

Henry Georgism In Britain

The Situation Analyzed

The Labor Government's Attitude

[J. O'Donnell Derrick, author of the following article, is correspondent for Scotland of *The Irish Weekly*, and of *The Irish Morning News*. "For over forty years," he writes, "I have given to the best of my little ability, journalistically and otherwise, adhesion to the principles of "Progress and Poverty," never subordinating those principles for the sake of any worldly advancement in journalism". To the editor of LAND AND FREEDOM he states, "I can never forget Parnell's old dictum, Never trust British parties. That advice is strengthened by the attitude of the Labor Government, which I thought would have taken advantage of the Budget to collect to some extent Land Values, as the House of Lords cannot alter, amend or add to any Budget which, once it passes the House of Commons, must be taken to the King for signature and made law irrespective of any decision of the House of Lords, under the terms of the Parliament Act of 1911". Henry Georgists in the U. S. A. will find the appended matter a fair summary of the situation in Britain. This article also appeared in the *Irish Weekly*—Editor LAND AND FREEDOM.]

MR. SNOWDEN introduced his Budget in the House of Commons on Monday, April 14th. In it he failed to impose Taxation of Land Values. On Tuesday there was an interesting development. In London there was a meeting of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, with which is associated all the leagues in Scotland, England and Wales that have the same object.

THE RESULT

There was unanimously passed a resolution which was sent to the press and to members of parliament. The resolution was as follows:

"We, the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, profoundly regret that the Budget does not obtain revenue by the taxation of land values in fulfilment of the definite pledges given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other spokesmen of the Government, and that the Budget fails to remit any of the Protectionist tariffs, indirect taxes and burdens on industry levied by previous Governments;

"We emphatically reaffirm our adherence to land value taxation and complete freedom of trade as the means to secure public values for public uses, and the removal of imposts on trade, industry and improvements;

"We recall the repeated statements of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that when the previous Labor Government was in office, plans for the taxation of land values were in an active state of preparation, and that when he introduced his next Budget it would include a 'drastic' measure of this character;

"Having regard to Mr. Snowden's Budget statement that 'many considerations have brought him to the conclusion that the most expeditious and effective way' to proceed with land value legislation is to have a separate Land Valuation Bill which will provide the basis for both the taxation and rating of land values, and that this Bill is to be introduced 'forthwith,' we urge that any such measure should ascertain the true market value of all land, irrespective of its use and apart from buildings and other improvements; and that the valuation should be open to public inspection and be periodically revised and kept up to date;

"In the conviction that the way to break down the obstacles which prevent employment is by the overthrow of land monopoly and the removal of rates and taxes on industry—in other words by land value taxation and Free Trade—we press on the Government the necessity of carrying this legislation into effect without delay."

MR. SNOWDEN'S NEW MOVE

The Chancellor of the Exchequer evidently heard of the developments at the United Committee meeting on Tuesday night, as on Wednesday, April 16th, he made the following pronouncement in the House of Commons:—

Mr. Philip Snowden said:—

"There is only one other matter to which I must make some reference, and that is the taxation of land values. Some of my friends have expressed regret that it has not been possible to introduce this proposal into the Budget. I should have liked to have done it. The right honorable gentleman the Member for Carnarvon (Mr. Lloyd George) raised the same question quite mildly. But he does not understand the difference between today and 1909.

"The right honorable gentleman appears to have forgotten that the Budget in which he brought forward those proposals took 189 days in Committee in this House, that it took 12 months to a day to get the Finance Bill through and then only after a General Election.

"Something has happened since then. Only the older Members of the House will remember Tommy Bowles, who got passed through this House the Collection of Taxes Act. Under that Act there is a time-table for the stages of the Finance Bill, and if we do not get the Bill by a certain date the resolutions lapse and the financial system of the country is thrown into chaos.

"The Finance Bill must become law by August 4th. If it does not, we cannot collect taxes, and everyone who has paid taxes under the Finance Bill can claim to have them repaid.

"I am as anxious as most landtaxers that this question should be dealt with as expeditiously as possible. Some

of my land-tax friends are very difficult people to please. They are like all people with one idea; they think there is nothing else in the world that is of the least importance. But there are other questions.

