

the Henry George News

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Winston Churchill

WITH the passing of Sir Winston Churchill, one of the few remaining great men of our era has left us. Georgists have a particular reason for remembering him.

Henry George left a deep impression in England, and his influence was felt when the Liberal party adopted land value taxation and free trade in its platform. Swept to victory in 1907, the Liberal party formed a brilliant government led by Lloyd George, Churchill, Campbell-Bannerman and Lord Asquith. A budget was prepared in 1909 which called for the valuation of all land for taxation in the United Kingdom — an unprecedented step since the days of William the Conqueror.

Churchill campaigned up and down the country for the proposal, and put to work his well-known eloquence on behalf of land value taxation. In an address at the Drury Lane Theater he said: "We have to face all the resources of a great monopoly, so ancient that it has become almost venerable. We have against us all the modern money power... There are only two ways in which people can acquire wealth. There is production and there is plunder. Production is always beneficial. Plunder is always pernicious, and its proceeds are either monopolized by a few or consumed in the mere struggle for possession... The

present land system hampers, hobbles and restricts industry..."

Unfortunately, the proposal was buried in an avalanche of history — opposition by the Lords, World War I, and the shifting sands of politics. By the 1920's, Churchill was in the Conservative camp, and seemed to have forgotten all about land value taxation and free trade.

Perhaps he had not completely forgotten. Years later he was reminded that he used to sing the Land Song, and he is said to have replied, "show me a crowd and I shall sing it again." After all, he was a politician, and politicians can't do very well without popular support.

Churchill will be most remembered for rallying his country against the Nazis. There is a legend that King Arthur, who fought the Saxon invaders, did not die at his last battle but was carried in a deep sleep to Avalon, and that he would awaken to save his country when it needed him. We need look no further than Winston Churchill for the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Alas that Churchill could not also have been the one to strike the blow for true economic salvation! Other heroes are needed to awaken to this task.

(A pamphlet containing speeches of Churchill on the 1909-10 budget will shortly be reissued by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. The publication will be announced.)