

## THE IPSWICH BYE-ELECTION—MR R. R. STOKES, M.P.

### A Great Victory for Land Value Taxation

MR R. R. STOKES, standing as Labour Candidate, was triumphantly returned as Member of Parliament for Ipswich at the election which took place on the 16th February. The figures were :—

R. R. Stokes (Labour)	27,604
H. U. Willink (National Conservative)	24,443

The majority of 3,161 was a striking result, winning the seat from the Government whose representative at the last election in 1935 had a majority of 7,250. The figures then were : Sir John Ganzoni (N.C.), 28,528 ; Mr R. F. Jackson (Lab.), 21,278.

No bye-election in recent times has aroused so much interest. Ipswich proved a key constituency for testing the feeling of the country and if the Government has been shaken by this demonstration of opinion, Mr Stokes's victory also gives politicians in all the camps occasion to look at their programmes and policies that they may be as fundamental and clear cut as those which captured Ipswich.

Returning thanks to the electors for their support Mr Stokes attributed his victory to the fact that the people are profoundly disturbed at the feeble and vacillating foreign policy of the Government ; that they are thoroughly dissatisfied with the rising cost of living, the ever increasing number of the able-bodied unemployed and the unwillingness of the Government to control the arms racket ; and he made the emphatic statement that "there is no doubt at all but that great interest has been aroused in the economic problem which lies at the bottom of poverty and war, and the solution of which through the Henry George philosophy has appealed to the imagination of the electors."

The extracts we give below from the Election Address speak for themselves. This was the line Mr Stokes took through the campaign which lasted four weeks. The Press of the country watching the developments recognized this candidate with a doctrine, as one who had a message deserving a special label. So Land Value Taxation, and the Single Tax and Henry George, sometimes with amiable patronage and sometimes with reproof, obtained a nation-wide publicity. But the people of Ipswich understood and responded. He and they have given the Taxation of Land Values and the Economics of Freedom a new and higher place on the programme of the Labour Party than it has held hitherto, which if we mistake not will be heartily welcome to the vast body of the rank and file within the Labour party itself. And it is with this policy, as the election figures prove (there are said to be 10,000 Liberal voters in Ipswich) that any candidate whether he calls himself Labour or Liberal has the best chance of winning support, just as it is the policy which, if pressed by the combined progressive forces in the country, would give the country the Parliament it so sadly needs.

Ipswich, although an urban constituency, is the centre of a large agricultural district. In answer to a questionnaire submitted to both candidates by the *East Anglian Daily Times* Mr Stokes insisted that the taxation and rating of land values must apply to all land, rural as well as urban. The replies were published in full on 29th January. The points Mr Stokes put in the forefront and in which he laid most emphasis were as follows :—

"At the present time the worker suffers too much from bad housing, inadequate wages and lack of holidays. The farmer is hampered by insecurity of tenure,

strangled by rent, shackled by antiquated leases, and harassed by an ever-growing horde of Boards and officials. The landlord is throttled by mortgages, and entangled and milked by lawyers. All the Government does is to legislate so that the consumer will be robbed the taxpayer bled, the worker sweated, and the farmer squeezed, so that we may maintain this fantastic system of incompetence and folly.

"The whole problem should be attacked from the point of view that plenty is a good thing and that we wish plenty of food and cheap land, and not food scarcity and dear land. The problem is one of under-consumption and not over-production, and we should aim at increasing the purchasing power of the people by transferring as a start the whole of the rates now levied on to land or site values by means of a thorough scheme of taxation of land values, both rural and urban. This would encourage and benefit the improving landowner and discourage the bad landowner who does not make the best use of his land but leaves it more or less derelict.

"Occupying ownership should be encouraged, and the landlord and tenant system should be discouraged.

"Stop altogether the whole policy of cheap State credits, of spoon feeding agriculture with quotas, tariffs, subsidies, de-rating, etc., and announce that in no circumstances will any public money be given to landed interests. These merely raise land values to the hurt of every other person.

"Abolish the present tyrannical Market Boards, which are mere price-raising monopolies. Any marketing schemes must put the consumer first, aim at reducing distribution and retail costs and increasing of consumption. In this way an increased demand would remove surplus and benefit the producer naturally."

Mr Stokes also favoured a wages board for agricultural labourers, a land court to give farmers security of tenure and enforce economic rents and provision that land shall no longer be available as preferential security for a loan unless such loan is spent entirely on agricultural improvements. But land value taxation was the key-note of his policy, and so not only with agriculture but also with housing, employment, better business and trade conditions all round.

In its leading article commenting on the election result the *East Anglian Daily Times* said : "Mr Stokes must at times have given his headquarters some anxiety in the matter of his persistence regarding his personal King Charles's head—the Henry George philosophy." Other papers made similar comments before and after the polling day but if any such fears were expressed inside the camp the result shows how mistaken they were. To commentators like Mr A. C. Cummings, of the *News Chronicle*, Mr Stokes was a "deviationist" from the official Labour programme ; but whether or not, it is for the programme-makers to observe how gladly the people listen when the solution of the economic problem is related first and foremost to the overthrow of the land monopoly.

