

LAND VALUES

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"OUR POLICY"

"We would simply take for the community what belongs to the community—the value that attaches to land by the growth of the community; leave sacredly to the individual all that belongs to the individual."—*Henry George.*

EDWARD MCHUGH

"The truth that I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance. If that could be, it would have been accepted long ago. If that could be, it would never have been obscured. But it will find friends—those who will toil for it; suffer for it; if need be, die for it. This is the power of Truth."—HENRY GEORGE.

Edward McHugh was a man who for a period of some thirty-two years nobly spent his life in the service of the Truth that Henry George tried to make clear. He was advance agent for Henry George's speaking campaign in the Highlands of Scotland in 1884, and afterwards at many meetings throughout the United Kingdom he acted in a similar capacity. Along with Richard McGhee, M.P., and others, he formed the National Union of Dock Labourers and became its first secretary. He took a prominent part in the dock labourers' strikes at Glasgow in 1889 and at Liverpool the following year. In these special endeavours on behalf of the workers, and they were for him strenuous days and nights, he never neglected an opportunity by voice or pen to point to the real cause of labour troubles and to the radical remedy in the free use of the land. In fact, it was the opportunity which the opening up of this new field in Trades Unionism gave him to present to the workers his gospel for the emancipation of labour that was the great inducement to him to engage in this agitation. In all his speeches, even in the heat of a great strike, he pointed to the land monopoly as the root cause of low wages and hard times. Abolish land monopoly, he would proclaim, and wages will be based not upon the one-sided competition which fixes wages now, but upon what labour can produce. We want the whole of what each man produces for his private property. Any man that is satisfied with less is a coward; any man who wants more is a rogue.

In 1889 he stood as a candidate for the Town Council of Glasgow on pure single tax lines. He left no one in doubt about the platform upon which he stood. He wanted the value of the land, every penny of it, for public purposes and thereby make the workers' industry and earnings free from the annual visit of the rate collector. In the idle acres in and around the city he boldly declared were to be found the one and only

solution of the housing question. During the contest we have known him to speak at half a dozen meetings from early morning till midnight, take a supply of paste and electioneering posters and all through the silent night place them up in prominent positions throughout the ward. At the beginning of the campaign he continued this work for 50 hours on end and then in his best form addressed a meeting of the dock labourers convened to consider some particularly annoying grievance. He did not win the election; he did not care to win. What he was out for he achieved, namely, to impress upon as many as he could reach in the fight the urgent need for local rating of land values. This contest was memorable as one of the first public contributions of the kind to the proud strength of the question to-day in the Glasgow Town Council.

In 1896 he went to the United States on behalf of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union where he helped to form the Longshoreman's Union. While in New York he took a leading part in Henry George's second mayoralty campaign and was with him when he died on the eve of the poll in October, 1897.

On his return home from the United States he resolved to devote himself entirely to spade work in the movement. He threw himself into open-air propaganda, lecturing, teaching political economy classes at Liverpool and Birkenhead, making men understand, wherever he went, the bottom principles upon which the practical policy of land values taxation rested. In this work he was eminently successful, and there are scores and hundreds of men up and down the country to-day, capable exponents of our ideas, and with democratic ideals, who owe their knowledge of and their clear insight into perplexing social phenomena to Edward McHugh.

He was indefatigable in his zeal and enthusiasm. He was ready for any kind of call. He would address a meeting, or a dozen meetings in some special endeavour, or turn into the organisation of a meeting or meetings for others to address. He would "heckle" a speaker addressing a meeting on a pitch held for the time being for some outside body and not infrequently the audience would disperse with McHugh in their minds as the chief figure of the debate. He would spend a forenoon with a journalist, in the afternoon prepare a brief for some speaker at a public debate, conduct a political economy class in the evening, and leave with the midnight train for some distant part of the country to engage in the hurly-burly of some by-election contest, where for a couple of weeks or three he would address his fellow-citizens at large on questions affecting land and labour; at the hotel well into the small hours of the morning he would argue the case with the other speakers in the campaign.

He loved to serve, and worked without the slightest thought of himself. He could have entered Parliament many times, but he had no such ambition. He was an agitator, he declared, and not a politician. He was the last man to think of compromise. He had a plain unvarnished story to tell and he meant to tell it without let or hindrance. He told it to some purpose with a persistence and a courage that brought to himself unbounded love and admiration, and to the cause increasing strength. His audience, whether it numbered fifty or five thousand, felt they had in the speaker no platform demagogue but a man who knew his case, was careful of his facts and possessed in a captivating way the art of presenting the facts so that they would speak

for themselves. He could provoke an audience to laughter, as he often did; but there was an uncanny feeling about this lapse from hard facts and sober truth, for, behind the gaiety of the moment there seemed some deadly sort of intention which boded no good for somebody if the speaker could have his way. He hated any kind of injustice; he looked it and spoke it with a fearlessness and a conviction that few could equal and none surpass.

