

IPSWICH COUNCIL'S UNEMPLOYMENT ENQUIRY

SOME MONTHS ago Ipswich Borough Council appointed a committee to investigate unemployment in the borough and to consider whether any steps could be taken to reduce the number of unemployed and whether any restrictions on development exist in the town which should be renewed in order to promote employment. The committee, the chairman of which is Mr A. S. Stokes, has recently issued a preliminary report.

It shows that the minimum monthly figure of unemployment during the last ten years was $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent unemployed. The maximum was more than four times that figure. Suggestions for dealing with the problem were invited from employers, trade associations, and others and 73 replies were received. Many envisaged the carrying of building and other works. Of these some would involve no charge on the rates "if commercially practicable," others would involve a charge on the rates, but in both cases the committee reported that these schemes would give no permanent relief.

A variety of proposals of a general character were submitted, such as raising the school leaving age, and compulsory retirement of older workmen, but these would evidently not increase employment and would simply spread it over a different class of persons. Various suggestions were put forward for exempting buildings from rates either temporarily or permanently, for rating unused sites, and for rating all sites. It was also suggested that a secret fund should be established to facilitate the purchase of sites for the Council without the identity of the purchaser being disclosed.

The following paragraphs are taken from the preliminary conclusions at which the committee has arrived :—

"It should be remarked that none of the public works in contemplation provides permanent relief of any consequence but that all of it will increase the value of neighbouring properties.

"Your committee find that nearly half the land of the borough is either unused or assessed as agricultural land and is accordingly de-rated, so freeing the owners from paying rates. Yet the cheapest land available is seven times the agricultural value and fifty times this value is commonly paid before building development can proceed.

"Owners of properties undoubtedly are encouraged, in paying no rates, to withhold land from use pending the rise in prices which is bound to occur as the population of the borough increases.

"Most of the development work proposed involves the acquisition of land, the high prices of which very much delay the activities of private enterprise and of the Council committees, who are loath to declare broad policies of street widening or other development on account of the price-raising effect of such declarations.

"The assessment to rates of buildings and improvements inevitably discourage development.

"The possibility of a readjustment of the rating system would seem to your committee therefore to merit careful investigation.

"Work undertaken to provide temporary relief, unless it is of a revenue-earning type, is bound adversely to affect the rates, and ratepayers who would keep rates to a minimum are reminded of their obligation either to face the expense of relief works or of relief, or to provide a solution of the problem which will tend to reduce rather than raise their rates and taxes."

WILLIAM McGUINNESS

Death has taken another great admirer of Henry George, and a powerful supporter of the Single Tax Movement, for our friend William McGuinness fell a victim to pneumonia and died on 22nd April.

It has been my privilege to know him for almost forty years, and a more delightful companion could scarcely be found. In spite of his having read *Progress and Poverty* as many times as there were years in his life, he attended the classes, and studied each lesson week by week ; for he said there was always something more to be learned. Quiet, unassuming ; always keeping in the background, yet he exercised an influence greater than can be estimated.

His method was that of Socrates, and he forced people to think for themselves. He was quick to see a fallacy in an argument, and his working knowledge of logic made debating with him a hopeless struggle.

Always a reader and student, he happened one night to hear a man speaking at the Wellington Column. When the meeting ended, he and a friend introduced themselves to the orator. It was Edward McHugh (and with him was Dick McGee), and the party broke up at three o'clock next morning on the Liverpool Landing Stage. That was his first introduction to Henry George, and the faith implanted by McHugh grew stronger and stronger year by year. The Single Tax was something more than a fiscal reform ; it was a philosophy, a religion. It was the dew which could guide mankind out of the political and economic labyrinth. In his early days he was a great walker, and Sunday morning often found him miles in the country with *Progress and Poverty* in one pocket and Cobbett's *English Grammar* in the other. Though better fitted than most of us to expound the gospel, he could never be persuaded to speak in public, not from diffidence, lack of confidence, but just his natural dislike of publicity. For if you came across a little knot of men, and McGuinness in the midst of them you could be sure that he would be doing all the talking, and they straining their ears to catch every word. He might have said with Horace :

"Nec recito quiquam, nisi amicis, idque coactus ;
bon ubivis coramve quibuslibet."

Take him all in all, we shall never see his like again.

JOS. W. FOLEY.

William McGuinness was one of the founders of the Liverpool League for the Taxation of Land Values, which to the last he supported most generously out of a meagre income—how generously only a few of us know, for he insisted on remaining anonymous in respect of his largest subscriptions. With single-hearted fervour he gave himself to the Henry George movement. Although a man of wide culture and high capacity, his modesty was extreme and kept him from public speaking. His calm and gentle presence predisposed everyone favourably. He watched with joy the success of the classes of the Henry George School of Social Science in bringing new and convinced adherents. With deep truth it can be said that he lived in the shadow of eternity. His guiding principle was that he should seek what good he might do and never turn himself away from any who sought his help ; and he applied that principle in countless unadvertised deeds. His memory will always remain with us who had the privilege of his friendship.

FRANK R. JONES.

Light on the Land Question. By an eminent London Journalist (Anon). 6d.