annan (Market Place).
- „ 18th.—Maxwelltown (The Square).
- „ 19th.—Dumfries (Whitesands).
- „ 19th.—Dumfries (Dockhead).
- „ 19th.—Kirkpatrick.
- „ 19th.—Chapelknowe.
- „ 20th.—Dumfries (Dockhead).
- „ 20th.—Rigg of Gretna.
- „ 20th.—Dornock.
- „ 21st.—Moffat (The Cross).
- „ 22nd.—Dumfries (Queensberry Square).
- „ 24th.—Gretna (Springfield).
- „ 24th.—Longtown (Outside Liberal Club).
- „ 25th.—Lochmaben (Bruce's Statue).
- „ 25th.—Lockerbie (Market Place).
- „ 26th.—Langholm (Market Place).
- „ 26th.—Hightae.
- „ 27th.—Dumfries (Dockhead).
- „ 28th.—Thornhill (The Cross).

THE CROFTER'S FAREWELL.

Farewell to the cot 'mong the whins and the bracken,
The sand in the bay, and the rocks on the shore,
To deep-sounding Staffa, and beauteous Gyleaken—
I leave thee, perchance, to return nevermore.
The birds sing as sweet by thy clear springing fountains,
The sun shines as bright on the hills and the sea,
But o'er thy deep valleys and high, swelling mountains,
The soft winds of freedom no longer blow free.

Green straths to the sheep have been given without
measure,
And glens to the deer, for the stranger to kill,
And all for a proud chieftain's profit or pleasure,
Thy clans are dispersed like the mist on the hill.
Where once were the hamlet, the shielings, the gardens,
And rustic contentment, and industry dwelt,
Cold hearths, ruined walls, and green mounds are the
wardens
That mark the lost home of the poor vanished Celt.

But who can forget as he treads the red heather
And hears the lost voices that rise on the breeze,
The men who have gone in their hundreds together
To crowd the dark cities, or cross the wide seas.
I'd rather for life be a poor humble toiler,
With conscience from outrage and cruelty clear,
Than of lonely hearths be a careless despoiler,
To make them the home of the sheep and the deer.

The nation that sleeps while her children are banished,
Who stood like a guard round her wave-beaten shore,
Will some day awake with a cry to the vanished,
A cry for the feet that return nevermore.
My breast heaves with sighs as I leave thee for ever,
To think that man's pleasure should work such deep woe.
Forget the dear mountains? Ah, no, I shall never
Forget thee till Highland blood ceases to flow.

—FROM LAW LYRICS.

LETTERS ON WORK AND WAGES.

A GOOD LIVING AND A GOOD HOME.

IV. HOW AND WHY TO TAX LAND VALUES.

BY MOYA LLEWELYN DAVIES.

[Appearing also in "Political News" (the organ of the Home Counties Union of Women's Liberal Associations) for June.]

DEAR D.,

In my last letter I mentioned the valuation of the land which is being made under Mr. Lloyd George's Budget.

When this valuation is completed, and it will not take very much longer, we must do all we can to get the Government to use it for taxation; to take the rates off man's work, his home, and his food, and put them instead on the value of the land alone.

This can be done in two ways. First, the Parish Council, or Town Council, or County Council, who levy the rates, must be allowed to give up the old unjust way of putting them on buildings and improvements, and they must put them instead on the value of the land alone. Land which is being kept out of use must pay its fair share according to its true value. That will lessen the amount which the present ratepayers now have to pay. It will also help to bring land into use and give more employment.

Secondly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who looks after the taxes of the country as a whole, must be asked to help the poorer neighbourhoods, and take off from them some of the heavy rates which they have to pay at present. For instance, you know how hard it is for the people in the country districts to pay the heavy rates for the schools, and for the relief of the poor, and for keeping up the roads. These heavy charges ought to be paid for by the nation as a whole. The main roads are used mostly by people from the towns. Why should they not help to pay for keeping them up? Then, again, when the children grow up they find they very often can't get work in the country and so they go to the towns, and that means that the old and the feeble are left behind, and the district has heavy rates to pay to help to support them. The poorer districts ought not to have to bear the whole of the heavy cost of the schools and poor relief and of keeping up expensive roads. These are things which ought to be paid for by the whole nation. And when the Budget valuation is finished, the Chancellor of the Exchequer should raise the money to pay for these things by putting a tax on the land values of the country as a whole. If this were done the rich districts would help the poor districts, and there would be less left to be paid by the poor districts.