"We have a terribly overcrowded Parliamentary programme, and it is very largely due to the very worthy desire of our friends to see everything done in the present Session of Parliament—as though we were going soon to be out of office. We have slum clearance, the raising of the school age, and one or two other matters and the programme is terribly crowded.

"I have thought weeks and months about this, but I realized that it could not be done with any possibility that we could get our proposals carried into law this year.

"The right honorable Member for Carnarvon Boroughs said that land valuation had already been done, but

THE VALUATION THAT HE MADE IS REALLY OF NO USE AT ALL

"His proposals were something quite different from what I should have made, and they are practically of no use in this case.

"Therefore a new valuation will be needed, but I will say this: that if there are difficulties in the way, if there is hostility in the way, to prevent us getting the Valuation Bill through this Session, then I shall make every possible effort, even if it mean in the next Budget the sacrifice of all those matters of detail and administration and the like which form so large a part in every Finance Bill, to carry this valuation by the insertion of an impost upon land values in the next Budget. But I hope that will not be necessary. We shall introduce the Valuation Bill forthwith, and we shall make every effort to have it passed into law this Session."

SITUATION ALTERED

Mr. John Paul, a former Glaswegian, is secretary of the United Committee. He and the writer of these notes, as unsalaried Henry George propagandists, founded the journal now known as *Land and Liberty*, away back in June of 1894, in Glasgow. With the Tuesday's speech of Mr. Snowden, Mr. Paul sent the following note:—

"I enclose copy of extract from Mr. Snowden's speech in the House of Commons. It would have been well for our discussions here on Tuesday if he had made this declaration when introducing his Budget.

"It is an important pronouncement and has completely altered the situation.

It is now my considered judgment that we can welcome the Chancellor's statement, do our utmost to see that the Valuation Bill is on sound lines, and during the next twelve months take a principal part in maintaining the agitation for the policy."

THE PARLIAMENT ACT: ITS TERMS

Friend Paul is right. Mr. Snowden's Wednesday's statement, which only reached the Glasgow office of *Irish*

Weekly on Friday, April 18th, completely alters the situation and gives ground for hope, but in no way alters the justice and reasonableness of the criticism offered last week. For instance, take the plea of Mr. Snowden in the second paragraph of the above speech. He mentions that it took Mr. Lloyd George twelve months to get his Budget through.

Quite true but there was then no Parliament Act in existence.

Then the Tommy Bowles Act does not alter the Parliament Act which became law on August 18th, 1911.

Clause One of the Parliament Act provides that if a Money Bill passed by the House of Commons is not passed by the House of Lords without amendment within one month, it shall be presented for the Royal assent and become law, notwithstanding that the House of Lords has refused to pass it. A Money Bill is described so as to include every kind of financial proposal and "subordinate matters incidental to those subjects"; and the power of deciding whether a Bill is or is not a Money Bill is vested in the Speaker of the House of Commons.

The foregoing statement of the effect of the Parliament Act appears in the "Liberal Handbook," in 1923, published by the Liberal Publication Department, and the author is Mr. Harold Storey.

MR. SNOWDEN'S ANXIETY

Mr. Snowden, in his Wednesday's speech, states he is "as anxious as most land taxers, that this question should be dealt with as expeditiously as possible." If that is so, then he ought to have included his valuation proposals in the Budget, and imposed in it a tax on land values. He knows perfectly well there will be "hostility" to his valuation measure, that it will rouse landlord interests against it in a way no other proposal will.

Why then keep the Valuation Bill out of the Budget, when he could have, once it passed the Commons, made it law? Why put off the struggle that will in any case ensue?

If opponents throw the finances of the country into chaos, well let them. Their doing so would only rouse the country all the more to secure Budget taxation of land values. It was the tactics of Mr. John E. Redmond and the Irish Party forced Mr. Asquith's hands, and latterly secured the passage of the Parliament Act. The Labor Government is badly in need of tactics of the calibre of the old Irish Party. Mr. Snowden has his whack at the "people with one idea."

A PRESENT TO MR. SNOWDEN

It is concerning a quotation from a speech of Mr. Lloyd George, who, at Aberdeen on November 29th, 1912, said:—

"Search out every problem, look into those questions thoroughly, and the more thoroughly you look into them you will find that the land is at the root of them. Housing, wages, food, health, the development of a virile, independent, manly imperial race—You must have a free

land system as an essential condition of these. To use a gardening phrase: our social and economic condition is root-bound by the feudal system. It has no room to develop, but its roots are breaking out. Well, let's burst it!"

