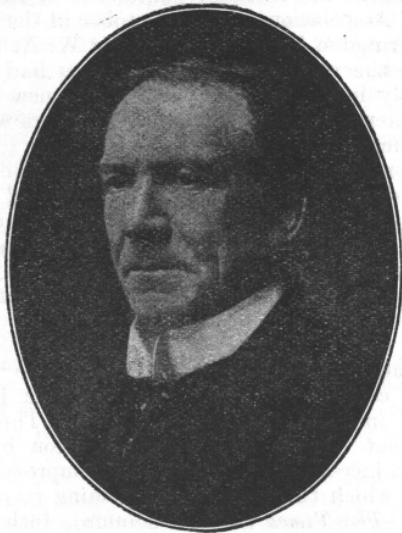


LORD STRATHCLYDE



The announcement of the passing of Lord Strathclyde which occurred on 3rd October brought many tributes in the Press to this man of outstanding ability who gave remarkable services to his country. He was in his seventy-sixth year and for the past eight years had lived in quiet retirement, mostly at his home at Cairndhu near Helensburgh. Previous to that he had held the chief judicial position in Scotland, the Lord Presidency of the Court of Session, for a period of seven years, having left the political platform and the parliamentary career where, as Mr Alexander Ure, he had made his name a household word.

His title to our grateful remembrance is the splendid service he rendered to the cause of land value taxation. In 1905 he took office in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's administration as Solicitor-General for Scotland and four years later became Lord Advocate. One of the first measures the Liberal Government introduced was the Land Values (Scotland) Taxation Bill, 1906, which was referred to a Select Committee presided over by Mr Ure. The Bill had been promoted by the Glasgow Corporation following upon a well-organized municipal agitation, in which Glasgow took the lead. But the history of the Bill and the fate of the measures proposed to make it effective are matters for another story. The Select Committee reported in a document which showed Mr Ure's mastery of the subject in its principles and application; it made an addition of the utmost value to the literature of the movement. The ink was hardly dry upon it before Mr Ure went on the platform to carry its message far and wide. His campaign was organized and conducted by the United Committee, and under its auspices he took part in no fewer than nineteen large and representative Conferences in the biggest cities in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, besides addressing many other public meetings arranged by the United Committee in conjunction with local Leagues and other Associations.

From 1906 to 1909 Mr Ure thus blazed the trail and when the Budget of 1909 came with its great challenge to land monopoly he was naturally wanted everywhere. Keeping at the propaganda till 1913, he never spared himself but continued as he had done since 1905 to charm his audiences with his instructive and attractive eloquence. What impressed his listeners was that he spoke without any note whatever, and yet the speech was so clear and concise that next day it could be put into pamphlet form without the alteration of a word. A number of his addresses were thus

published by the United Committee.

Those who were present at his meetings and helped to organize them will never forget them and will regard their association with them as part of the most successful and inspiring political work ever undertaken. One may recall just two examples of his oratory, citing them also to indicate with what force he drove home his points. The first of the *Notes for Speakers*, published by the United Committee in 1913, set forth Mr Ure's "Six Reasons for Taxing Land Values" which he named in his speech in the Alexandra Palace, London, on 28th June, 1909. They were:—

FIRST.—The land comes from the hand of the Creator, and does not owe its existence to man.

SECOND.—The land is limited in quantity; you can no more add an acre to the area of a country than you can add a cubit to your stature.

THIRD.—The land is necessary for our existence; it is necessary for our production; it is necessary when we wish to exchange our products with one another.

FOURTH.—The value of the land is independent of the value of any buildings or other improvements upon it.

FIFTH.—Land owes its value entirely to the presence and activity and demand of the community.

SIXTH.—Land cannot be carried away and cannot be concealed.

And Mr Ure added: "Do you know, does any man in this room know of any other commodity which possesses all these characteristics? If he does, let him name it now, and I will mention it to the Chancellor of the Exchequer." Needless to say, no answer has ever been given to that question.

To Mr Ure, the 1909 Budget was of vital importance, not because of the (miscalled) land value duties it imposed, but because of the promise of the land valuation that would lay the foundation for a great and beneficial reform. On that he placed emphasis repeatedly in unmistakable terms as in his address at the Gladstone Park Demonstration, Dollis Hill, London, on 24th September, 1910:—

My object is to lift off all taxation and rating from the product of men's industry, energy and expenditure and to lay all taxation and rating by-and-by on the value of the land alone. I tell you frankly there are no land reformers who would think it worth their while to have a different valuation made if they were to stop merely at the collection of the Budget taxes. They are keen that the valuation should be made for a greater purpose still—in order that they may in time remove all rating and taxing from the value of buildings and improvements—the work of men's hands—and place the whole of it upon the basis of the value of the land. The result of all this will be that the land will be free, the great monopoly will be broken down and freer access will be given to God's earth to those who are able and willing to make the best of the land. Men will be encouraged henceforward to make a profitable use of their land, to spend money upon it in labour and material, and so the wealth of the whole community will be vastly increased.

This statement was suitably illustrated in an action picture published two days later in the *Daily Mirror*, showing Mr Ure's characteristic gestures as a speaker.