In the memorable dockers' strike at Liverpool he was the chief spokesman and organiser. For some three weeks the shipping and work of the port were at a standstill, yet throughout all this trying time McHugh never wavered nor wearied. As someone well said: he kept the peace. It was a strike that was as orderly as it was epoch-making in the labour unrest of the day. It proved McHugh to be a leader of men. "Keep sober!" he thundered out to a meeting of twenty thousand excited strikers; "there is only one good side of a public-house for you, now, as at all times, and that is the outside. The man who fails to observe this rule in this fight is a traitor to his fellows and to the great cause we have in hand."

Twelve years later our crusader was quietly and assiduously engaged in bringing before members of the Liverpool Town Council the urgency of local rating of land values, and the meaning of the Bills then being brought into the House of Commons on the subject. In due time he had the satisfaction of seeing the conservative Town Council of Liverpool join with force and enthusiasm the Municipalities and Local Rating bodies of the country in their unqualified demand for powers to rate land values. At the beginning of this well-timed municipal agitation, led with sustained vigour by the City of Glasgow, it was a triumph of no mean significance to have the Liverpool Town Council take its place in the campaign with Manchester, Bradford and other great municipalities this side of the border.

Six years later, in 1908, strong vigilant and eager as ever, he accepted a mission from the United Committee to go to the Highlands where the cottars and the landless were in revolt over the delay of Parliament in providing them with a patch of ground to enable them to live in decency and comfort. The campaign of meetings opened September 1st, with Mr. L. G. Swift MacNeill, K.C., M.P., as the chief speaker. There was a crowded meeting of cottars, fishermen and crofters. A new Land League was initiated, and sweeping resolutions were unanimously carried. Local Leagues and Committees for the taxation of land values were formed in several places as the outcome of this campaign, including a Women's Land League at Vatersay. He attended the Conference held at Inverness September 19th under the auspices of the United Committee and the Scottish League and at the evening demonstration, in seconding a vote of thanks to the chief speaker, Mr. Ure conveyed to him "the heartfelt thanks of the people of the Island of Barra who had been oppressed and denied the use of the God-created land that they were willing to utilise for the maintenance of themselves and their families." He addressed a meeting at Oban on September 28th—returning again to Barra where, on 2nd October, he spoke at Castlebay to one of the most representative meetings ever held in the Islands. The series of resolutions carried at these meetings were published in *LAND VALUES*. They constitute in themselves a comprehensive statement of principles, a warning to the Government and a clarion

call which in the circumstances could not be bettered. When the present Liberal candidate for Inverness-shire, the Solicitor-General for Scotland, toured some time ago in the Islands he and his agents were surprised and amazed to find questions being put on the urgency of taxing land values.

Following this campaign in the north our tireless evangelist was turned into uncultivated territory south of the border. Early in October he went, under the auspices of the United Committee, to Portsmouth to address a fortnight's open-air meetings at the work gates and to help organise a public meeting to be addressed by Mr. Ure on the 26th. A correspondent wrote: "Mr. McHugh left an excellent impression on the workmen of the Dockyard who were so eager to hear him again that they were willing to stand out in a perfect downpour of rain." Next he settled down for a time at Cardiff and here he put in some of his best work. He formed the Welsh League, organised meetings for Mr. Ure and others, and addressed all kinds of meetings and conferences himself. His organisation of the great demonstrations addressed by Mr. Ure at Birkenhead, Liverpool and Bristol is on record. At the Birkenhead and Liverpool meetings, where he laboured for so many years almost single-handed, the mention of his name evoked an enthusiastic response from the audience.

These are but some of the leaves culled from the life of Edward McHugh. He was a high-spirited propagandist and an idealist, ready at all times to accept any post where something could be done to awaken thought, or stimulate agitation to be directed into channels which would swell the main stream making for the realisation of his dream of a free people, free from want and the fear of it. His influence at Cardiff as at Liverpool and Birkenhead is still felt, and the numerous friends and advocates he rallied under the standard of equal rights to land remain to carry forward the task he has for ever laid down. He being dead yet speaketh.

At the close of 1911 he went to Australia and New Zealand, where he lectured with success for a year. On his return home after a month's rest, in February, 1913, he was busy speaking and distributing literature at the London street corners in connection with the County Council elections.

At this time his health began to give way. He tried to subdue and overcome the feeling of failing strength, but the trouble gradually developed. He kept at his class work with some new recruits at Liverpool and Birkenhead, and spoke occasionally at open-air meetings. But his physical strength was fast ebbing; his great day's work was coming to a close.

On November 5th, 1914, he wrote with all his old enthusiasm over a new mission he had undertaken on behalf of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union. He wanted literature. He was going to teach some three hundred English-speaking foreign seamen *The Land Song* and what it meant; he was going to devote himself to diffusing a knowledge of the teachings of Henry George, and he was quite happy at the prospect of his new sphere of usefulness. At the end of the month he broke down completely and had to return home seriously ill. He was patient and hopeful in this last illness, and with a temporary return of strength some six weeks ago he wrote his last letter saying how he was looking forward to meeting his colleagues in London once again. Alas, it was not to be.