MORE CRITICISM

Mr. Snowden by his tactics has delayed the "bursting" process. As a matter of fact the career of the Government since it assumed office has been in antagonism to the philosophy Mr. Snowden preached in the Memorial Hall, London, on May 24th, 1919, when he said: "Every social reform increased the economic rent of land. Therefore, unless they were going "to waste their efforts by tinkering with social questions, as in the past, they must concentrate upon this fundamental question: to secure the land for the people."

That the Labor Government since it obtained office have wasted their efforts is pretty evident. It has gone on administratively and otherwise, increasing economic rent and providing landowners with millions of pounds. The question arises: will it now "forthwith," to use Mr. Snowden's word, really press forward the valuation measure, or will it, anxious for office, give other proposals of a petty character precedence?

MR. SNOWDEN'S BROADCAST TALK

In his broadcast speech, Mr. Snowden is reported to have stated:—

"I propose this year to take the first steps to secure to the community some portion of the enhanced value of the land which is created by the community itself.

If our ancestors had had the foresight and the wisdom to impose a duty on land values a hundred years ago, what vast wealth that has fallen haphazard into the hands of private citizens would have been available for beneficent State purposes! The justice of the claim of the community to share in land values has long been to me a cherished conviction. That conviction is shared by two parties of the land. I am not, indeed, proposing to levy a duty on land values in this Budget. I am not even prejudging what the form of the impost should be. Both the State and the local authorities have claims to be weighed. That is a question which must come afterwards. First of all, we need a valuation. It is only when site value of land has been ascertained—a lengthy process—that money can be raised.

But we shall introduce a Valuation Bill for the ascertainment of the site value of land, and as soon as legislation can be passed we shall press on actively with the task of valuation so that this long overdue reform may be inaugurated with the least possible delay."

A DELUSION

Mr. Snowden is suffering from a delusion, if he fancies Land Value disciples want a Valuation Bill merely "for the ascertainment of the site value of land."

That may be the view of Mr. Snowden, and, if so, it is one which will please Whig Liberals and agricultural landowners.

What is wanted is not a valuation merely of "sites," but of all land, irrespective of improvements, a valuation on these lines of all rural as well as urban land.

Henry George disciples know that a tax on agricultural—as well as site—land values will operate to break up big estates, thereby causing a big distribution of ground and so provide for more users. To exempt agricultural land values would tend to keep in existence high rents, withholding of land from use, and promote land speculation. In and around cities and towns there is land claimed as agricultural, rented at about thirty shillings an acre; but when wanted for building purposes the selling price has ranged from £200 to £1,200 an acre in some cases in the neighborhood of Glasgow.

The Land Value M. P.s will offer strenuous opposition to any measure that is merely for the "ascertainment of site values."

NEW FORCES ON LABOR SIDE

If the Valuation Bill satisfies Henry Georgites, the Government will have a new force on its side in the constituencies—men with years of experience of propaganda work. Landlord interests in the Commons are likely to obstruct the passage of the measure very fiercely. With the assistance of the Liberals, it ought to pass the Commons, and may be rejected in the House of Lords. It will then be up to the Government, if it lasts till then, to tack on the measure to the next Budget.

J. O'D. DERRICK.

Activities In New York

OUR friends of the Commonwealth Land party in this city have not been inactive. Gathering their members together for field work over ten thousand circulars were distributed in one day in subways and at the city ferries. This large page circular written by George Lloyd showed how \$800,000,000 of land values are allowed to escape while the officials of the city are seeking new sources of revenue!

Both George Lloyd and M. Van Veen have addressed a number of meetings in the last two months. Mr. Van Veen appeared before the 23rd Assembly District League of Woman Voters and spoke for two hours. Other meetings addressed by this indefatigable worker were the Hamilton Community Council and the Socialist Club of Brooklyn, where George Lloyd also spoke.

OUR machines long ago solved the problem of production. Why should not our statesmen and captains of industry use their genius and experience for the solution of the pressing problem of distribution?

—CLARENCE DARROW, in *Plain Talk*.