

ARTHUR HEBDEN WELLER.

In the death of Arthur Weller, on April 26, the Henry George Movement has been bereft of a great stalwart and able exponent. He was aged 86 and had only just retired because of the illness that overtook him, from the secretaryship of the Manchester Land Values League. He had held that post since 1906 when the League was formed. At first he acted in an honorary capacity, but later, in 1909, when the League was enabled to open its own office, he gave up a business career to devote himself entirely to

the League's work. His long service with his ready pen, his part as a speaker on many a platform, ever pleasing in its dispassionate style and all the more convincing, marked him as an ideal advocate of a righteous cause. His campaigning in the Manchester area was interrupted only during the years of the first world war, when he came to London to give John Paul valuable assistance at the offices of the United Committee whose staff had been drawn off elsewhere because of the war. As an organiser he had many successes to his account, most notable being the public conferences in Manchester which time and again brought delegates from all over the country. His influence in that regard was enhanced by the position he held as member of the Manchester City Council from 1927 to 1930. It was largely by his insistence that the City Council itself, in those years, took a lead among British municipalities in pressing for the Rating of Site Values, and incidentally encouraged Philip Snowden to go forward with the 1931 Finance Act repealed (alas) when the Tories returned to power. An asset to Weller in all his work was his own bulletin *The Porcupine*, produced bi-monthly, which had a small and select circle of readers—yet grateful, because of the clarity and simplicity with which he argued his case. The death of his wife in 1943, taking from him a most loyal partner in his life's endeavours, was a very severe blow. And now he has gone, there are many, including the members of the United Committee, who grieve at the loss of such a colleague. We regret that space considerations prevent us from publishing extracts from some of the many letters received paying honour to his memory from, among others, F. Bentley, Albert Brown, Cllr. Herbert Eastwood, Mrs. Peggy Hill, Sydney Needoff, Mrs. Douglas J. J. Owen, Ronald Rennie, J. D. Slater and Mrs. Florence Sumner. To his son, Leonard, we convey sincere sympathy in the bereavement sustained.

A.W.M.

PLANNING ACT CONDEMNED**—By Barclays Bank Chairman**

In the course of his address at the Annual Meeting of Barclays Bank, Ltd., (*The Times* report January 15) the Chairman spoke of the decision of the Government to encourage home ownership and that the local authorities may now, subject to conditions, sell individual houses to those of their tenants who are willing and able to buy them. He added: "If this presages a return of the main responsibility for housing to private enterprise, it will be necessary for the land to be freed from the stranglehold of the Town and Country Planning Act, but this typical example of the planners' art is surely destined, in any case, soon to collapse in complicated ruin."

—By National Chamber of Trade

At the annual conference of the National Chamber of Trade, at Harrogate (*Manchester Guardian*, April 29), Mr. J. Smith, of Worcester, referring to the Town and Country Planning Act, said the Chamber's board of management might have made representations to Members of Parliament that the development charge should be repealed and the burden on the public lightened by the abolition of the compensation clauses. The Government had been extremely lax in not forming its policy on this matter, and the National Chamber of Trade should do it for the Government and get this "shocking law repealed."

Mr. Gratwick, general secretary, said that one of the first things the present Government did was to set up a departmental committee to go into development charge provisions. He was satisfied that there would be extensive alterations. He believed it was the Government's intention to do precisely what Mr. Smith thought ought to be done.

Sir Walter Womersley said the Town and Country Planning Act was the "Most pernicious act ever placed on the Statute Book." To amend, and amend it thoroughly, meant, to his mind, that the Government would have to cancel the whole of the provisions of the Act and bring in a less contentious and more just Bill.

—By Chartered Surveyors

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act has not worked as well as was expected even by its critics. Its operation has proved complicated, hard to understand, and at least a potential hindrance to development and redevelopment. It gives rise to insoluble problems of valuation, fails to collect betterment accruing to land in its existing use, and is making the whole planning process undeservedly unpopular. Moreover, the disbursement of its £300 millions compensation fund would have an inflationary effect. This was the general opinion of Surveyors who participated in a discussion of the betterment compensation provisions held at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, May 5, according to the *Manchester Guardian* report.

—In the House of Lords

A full report of the important debate in the House of Lords, May 27, on the working of the Act will be published in our July issue.