

## THE LIBERAL SUMMER SCHOOL AT GLASGOW

By William Reid

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Liberal Summer Schools have had their innings at Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh, and on 18th, 19th and 20th September, the commercial capital of Scotland had its baptism in the faith of the Summer School, if the groping after such ideals as make up the programme can be called a faith. Glasgow and its immediate environs have not been nurseries of modern Liberalism, whatever prospect they may offer to a reconstituted Liberal programme. It cannot be truly asserted that anything in the way of gloom or depression exhibited itself, notwithstanding what might fairly be described as inhospitable surroundings.

It is said that the looker-on sees most of the game. To such there must have appeared an easy confidence and cheery assurance on the part of those who took a leading part in the deliberations. "All-in National Insurance," "Garden Cities," "The Gold Standard," and "Taxation of Land Values" shared pride of place in the programme with the larger and more baffling problems of "Europe" and "The World Situation."

"Coal and Power," with a local amendment, came on for discussion immediately after "The Taxation of Land Values." The amendment sought to strengthen the Lloyd-George scheme by making a place for a miners' representative on the Board of Management. While we were listening to the Summer School discussion on "Coal and Power," Mr. Lloyd George was developing his "All-in Land Scheme" at Exeter.

Quite early in the proceedings the question of the taxation of land values began to obtrude itself. Mrs. McGrouther, of Troon, put it to the first speaker (Mr. Ernest Young) that electors had ceased to care for the Liberal Party, and had gone over to the Labour Party on account of a lukewarm attitude towards land values on the part of the Liberals. Miss Mitchell, in dealing with "Satellite Towns," anticipated Mr. John Gordon's lecture on the "Taxation of Land Values." She evidently is not one of those people who fear that rating of land values will stop building. Her fear appears to be that it will cause such a boom in building as may cause open spaces in the heart of towns to become a thing of the past. This aspect of the matter was met later by Mr. Gordon, who showed how Sydney, New South Wales, in addition to its building boom, had retained and enlarged the space for light and air by putting its rates on unimproved land value. When Miss Mitchell gets beyond her inspection of garden cities, and analyzes the financial position she will find what the pioneers of these "Satellite Towns" have experienced—namely, that the first step makes the next one more difficult. Land can be got cheaply to begin with, but once the amenity has been created there is no further cheap land for extension. Taxation of land values is needed to strengthen the garden city projects, though the lecturer appeared to think that it was the other way round. Garden cities, like all other progressive things in this country, are both rented and rated on their own improvements.

Mr. John Gordon, in his turn, also anticipated the lecture to follow, the next contribution being "Coal and Power," by Major E. J. Donaldson. Regarding the proposed payment of seventy millions in order to obtain possession of existing mining royalties, Mr. Gordon suggested that we could have no true valuation of royalties or any other form of land value except by taxation of land values, and regretted that taxation had not preceded the proposal to buy. The scheme as outlined by Major Donaldson was adversely criticized

by Mr. Douglas MacDonald. In these debates, Mr. J. O'D. Derrick, Mr. A. S. Munsie and Mrs. McGrouther represented the views of members of the Scottish League, as did also Mr. Douglas MacDonald.

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The first session opened with a lecture on Socialism by Mr. Ernest Young and the concluding session found Sir Daniel Stevenson inquiring: What is a Socialist? All through the writer had been inwardly inquiring: What is a Liberal? Mr. Gladstone took a regretful farewell when the Liberalism of his later days showed a tendency to flirt with ideas of paternalism and state regulation. Modern thinkers in the circle of Summer School Liberalism seem to think that Liberalism had been too much thirled to the doctrines of *laissez faire* and the Manchester school. Man is nothing if not progressive, but the question is not now What is a Socialist? but What is a Liberal?

Leaving things alone and leaving individuals alone are two distinct and different matters. It has never at any time appeared to the writer that Liberalism must set itself rigidly against state regulations, or even nationalization. All that has appeared is that on broad general lines Liberalism stood for liberation of the individual from each and every thralldom. If monopoly can only be broken by nationalization, he supposes that Liberalism would logically stand for nationalization in such peculiar circumstances.

So far as one can see, some people calling themselves Liberals are not likely to exclude much from a programme that a Socialist (a sane modern Socialist) would include. Indeed, while the Labour Party has been developing from the nationalization creed to the Liberal ideal of liberation, the newer or more modern Liberals have been developing in the opposite direction. By such methods they seem fated to meet on common ground. It may be on Socialistic ground.

A Socialist was defined by the opening lecturer, who quoted—or, rather, misquoted—Ebenezer Elliot. In the lecturer's version, the question What is a Socialist? was asked twice. However, we were told he had yearnings—

"For an equal division of unequal earnings.  
Idler, bungler or both, he is perfectly willing,  
To fork out his penny and pocket your shilling."

Socialists have much to answer for, but they are not to be killed off by such claptrap. Doubtless Sir Daniel Stevenson knows the answer to his own question. In later days we have come (with the authority of the *ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA*) to regard all movements for the uplift of the poor as Socialistic. Sir William Harcourt said: "We are all Socialists now."

It is not an easy matter to get rid of taxation, and the practical thing seems to be to devise schemes to obtain it with the least shock to capital and labour alike. That is where taxation of land values comes in. Sir Alfred Mond had a good word to say for the Land Value Policy when he spoke in the Liberal Club.

By HENRY GEORGE

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