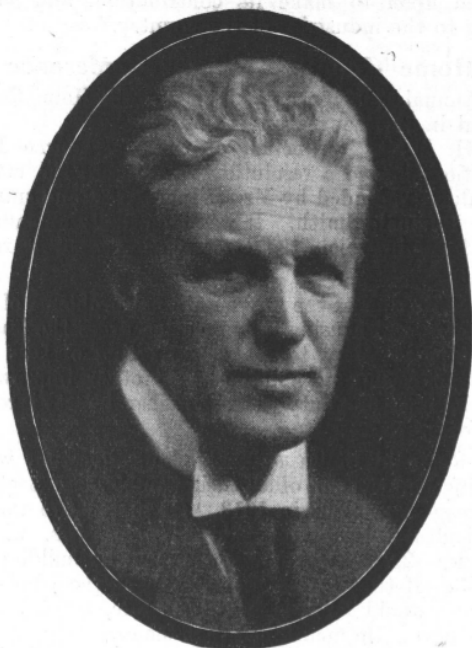


HARRY LLEWELYN DAVIES



Died 1st May, at his residence, "Seven Sisters," Birling Gap, Eastbourne, aged 57 years.

Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful impulse behind it in the world and bettered the tradition of mankind.—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

In the death of Harry Llewelyn Davies the movement for the Taxation of Land Values, based on the teaching of Henry George, has lost one of its foremost advocates. His passing was so unexpected that we his friends and colleagues can hardly yet realize that we shall see him no more.

He was strong and cheerful and courageous. There was never a trace of personal ambition from beginning to end of his service to the movement. He gave of his best out of the fulness of a heart warm and glowing with love of his fellows. Such a life as his betters the tradition of mankind. He came to the movement in a questioning mood. He listened, put his objections, read and argued himself into the belief that Henry George was right—not only right, but unanswerable. What Henry George taught was the truth, and the truth meant freedom and fair play, bringing with it the assurance of peace and progress. In his examination into industrial questions he took nothing for granted, and the more he inquired the more convinced he became that land monopoly was the direct cause of unemployment and hard times, and that the Taxation of Land Values was a measure of primary importance, the first step to the abolition of poverty.

He recognized the uses of debate in the making of public opinion, and he knew how to make the most of any such opening. But the Socratic method of question and answer was his ideal form of approach. Let the case be brought out in this enlightening manner, he held, and the argument would take care of itself.

He was impatient of hair-splitting on points of doctrine, and when there was no escape from such an exercise he simply was not listening. He was out for his man, never for any display of superior knowledge; yet in quiet retirement he would give an evening or more on how a difficulty could be removed from the mind of any honest doubter. On such occasions his bearing and his countenance was something to remember, and to treasure for all time.

It was as a mere youth that he first came to the meetings of the Glasgow Henry George Institute (the first Henry George Club), commenced in 1886 and carried on for eight years until this Journal was established and the Glasgow Group moved out to a wider sphere of action and influence. He brought his brothers, Crompton, and Theodore, to Glasgow and so through that gateway into the movement to its enduring advantage. He took active part in the affairs of the Scottish League, and continued his interest in its progress the while he sailed the seas as an engineer on board ship.

Twenty-five years ago he settled down at Annan, where as managing director of Cochran & Co., Ltd., he had to devote himself to this enterprise. It is on record that he contributed much to the high standing the company now enjoys in engineering and commercial circles. He was held in high esteem by all connected with the firm. At the Works Council Meeting, 9th May, one of the speakers said Mr. Davies had gone, but his many kindly acts would be remembered; another recalled his abiding interest in the children of the district. Along with Mrs. Davies he was always their close friend in every way. They were married in 1902, and those who were privileged to see them together could readily understand their mutual happiness. Mrs. Davies was by the side of her husband in all his interests, and through him her attachment to the Land Values movement was assured.

In all this engrossing period of his life, when he was building up the reputation of a first-class business, his mind never once turned from the wider and more appealing duty to the cause that claimed him as its own. He sought and won the adhesion of his cousin, and partner, Charles E. Crompton. They stood together in mapping out future propaganda. He was immensely pleased and uplifted with his partner's approval and support.