Edward McHugh was an outstanding character in the single tax movement; a faithful disciple of Henry George and a gifted and untiring exponent of his philosophy. For what he was and for what he accomplished he is entitled to a place of honour in the movement alongside Tom L. Johnson, Lewis H. Berens and Joseph Fels. He knew the doctrines taught in *PROGRESS AND POVERTY*, and he unsparingly devoted himself with a great strength and passionate conviction to teach them to others. He was a personal friend of Henry George and loved to recall sweet memories of this association and comradeship. He was a member of the United Committee from its inception and took at all times a keen interest in all its activities; even when away in some far corner of the vineyard expounding, convincing and advancing the cause he kept constantly in touch with the office.

He was full to overflowing with sympathy for the poor and the down-trodden, but he never hesitated to condemn selfishness and intellectual laziness, whether his man was poor or rich. He had no time for ordinary forms of recreation and amusement, and regarded a visit to a theatre as so much time wasted which could be better spent on a soap box at some street corner, or in hunting up some local "horrible examples" of valuable idle land upon which decent people might be decently housed, or which ought to be paying golden sovereigns into the public treasury.

He was loved and honoured by hosts of friends and supporters in all parts of the country, very many of whom he had directly brought to the service of the movement. In all this success he was modesty itself. If he were asked how he got on at the close of some campaign he would smile and say: "Oh, not so bad," and more than likely commence to relate how he had to meet and overcome some organised and inane opposition. The one inference to be drawn from his explanation was that he could very well have been working to advantage in some other quarry. A visit to the area affected would tell another tale. His mission had been an overwhelming success; for days and weeks the place had been ringing with conversations and discussion on the land question, on the subject of how wealth was produced and how distributed, and the single tax keenly contested in all kinds of corners as the cure for dull trade, low wages, poverty and bad housing conditions.

In his home life he was happy and contented in the affection of his wife, son and daughter. They were all three devoted to him, as he was to them. We tender Mrs. McHugh and her son and daughter our deepest sympathy and that of our world-wide movement, feeling assured that his noble and unselfish life and the great heritage he has left us all will bring consolation to them in their great sorrow.

We who worked with Edward McHugh for so long mourn his loss to our fighting strength, but we feel grateful for what he was privileged to do for the cause. We thank God for him. He has left us a rich harvest to reap, and a glorious example. So long as Henry George's name and teaching stands for truth and social righteousness, and his passionate appeal for service continues to move men to thought and effort, the name and the memory of Edward McHugh can be cited as an inspiration "to those who seeing the vice and misery that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, feel the possibility of a higher social state, and would strive for its attainment." J. P.

RAILWAYS AND THE UNRATING OF IMPROVEMENTS

By James Dundas White, LL.D., M.P.

In Railway Legislation during recent years there have been various Acts in which provision has been made for relieving improvements, wholly or in part, from the burden of rating. The first of these appears to have been the

Light Railways Act, 1896

(59 & 60 Vict. c. 48), of which section 5 (1), which provided for special advances towards Light Railways being made by the Treasury under specified conditions, contained the provision (which of course is applicable to any light railway within the meaning of the Act) that, in connexion with special advances by the Treasury:—

"(c) Where the Treasury agree to make any such special advance as a free grant, the order authorising the railway may make provision as regards any parish that, during a period not exceeding ten years to be fixed by the order, so much of the railway as is in that parish shall not be assessed to any local rate at a higher value than that at which the land occupied by the railway would have been assessed if it had remained in the condition in which it was immediately before it was acquired for the purpose of the railway, but before such provision is made in any order the local and rating authorities of every such parish shall be informed of the intention to insert such provision, and shall be entitled to be heard. The order may authorise the Board of Trade to extend any such period."

As regards railways which are not light railways within the meaning of that Act, the first instance of a similar provision appears in another Act of the same year, the

West Highland Railway Guarantee Act, 1896

(59 & 60 Vict. c. 58), in which, in order to facilitate the construction of that railway for the development of the West Highlands, the Government guaranteed a certain rate of interest on certain capital for thirty years. In that Act section 2 (entitled "Limit of rates") provided:—

"2. During the period, not exceeding the said period of thirty years, for which the whole or any part of the interest or dividend guaranteed by this Act shall be payable by the Treasury, the railway shall not be assessed to any local rate at a higher value than that at which the land occupied by the railway would have been assessed if it had remained in the condition in which it was immediately before it was acquired for the purpose of the railway."

Eleven years later an Irish Local Act, the

Collooney Ballina and Belmullet Railways and Piers Act, 1907

(7 Edw. 7, c. cxxiv.), had a somewhat similar provision in section 65 (entitled "Assessment of railways to local rates"), which is as follows:—

"65. For a period of twenty-five years from the opening of the railways or any part thereof for public traffic the railways or so much thereof as is opened for traffic together with all stations yards works and lands connected therewith shall not be assessed to any local rates at a higher value than that at which the land occupied by or in connexion with the railways stations yards and works or such part thereof as is opened for public traffic would have been assessed if it had remained in the condition in which it was immediately before it was acquired for the purposes of the railways stations yards and works or such part thereof as aforesaid."