

## WORKING CLASS CONSERVATIVES

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present the working classes, there is something irrational in a member of this class not voting Labour. But some said they voted Conservative because they promised more personal freedom. Others said that Conservative leaders,



being better educated, could "manage the economy" more skilfully. If one accepts the planned economy this is not irrational. Conservatives vie with Labour leaders in wellfarism, and the record of recent Labour governments suggests that Conservatives could not manage the economy worse than Labour politicians. This enquiry might have been more revealing if the question had been put: "Why do you *not* vote Labour?" It might have been more revealing still if some wealthy persons, including land speculators, had been asked: "Why do you find it to your interest to support Labour?"

In its object and method this book is typical of the dominant influences in contemporary thought. The authors do not set themselves to investigate any aspect of truth likely to promote improvement in politics and society, but only to present the result of a survey of opinion undertaken in the same spirit as a market survey for a new detergent. It will be useful for political strategists but not to public-spirited citizens. The effect is likely to be the promotion of the general impression that public affairs are matters of expediency only and best left to the experts and that there is something inferior and unscientific in feeling deeply moved at injustice and impelled to take one's side in the eternal struggle between good and evil in the world.

The subject might have suggested the question of how to reconcile indiscriminate franchise with political wisdom. The authors quote several writers in the 1860s who considered this, but they do not enlarge upon it, and they omit J. S. Mill's *Representative Government*, 1860, a notable contribution to the subject. Mill contended that unless there were a general understanding of some personal rights that no government must infringe, democracy might be more of a danger than a benefit; that although electors could not themselves have knowledge of all the details of government, they were capable of responding to the appeal of honest and able men who could do so; but for this purpose it was essential that electors should be free to vote for personal, not party, representatives, so that minority opinions could have an equitable voice in deciding policy. Thus, with genuine free and independent discussion in Parliament, there would be opportunity

for truth to prevail over error and so check the prevalence of mass ignorance and its exploiters.

Mill's warning has been ignored. Conservatives at the time hoped to check bad democracy by insisting on a property qualification for electors; this has been swept away and in the process it has helped to bring property into disrepute. Conservative leaders have since, by political manoeuvre, succeeded in maintaining their power, but only at the expense of all that is valuable in the Conservative principle. By joining with socialists to impose the planned economy they have sapped respect for those essential rights on which good democracy depends. The Conservative principle of resisting mistaken and injurious changes is a most valuable element in politics, but those independent spirited Conservatives who assert it are repudiated by their compromising leaders.

The authors of this book received financial and other assistance from various public and semi-public bodies such as the London School of Economics, the University of Michigan, and the Centre for Social Organisation Studies at the University of Chicago. One feels that the public interest might have been better served if the same resources, together with the undoubted ability of the authors, had been put into an effort to awaken the public to their essential rights and thus diffuse the light of knowledge necessary for correct opinion in social and political matters.

## EUSTACE DAVIES

**E**USTACE ARTHUR DAVIES of Cardiff died at a mature age on the 9th July, 1968.

It was given to him to see the introduction of the Henry George movement in this country, but although he was a young man when George came here, he did not actually meet him. He was to become a dedicated follower, however, and was one of the founders of the Welsh League for the Taxation of Land Values.

He bore the burdens of the day in a very real sense. He was the League's Honorary Secretary and all the propaganda work and organisation fell upon him. The law office he occupied was often given over to the work of the League.

These efforts resulted, amongst other things, in the calling of a meeting of the municipal corporations by the Cardiff City Council to consider the rating of land values.

The Finance Act of 1931 seemed at last to spell the beginning of the reform, but the repeal of it on the change of Government which followed before the measure was put into effect, left him disheartened.

He nevertheless persisted, frequently almost as a one man effort but, the passage of time took his strength, and when he lost his wife, who was ever with him in his efforts, he was obliged to yield to his years.

Our sympathy goes to his brother, Mr. John Davies, and his sisters, Mrs. S. O. Harris and Mrs. S. Griffiths, and particularly to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Edith Edwards, who devoted herself to him in his failing years. E.S.B.