At the 1906 General Election the Taxation of Land Values emerged from its academic haunts and became an issue in politics. It was a great opportunity, and he was determined that we should be equal to it. He was one of the first to realize the need for strengthening our organization. The United Committee was the right idea and he would not rest until the Committee was formed, and the monthly Journal transferred from Glasgow to Westminster.

When this was finally accomplished in 1907, he resolutely settled down to the work at his own door. Along with a few kindred spirits he formed the Newbie Liberal Committee, and under its banner there was carried out for some six years one of the most brilliant and successful campaigns for Land Values Taxation that can be put on record anywhere. The Newbie Liberals, as these Single Taxers named themselves, made the most of the 1909 Budget. They held meetings in Dumfries, Annan and Carlisle, and in the remote parts of Dumfriesshire. They held local conferences, planned debates, organized plays. They brought representative speakers, Members of Parliament, and Town Councillors of repute from all parts to their aid, and carried out several huge open-air demonstrations. The Land Song was known and sung in halls, and in the open streets from end to end of the county; and for special instruction and cohesion among the agents and helpers a monthly paper named THE YOUNG LIBERAL was instituted. Much informing literature was published, including seven of the closing chapters of Henry George's PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE, and THE LABOUR QUESTION, being an abridgment of Henry George's THE CONDITION OF LABOUR. This pamphlet is one of the most popular publications circulated by the United Committee. The abridgment met with universal approval, and is considered by many to be an outstanding contribution to our permanent literature.

It would take much more space than is at our disposal to tell of this splendid awakening in a place that had hitherto never heard much, if anything, of the economic

relationship of land to labour. It was a great appeal and the response was as remarkable. Its weight and width were duly noted by the local politicians, and the sentiment created for land values legislation which it evoked still has its roots in the soil. What was accomplished in the Border counties in those days was of a lasting character. It was largely, if not wholly, the work of Harry Llewelyn Davies. He put time, energy and money into this great adventure, and not in vain. The war came and shattered for a time the realization of the high hopes of real land reform, but the fruits of the memorable campaign can still be garnered. When the day of reckoning comes again, as come it must, and when the well-directed propaganda is translated into the legislation it foreshadows, the name of Harry Llewelyn Davies will be registered as one who, holding fast to the principles enumerated in *PROGRESS AND POVERTY*, lent the full weight of his strength to the promotion of the practical policy.

Never yet
Share of Truth was vainly set
In the world's wide fallow;
After hands shall sow the seed,
After hands, from hill and mead,
Reap the harvest yellow.

We mourn the loss of a true friend and colleague, one whom we can ill afford to lose; but we can be glad and grateful for him, and for all he was given to accomplish. The movement for the Taxation of Land Values is stronger to-day because of his devotion to it. In the day-by-day struggle to make good our claim to be heard the companionship of a man like Harry Llewelyn Davies is ever a help and an encouragement. He is no longer with us in the flesh, but his fine spirit, and what he achieved, is still our inheritance.

We extend to Mrs. Davies and to her family circle sincerest sympathy in their great bereavement.

J. P.

HOW THE LANDLORDS THREW OFF THEIR TAXES

"Cromwell and his Parliament having lopped off the revenue of the Crown, having relieved the landholders from paying the chief of the nation that which was justly due from their estates, wanted money to carry on the government, and to put into their own pockets. And whom should they get the money from? From the landholders they ought to have got it; but they wrung it out of the sweat of the people; and for that purpose they began that system of EXCISE LAWS, which has been the scourge of this kingdom from that day to this.

"The people detested it from the very outset: it was in imitation of the Dutch. . . . Such was its unpopularity with the people of England, who protested against it as an illegal and detestable extortion, that the vile band of usurpers then called the House of Commons passed a resolution in 1642, in these words:—

"That aspersions having been cast by malignant persons upon the House of Commons, that they intended to introduce excises, the House, for its vindication therein, did declare, that these rumours were false and scandalous; and that their authors should be apprehended and brought to condign punishment.