There was certainly widespread regret when in 1913 such a redoubtable fighter for social and economic reform left the political arena. He went to the Court of Session but not to lose his interest in the objects he had sought to advance as a politician. After his retirement to private life he corresponded now and then. Writing to Mr John Paul on 22nd November,

1920, in regard to proposals for land value rating then before the Manchester City Council, his word was: "I am sorry that for health and other reasons I am unable to play my part in preaching the soundness of this basis of rating. My views about it remain unchanged."

When the United Committee entered its new offices on 27th June, 1910, advantage was taken of the occasion to entertain Mr Ure and present him with an illuminated address in which was put on record the admiration and gratitude of his co-workers for the powerful, courageous and effectual aid which he rendered to the movement for the Taxation of Land Values. That tribute is now to the memory of the champion we had, and by resolution of the Committee on 4th October it was conveyed, with an expression of deep sympathy in their bereavement, to Lady Strathclyde and other relatives. In this message we sincerely join.

A. W. M.

THE LAND VALUES CAMPAIGN

Mr C. G. Ammon, M.P., at Chester

It is gratifying to see the useful Press reports of the various meetings that have been organized by the Land Values Campaign Committee, such as for example, those addressed by Mr Ashley Mitchell at Lincoln, 5th October, Mr Ben Riley, M.P., and Sir Edgar Harper at Sheffield, 6th October; Mr T. W. Stamford, M.P., at Grantham, 16th October; Mr C. G. Ammon, M.P. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty in the Labour Government) at Chester on 17th October, reported extensively in the *Cheshire Observer* of 20th October; Messrs George Barker, M.P., and D. J. Vaughan at Abertillery, 21st October; and other meetings.

Mr C. G. Ammon, in the course of his speech, said that by the hold up of land, the landowners were growing richer and richer by the value that was created by the community. They not only did that, but did not pay a penny towards taxation and rating on the land held up. They should be rated and taxed on the economic value that had been created by the community round about. Let them take, for instance, the case of Golders Green. Exorbitant prices were asked for the land when two railway companies in London developed towards there. Until the railways went there, Golders Green was purely agricultural land, worth a few pounds an acre. Every landowner should be made to pay rates and taxes on the full value of the bare land, even though only half of it was used. They must abolish present rates and taxes, which heaped all the burden on improvements, and so often kept them from being made, thus causing unemployment. This would give all land its very best use, and they would no longer see unused land or labour starved land side by side with men who sought work.

Mr George Barker, M.P., at Abertillery

The *South Wales Gazette* of 26th October reports very fully the speeches of Messrs George Barker and D. J. Vaughan at Abertillery on 23rd October. Adjoining matter is an article on Land Monopoly and the Housing Question by Mr E. R. Pike.

Sir Edgar Harper, besides his constant active work on the platform, which is instanced by his recent meetings in Sheffield, Edinburgh and Glasgow, is ever busy with his pen, and numerous letters to the Press have appeared over his signature. He took a notable part in the correspondence arising out of the Sheffield Reports and the discussion in the Council. On the 16th October he addressed a letter to 100 newspapers dealing with the municipal elections and setting forth four excellent reasons for the Rating of Land Values.

NOTES AND NEWS

Speaking at the Autumn Conference of the London Teachers' Association on 13th October in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, Mr W. A. Llewellyn said that the number of cellar dwellers had increased enormously in the last 30 years. He knew places in Westminster where people lived in cellars which are under other cellars.

Whether the Conference was shown the relation between slums and poverty and dear land was not reported. But it came up against the land question all the same, in a decision not to proceed with a proposal to provide sports grounds for members. One objection was stated to be the high prices asked for suitable grounds.

* * *

On a rumour that the Hampstead "Tube" is to be extended certain land near Edgware has just been advanced in price by £250 an acre. There is no "betterment" levy—that is, contribution by owners out of the increment of value due to improvements in transport which they have done nothing to initiate or promote.—*The Times* (Estate Column), 15th October.

* * *

In an advertisement in the *Evening Standard* (London) of 26th October, the City of Sydney, N.S.W., invites subscription to a new debenture loan. By way of information to subscribers, it is stated that the unimproved capital value of lands on which the rates are levied is £61,352,514, and the average annual value [of land and improvements—Editor *L. & L.*] is £8,601,840. The Municipal Council has power to levy a rate up to 2s. in the £ on the average annual value, plus 3d. in the £ on the unimproved capital value, or alternatively up to 6d. in the £ wholly on the unimproved capital value. The present rate is 3½d. in the £ on the unimproved capital value, leaving uncalled rate value 2½d. in the £, amounting to £833,509.

* * *

At the opening session of the Banking Class in the Edinburgh University, Mr Allan M'Neil, M.A., S.S.C., dealing with the Agricultural Credits Act, said the five leading banks in England and Wales, apart altogether from loans from other banks, have outstanding advances to agriculturists of £51,000,000, of which £26,000,000 represent loans for purchase of agricultural land, and £25,000,000 represent loans for current trading.

* * *

We gladly notice the space given by the Conservative *Yorkshire Post* to the series of letters on Free Trade written by Mr A. W. Dakers in a prolonged controversy on "Safeguarding." Our correspondent has not failed to deal radically with the question as a Land Value Taxer, and he greatly appreciates, as we do, the courtesy the Editor has shown.

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