Then, again, if we had this tax on land values, we could at last free the poor people from the taxes on their tea, sugar, cocoa, &c., which make living so dear. A labourer and his family living on 15s. a week, when they buy a pound of tea at, say, 1s. 2d. a pound, pay 9d. for the tea, and 5d. in tax. Fivepence is a big sum of money to the wife who has to think of every halfpenny before she spends it. And why should she have to pay all these fivepences in taxes when all the time the land values are growing all over the country? Land in London, for instance, is sometimes sold at the rate of over a million pounds an acre, think of that! And these millions of pounds go into the pockets of people who have not earned them, because it is the people as a whole who make these land values.

This brings me to my last point. Before ending these letters, I want to show you why a tax on such land values is the most just of all taxes, and that until we tax land values, we can never hope to bring any real relief, or any real prosperity to the people.

The reason for making these changes is not only that they are necessary if we are ever to do away with poverty and unemployment and low wages, but also because it is a just and a right thing in itself to tax land values. Let us think, first, what is this land value that we propose to tax. It is the value which land has apart altogether from the work done upon it by the particular person who owns or occupies it. Some people would say, but land has no value until potatoes are growing in it, or there is a factory or cottage upon it! But what about a piece of

land with only old pots and pans thrown upon it, near a growing town, for instance, where people are wanting houses. The owner of that piece of land knows it has great value, though he never does anything to it from one year to another, perhaps never even sees it. But each year that land is worth more to him, and when at last the people in the town must have it, because they want more houses for their growing population, the owner sells, and gets hundreds or even thousands of pounds an acre for it. So you see that ugly idle land with pots and pans on it had a value, and that value which it had was not given to it by its owner. We are quite clear about that! Then who gave it its value? Why, the people living in and around the town who wanted it, to work upon it, or build houses upon it. Land at the east-end of London which used to be rented at £2 to £3 an acre has been selling at £2,000, £3,000 an acre, and even £6,000 an acre. This tremendous increase was due entirely to all the people there, engaged in the trade and industry, and commerce of London—the merchant, the manufacturer, the shipowner, the workman, the labourer—everybody except the landlord, who took the benefit of everybody else's work.

Well, if the people as a whole have made the value of the land, then these land values should in fairness belong to the people. If this is true, and no one can deny that it is true, the present owners of land are taking what really belongs to the people. This ought to be set right by taxing landowners according to the value of their land, whether they enjoy the land themselves, or let it to others and exact rent for doing so. And if this were done, no one need then be taxed on his work or earnings, and the taxes could be taken off tea and sugar, and the rates taken off houses.

Land values grow as the people increase in numbers, and so land values provide a fund which grows naturally as the needs for public expenditure increase. So here you have, side by side, the bill and the payment for it. As more public buildings, more parks, more schools are wanted, so land values rise to pay for them.

On the other hand, so long as land values are allowed to go untaxed into the pockets of the landlords, the people will find that they will be cheated of the fruits of every fresh effort they may take to improve their condition. The more the people want land for houses and for cultivation, the more rent they will have to pay for it. At present, if housing improvements are made, and parks laid out, up go the rents. If railways and tramways are made to the suburbs, rents will go up all along the route. Do you know what happened in regard to Waterloo Bridge in London? There used to be a toll of a halfpenny for every person who passed over the Bridge. This toll was done away with, and soon after rents on the other side of the Bridge rose by 6d. a week. The poor people going over the bridge backwards and forwards to their work were 6d. a week better off when the toll was removed, and so the landlords thought to themselves they could get sixpence a week more rent out of them. And so it was the landlord who benefited, and he will continue to benefit so long as we allow the present bad system to go on. If people get higher wages in a district, up go the rents! If Co-operative Stores are started and people's money is made to go further, up go the rents! All efforts for improvement must be like trying to draw water in a sieve, until the leakage is stopped by the taxation of land values, which will at last give the people a chance of earning and keeping the full value of their work. It is only in this way they can get a good living and a good home.