"These hypocrites, however, having, the next year, gathered troops round them to protect them, passed an Act imposing excise on beer, cider and perry; and the year after that, on flesh, wine, tobacco, sugar, and such a multitude of other commodities, that it might fairly be denominated general. Prynne, one of the most cunning of the villains, said that they intended to go further but that it would be necessary to use the people to it by little and little."—A LEGACY TO LABOURERS, 1834. By William Cobbett, M.P. for Oldham.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

Land Values Rating and Taxation

(RESOLUTION, 2nd May)

Mr. J. E. EMLYN JONES (Liberal, North Dorset): I beg to move:—

"That this House is of opinion that the value of land apart from improvements belongs of right to the whole community and is a proper source of public revenue; requests the Government to make a complete valuation of the land showing its present true market value apart from improvements so that taxation and rating of land values may displace the taxes, obstructive to industry and harmful to trade, that are now levied by Parliament and the local authorities; recognizes that this reform has been practically and successfully initiated in other countries; and declares that it is urgently demanded in this country as a just and expedient method for opening new avenues to steady employment, encouraging house building, restoring prosperity to agriculture, and assuring to industry the fruits of industry."

If there had been, years ago, a general recognition of the principle outlined in the Motion under discussion, I think many of the difficulties, such as housing, unemployment, and the under-cultivation of land, would not have arisen.

The London County Council paid £295,000 for housing land at Becontree which was previously assessed at £3,955. They paid £50,339 for housing at Bellingham where the assessment was £490. They paid £120,000 for housing land at Roehampton which previously had been assessed at £957. The whole of that 2,450 acres for which the London County Council paid £465,883 were assessed at £5,031. Surely both these valuations cannot be correct? Either the purchase price, calculated upon 20 years purchase, should have been something in the neighbourhood of £100,000 or the assessment value should have been something like £23,000. In either alternative the ratepayers would have had the benefit; but the story is not complete.

One has to reckon with the enormous tariff which is levied upon these houses when they are erected. In the case of the 2,450 acres referred to, allowing for building, say, 12 houses per acre—and incidentally I hope that no more than 12 houses per acre will be built under the Housing Bill—12 houses per acre, at an assessment of £20 per house, we find that the assessment value would go up from £5,031 to £588,000 per annum. This is some measure of the burden placed at the present time upon the building of houses.

Some years ago a county council not very far away took over 660 acres of land with the very laudable idea of converting it into 27 small holdings. The assessment before the establishment of the small holdings was £150 per annum, but the money expended upon the setting up and equipment of those holdings was made the excuse for increased taxation, and the assessment went up from £150 to £580. In all cases the expenditure of money is made an excuse for imposing extra taxation upon the smallholder.

In Canada, which the opponents of this principle very often refer to as an indication of failure, the system has, indeed, justified the expectations that were held in regard to it. In all of the large towns and cities west of Manitoba by far the largest proportion of the rate revenue is derived from a tax upon the site value of the land. There is no time to-night, unfortunately, to deal with all the popular arguments against this principle. Its opponents refer to the failure of the land duties in the Budget of 1910. The answer to that sort of argument is that the Budget of 1910 did not contain, by any stretch of the imagination, the principle which I am asking the House now to affirm. The proposal to tax land values is a proposal to levy a uniform tax upon all land, whether used or not, and to remit a corresponding amount of taxation which is now being levied on improvements and upon trade and industry.

Mr. H. H. SPENCER: I beg to second the Motion.

I have just time to tell a little parable of my own town. About 60 or 70 years ago there came a humble foreigner of Jewish extraction from Germany. He was a political refugee. He lived and worked in my city and he built up a very large export trade. He used considerable premises to do it. He paid rates, which were growing year by year. He paid Income Tax on his earnings. He paid very heavy Excise and Customs duties on his luxuries. He was taxed on his industry at every hand and turn and corner.

Just about the same time that he came to Bradford the principal landowner of Bradford succeeded to the estate. His land at that time was not worth a twentieth of what it is now. He hardly ever came near the town. He did no work for the town. Year by year he sold a little piece at 5s., 7s., 10s. a square yard for building, and of course only the land that was becoming what they call ripe. I got an acre of land six miles out of the town for £40 an acre, but the poor people in the town had to spend £300 or £400 an acre because they could not afford to go out. Their children must be educated close at home. The difference was this. The useful citizen was taxed, taxed, taxed. The man who did nothing and grew rich while he slept—when the end of his life came Bradford had made for him, without his working at all, far more than the other man had made by a long life of clever toil and financial genius. It is not equity, and because it is not equity all the great municipalities—Glasgow, Manchester, I believe even Liverpool, that home of Toryism—have passed Resolutions in favour of this great reform. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman said, long ago, that our present system of taxation and rating is a hostile tariff against building. I was one