

FRED SKIRROW

ON 16TH FEBRUARY Fred Skirrow ceased his labours for the cause to which he devoted a long life. It was peculiarly fitting that such a campaigner should die peaceably and resignedly in his chair at his office in Keighley. A friend had looked in earlier in the day and found him busy on correspondence. A few months ago he lost his wife, and the strain of helping to nurse her through her long and painful illness had sapped his strength. The esteem in which he was held was shown in the high tributes paid to him in the obituaries appearing in the Bradford, Leeds and Keighley newspapers. Born in Bingley, he was a half-timer in a textile factory at the age of eight. As a young man he went to the U.S.A. in search of work, and later moved to Canada. In 1884 at Hamilton, Ontario, he heard Henry George speak, the meeting being organised by the Knights of Labour, which he had joined. So he was introduced to the principles and ideals that directed all his subsequent thought and endeavour. He gave up factory life to settle as a pioneer on a 100-acre holding on Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron, where the nearest village was 40 miles away, his only near neighbours being Red Indians. Obligated to travel over miles of virgin land in the hands of monopolists, he had to seek out and build for himself and wife a home where land is dear, even if you get it for nothing. He often spoke of his farming experience, using it as an instructive and intimately authentic lesson on what can be achieved, if only labour has access to land, a lesson well taught to any who belittled the land question or who ventured to suggest that capital was a primary or more important factor in wealth production. He had begun to make fair progress, but in that hard struggle and in the isolation Mrs. Skirrow's health broke down, and the new life had to be abandoned. He returned to Hamilton, and in 1886 was back home in Bingley. Later, in Keighley, he became Liberal agent for the division, and in 1903 was appointed secretary of the Yorkshire and Northern Counties Land Values League, at which post as organiser, speaker and most prolific newspaper correspondent he did restless duty to the last moment. There was seldom a conference or public demonstration or campaign of open air meetings where his services were not called upon, and such expeditions took him to many parts of the country, as also to Denmark for the 1926 International Conference in Copenhagen. For any audience there was attraction in his resonant voice and genial manner, above all in the confidence he easily captured by his sincerity and the simple unadorned oratory with which he spoke as man to man. One could envy him his ability to make friends and draw the stranger willingly into discussion on the unflinching topic. As distributor of the printed word, as salesman of the book and the pamphlet, he had few equals. He was

one of the founder-members of the United Committee. His memory will be cherished by his colleagues and co-workers in Yorkshire and far afield, and he will be missed as much by those controversialists in the Press who never failed to get Fred's prompt rebuttal of their contentions or inducement to develop them. To his sisters, brother and niece we extend our sympathy in their bereavement.

Among those present at the funeral were Ashley Mitchell, P. V. Olver, J. W. Booth, H. Coulton, J. Crabtree, C. Dixon, P. Roberts, E. Roper, R. Scaife, E. Spedding, Miss Fanny Thomson and Mrs. Ada Green.

A. C. CAMPBELL

ONE OF the leaders of the Canadian Henry George Movement, Alexander Colin Campbell, aged 86, died at his home in Ottawa on 28th November. His association with the British and International movement was of long standing, as he was for many years a member of the English League, and when the International Union was formed (in 1923) he followed and assisted its activities with the greatest zeal. *Land & Liberty* had in him a missionary who added materially to our circulation in his country. Present at the International Conference and Henry George Centenary in 1939, he provided a paper on "The Man who Invented Plenty," the more gladly and competently because Campbell himself so firmly believed in the Philosophy of Abundance. Reporter and writer, he joined the staff of Hansard at the Ottawa Parliament in 1874, becoming Editor of Debates in 1919 and retiring in 1926. He was engaged during the last few years in writing a history of Canadian Liberalism, unhappily unfinished. He is survived by three children, nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. We extend our sympathy to the bereaved family.

Mr. Donald MacDonald, of Balnabean, Conon Bridge, Ross-shire, who has died in his 91st year, was for a long number of years a member of the Highland Taxation of Land Values League, and regularly attended all the meetings held by it at the Muir of Ord, Dingwall and Culbokie. His stalwart bearing and presence brought a large number of crofters to the meetings, as well as members of old Highland Land League to which he at one time belonged.

Mr. J. A. Marshall addressed the Rotary Club of London on 2nd February on "The Hidden Factor in Industry," Mr. Sydney Pascall moving the vote of thanks. The address is fully reported in the *London Rotarian*, 19th February, and we hope to notice it further next month.

On Thursday evening, 30th March, Councillor S. Needoff is to address the West Derby (Liverpool) Ratepayers' Association in the West Derby Village Hall on "The Need for Rating and Valuation Reform." On 24th February

he addressed the North Staffordshire Branch of the School of Economic Science. He has been busily engaged as a member of the Manchester City Council committee on Land Values, and had an article, "Anomalies in Rating Beset Our Planners," in the *Manchester Evening News* of 9th February.

On 20th February, Mr. F. R. Jones addressed the Liverpool W.E.A. discussion group on "War and Peace." A keen discussion followed and a quantity of *Land & Liberty* literature was sold. At the Bowring Park Study Circle (31 Corwen Crescent, Liverpool, 14), on 12th March, Mr. T. W. Oliver will open a discussion on "Protection or Free Trade and Land Value Taxation."

Dr. D. G. Taylor, President of the Welsh League, has written a paper on the Land Question for the Religion and Life Week to be held in Cardiff in April.

Fred Skirrow's last letter in the *Yorkshire Observer* appeared on 25th January, and the correspondence he has done so much to stimulate goes on.

Last month the letters published in that good "forum" included those by "Audax" (three), P. V. Olver, C. H. Smithson and A. B. Dent. Cuttings are to hand of other correspondence: "A. B." in the *Cornish Times*, A. J. Mace in *Cavalcade*, H. R. Lee (two) in the *Portsmouth Evening News*, A. R. McDougal in the *Scotsman* and *Time and Tide*, and A. H. Weller in the *Stockport Express*, *Clitheroe Advertiser* and other Lancashire papers. Other letters are mentioned elsewhere.

The Manchester League has sent selected leaflets (from those published by the United Committee) to each of the members of the Manchester, Salford and Stockport City Councils. Our advertisement of these leaflets invites the co-operation of all who can, in such ways, help in their circulation. The Manchester League has also issued a special leaflet, "Before the War—After the War—The First Thing Necessary," to local associations with offer to address meetings.

The annual meeting of the Castle Douglas Henry George Fellowship was held on Sunday, the 13th February, at No. 19 King Street, Mr. James Cook in the chair. On Mr. E. J. McManus submitting the resignation of his pro tem secretaryship, because of his return to Merseyside in the near future, Mrs. Margaret McCall, 88 King Street, Castle Douglas, was elected Secretary and Mr. Samuel Locke Colvin was elected Treasurer. The monthly meeting evening was changed from the fourth Sunday in the month to the first Sunday, and some minor amendments were made in the provisional Rules of the Fellowship. At the next monthly meeting, Mr. E. J. McManus will open a discussion on the relation of Rent and Wages.