Your affectionate friend,

M.

THE LANDLORD'S GRIP.—It is almost impossible to over-estimate a landowner's power. Outsiders imagine it curtailed in these democratic days; I know otherwise. The landowner has the farmers in his grip, and they are aware of it and grovel before him. Through them he controls the ploughmen. The villagers as well are in his hands; they work for him or his tenants, they occupy houses owned by him or his dependents. Even the better class residents, the doctor, the schoolmaster, the shopkeeper, dare not oppose the laird; a word from him or his factor and their custom would be gone.—JAMES BRICE in *THE STORY OF A PLOUGHBOY*.

THE SQUIRE AND THE FREEHOLD FARMER.

A DIALOGUE OF FREE TRADE AND LAND REFORM.

BY L. H. BERENS.

Squire: Good morning, Bolton. Fine weather for the hay crop, eh?

Bolton (a small freehold farmer): Aye, Squire, I see nought to grumble at.

Squire: How are all the boys?

Bolton: Right hearty, thank you. They are good lads and not feared of work. I've learned them their trade, too, and that's just what's troubling me.

S.: Troubling you! How so?

B.: Well, Squire, they're growing up, you see, and are wanting to wed and settle down in their own homes, as I did before I was their age.

S.: A laudable ambition, surely.

B.: Aye, I've nought to say against it; but it's none so easy.

S.: None so easy? Why, surely there's lots of girls in every part of the county.

B.: Aye, there's lots of lassies, and right good lassies, too; and they've made their pick right enough. That's not the trouble.

S.: Where is it, then?

B.: Look here, Squire, two things are needed before men such as my lads can start to build up their homes—a lass to love and land to till.

S.: Yes; that's true enough.

B.: And, as you say, there are lots of lassies; and, God knows, there's lots of land, too, some of it lying idle or given over to the game.

S. (Shaking his finger at him): Bolton, Bolton! Why, I thought you were a sportsman.

B.: Aye, so I am, in moderation, in moderation. But, as it seems to me, to fence birds in and to fence men out may be good for the birds, but it's mighty bad for the men.

S.: Well, there's room enough for both.

B.: So there may be. But, as I was saying, though my lads have won their lassies easy enough, there's no land to be bought in the whole county at a price which the farmer can afford to pay.

S.: But, Bolton, your lads know their business, I'm sure, and any landlord would be glad to have them as tenants. There's Hackley Farm, over yonder, has been on my hands for years; couldn't we come to terms for that for one of them?

B.: Hackley Farm, Hackley Farm. Say, Squire, do you know what became of the last man who took it?

S.: I can't say that I do. He couldn't make it pay, so he had to go.

B. (Brooding): He couldn't make it pay, so he had to go. Go where? (Then, raising his voice and shaking his head.) No, Squire, no. My lads have seen too much of what happens to tenants nowadays; they've seen too many of them, after struggling to pay the rent for years, driven off the land into the towns to rot, or working on the fields they once called their own as day labourers, with nothing to look forward to but the workhouse or the grave.

S. (Uneasily, but assumed heartiness): Why, Bolton, I fear you're becoming a pessimist in your old age.

B.: Aye, maybe I am. Still, none of my lads will work either as gamekeepers or tenants. Their forbears for centuries have tilled their own land, and so will they, even though they have to leave the Old Country to do so.

S. (Evidently glad to change the conversation): Leave the country. Is that their latest notion?

B.: Yes. They are talking of trying their luck in Canada or Australia, where land is easy to be had, they say, though I doubt whether it be as good as here—and it's breaking their mother's heart, it is.

S.: Oh! She shouldn't be so faint-hearted. They'll do well enough. Besides, it's under the same old flag, and their work and pluck will help to build up our world-wide Empire.

B.: But wouldn't they be doing of that at home, at the very heart of the Empire, where they've been born and bred? A good farmer doesn't neglect his best land in order to till worse land. And, Squire, the time may come