

HENRY GEORGE'S ARGUMENT

By G. R. Harrison, N.S.W.

We, the people, live on this earth, have grown out of the earth. We have a right to be on the earth; can exist only by using the earth. Material of the earth, we breathe, we eat, we drink, are clothed and sheltered withal.

Our right on the earth is: each to be free to use it.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," sang the Royal Psalmist, and though we have permitted it to be believed that "the earth is the landlord's" and all its wonderful fulness, we *know* it is not so.

Other rights man has on the earth:—

1. All have an equal and unquestionable right to be on the earth.

2. Each has a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

3. Each has a right that he shall not be hurt by his fellow.

4. His right to freely use the earth.

5. His right to own that which he creates or produces.

When a man occupies a site upon God's earth, there is nothing to pay to any man for his permission for him to occupy, every other person has the same right to use it, *but, he is using it* and for others to try and use it *would hurt him*, and his right is not to be hurt by his fellow.

But what is to hinder each man fencing in ten, aye, twenty times what he can use and claim that he is using it?

Where it hurts no one what matters, but where men settle thickly, there is a principle which makes them reduce the area they hold to the smallest.

Nothing is to be paid to any man for permission to use, but where man lives close to his fellows, he makes roads, starts services, shops, workshops, and carries round goods his fellows are ready to buy; the more of these services are within reach of a site, the more desirable is that site, *the measure of desirability is value*. Men are ready to pay the holder of a very desirable site to vacate in his favour, and to buy all improvements he has put on the site; whether he agrees and sells or values his advantages more than the others offer, he has shown that there is a distinct value in "the advantages made by man to be enjoyed in occupying that site."

Governments of some sort are established, that is, the people decide to appoint some of their number to collect help to make the roads and other utilities all desire, all giving their help in one form or another, but, what would be the right principle to decide how much should be the contribution of each siteholder?

Why! The value of the advantages the community has given that site, as measured by what others would give for those advantages.

Where these advantages are very great, as in large cities, if we collect, yearly, the amount people would pay by the year for these man-made improvements, none would—could—profitably hold more than just enough for their purposes, doing all they could to reduce their area, to reduce their annual rental.

Thus, you see that the annual rental is not payment to man for permission to use God's earth, it is payment to the community for the help given to the site user, it is the wages of the community.

This explains how we may live freely upon God's earth, as God intends, rendering to every man that which is man's.

This is the real meaning of Henry George's teaching, it agrees with God's law, as we find it in this Creation, the Cosmos.

EDWIN ADAM, K.C.

As intimated in the Scottish League notes in *Land & Liberty* for November-December, our never-to-be-forgotten Edwin Adam, K.C., passed away on the 21st September, 1931, in his 70th year. He was one of the men who formed the United Committee at 14, Barton Street, Westminster, on 23rd March, 1907; but before that event he had years of active work in the cause to his credit, as Vice-President of the Scottish League and President of the Edinburgh League for the Taxation of Land Values.

Mr Adam was educated at Edinburgh Academy and had a distinguished career at Edinburgh and Leipzig. He was called to the Scottish Bar in 1885 and in 1905 became Advocate Depute. In 1895 he contested as Liberal candidate the Glasgow Central Division and in 1900 the West Division of Edinburgh. In both contests he was known and respected for his fearless advocacy of individual rights in the land and the claim of the community to its communal value.

His well-sustained efforts and enterprise in maintaining and extending the propaganda made him an outstanding figure in Edinburgh and the East of Scotland.

He was widely known and respected as an outspoken Radical who, as his wife has well said, "never had a mean or petty thought about anyone."

Mr Adam's *Précis of Evidence* was recognized as an impressive and lucid statement that marked him out as an authority on the Land Value question. It was taken to be a document of singular strength and character, and, along with his cross-examination by the Committee, was printed in pamphlet form. Admittedly this publication did much at the time to strengthen the growing opinion for the policy in Parliamentary circles. At the very beginning of the *Précis*, Mr Adam affirmed: "I approve of the principle of the Bill, and hope the principle may be extended so as to apply alike to urban and rural rating."

Following this intellectual triumph his well-known book entitled *Taxation of Land Values* was given to the movement. It was speedily exhausted and a reprint met with the same friendly reception.

Unhappily for the cause, shortly after his appearance at the Select Committee, Mr Adam's public service came to an end. He was offered and accepted the position of principal Clerk of the Session of the Scottish Law Courts, Edinburgh, which he occupied for full 20 years, retiring in October, 1927. Commenting on this step, Lord Strathclyde (then known as Alexander Ure) remarked to the present writer: "It should not be allowed."

Shortly after his retirement from the Court of Session, I met Edwin Adam in London, when we had an enjoyable evening together, going over old ground, counting the gains and losses. He was just recovering from an illness at the time, but in conversation he had all his old charm which seemed intuitively to spring from his resolution to do the right thing, allowing the consequences to take care of themselves. He was the same strong, generous-minded colleague that a generation ago we who knew him and worked with him had learned to love and esteem. He lives on in the spirit.

To Mrs Adam in her bereavement we extend our sincerest sympathy.

J. P.