Mr Andrew MacLaren, M.P. for Burslem, spent a week in the constituency speaking at many meetings and lending valuable support in his able advocacy of the land values question. As the campaign grew hotter, Ipswich drew to its platform many Members of Parliament, leaders of the Parties and candidates in other constituencies. Supporting Mr Stokes there were, among numerous others, the Rt Hon C. R. Attlee, M.P., the Rt Hon Arthur Greenwood, M.P., the Rt Hon

Herbert Morrison, M.P., Mrs Agnes Hardie, M.P., Lord Strabolgi, Lady Noel Buxton, the Rt Hon Miss Margaret Bondfield, Mr W. M. Adamson, M.P., Mr George Benson, M.P., Mr P. Noel Buxton, M.P., Mr W. T. Kelly, M.P., Mr Arthur Pearson, M.P., Mr George Ridley, M.P., Mr G. Tomlinson, M.P., and Miss Mary Sutherland.

The Rt Hon D. Lloyd George sent a vigorous message of support. The Council of Action which has Mr Lloyd George's backing threw its efforts into the campaign holding also a special meeting under its auspices which was addressed by the Rt Hon George Lansbury, M.P., and Miss Megan Lloyd George, M.P.

A feature of the campaign was the "meeting unusual" of which there were several. They were devoted entirely to questions fired at Mr Stokes by his large audiences. The report says that the questions ranged over a wide variety of subjects and issues, the majority "touching on economic policy" and the Ransomes and Rapiers "shells without profit" offer to the Government. On economic policy, the candidate made the most of his opportunity to explain the remedy for poverty, and therefore the way to both industrial and international peace, that is contained in the philosophy of Henry George. The *East Anglian Daily Times* and its evening edition, *The Star*, generous in the space they gave so equally to both sides, were generous also in their hospitality to "Letters to the Editor." The discussion of land value taxation went on apace in these correspondence columns, Mr Stokes contributing as convincingly with his pen as he did with his voice on the platform.

#### EXTRACT FROM ELECTION ADDRESS

TO-DAY, WITH wars and so many rumours of wars, it is of first importance to recognise that the root cause of war is economic and to examine ways and means of putting the economic structure right. Until we do so the chance of ultimately avoiding war is very remote. The peoples of the world desire nothing better than to live at peace with one another and the militarism rampant is the direct result of handling affairs in a spirit of petty nationalism and economic selfishness. The resultant poverty provides just that atmosphere in which false leaders thrive wherein they teach their own people that the peoples of other countries are their enemies, while the common enemy—an unjust system which inflicts hardship and poverty and sucks the life blood of the people—escapes unnoticed.

I believe in the right of all men to enjoy in peace and security the fruits of the earth and the produce of their labour. I know that poverty and distress are not a part of the natural order of things but the product of a distorted economic system which allows private monopolies to control and to limit the production and distribution of wealth.

The problem to-day is not between the Nations who have and the Nations who have not, but between the peoples of all Nations who have not and the people who have. Until this maladjustment has been put right there can be no real peace. I, therefore, suggest to you a change in the economic policy, which can be applied equally effectively all the world over.

All wealth is the product of man's labour applied to the resources of nature. The private control of these resources is a fundamental social injustice. It gives to the owners of land the right to exact a toll for the opportunity to labour, or even to refuse that opportunity.

I believe that the gradual abolition of the private monopoly of natural resources through the taxation of land values is the most potent remedy for the evil

distribution which is the cause of poverty and distress. Land values are the creation of the community and arise out of its presence. The land owner contributes nothing by his ownership as distinct from his management.

The taxation of land values would enable us to reduce taxation on industry and commerce, take the rates off houses, and promote the even flow of wealth. As a result of the Finance Act of 1931 a measure for this taxation was actually on the statute book. It was removed by the National Government with the excuse that it would cost too much to collect, but in reality because the privileged classes did not wish to lose the control which the private ownership of land gives them.

Conservative leaders have stated that they have no cure for unemployment. This has certainly proved correct for, at the height of the boom, whilst members of the Government are complacently declaring they have brought about the return of prosperity, we still have over 1,500,000 able-bodied unemployed, the figure increasing by 365,000 in the last three months of 1937, a season when employment usually remains steady. I do not claim that this can be remedied by a wave of the hand, but I do believe there is no need for unemployment at all if we have the courage to put the economic system right.

If the figures recently quoted by the Government are the best they can do at the height of a boom where is there any real hope in their policy? I stand as a Free Trader, believing that free trade is nature's way of distributing the wealth of the world, and that any interference must lead to exploitation of the consumer and a rise in the cost of living; for the same reason I am opposed to all quotas and subsidies and would urge the speedy remission of those which affect the cost of food.

I look forward to a state of society in which everyone can live in economic security, and war shall cease to exist where freedom and justice are secure for all men. To assist in achieving this end I ask you to return me to Parliament where I will do my best to represent the great town of Ipswich with which I have been so long connected. The eyes of the whole country are turned to you and, at this time of tension and crisis, your vote is more significant than perhaps it has ever been before.

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Mr Stokes took his seat in the House on 22nd February. He has received congratulatory messages from all over the country and many parts of the world. We join heartily, and express on behalf of all advocates of land value taxation and free trade gratification that as Member of Parliament his influence to promote this cause is so enhanced.

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The Henry George Foundation made display of the books by advertisement, with quotation from Henry George, inserted in the morning and evening Ipswich dailies. The books were placed on sale in a number of the book-shops, two of the largest giving an excellent show in their windows. Reprint of the advertisement will be found on page 44.

**Southend.**—Four separate sites were required by the Southend Corporation in connection with improvements at Leigh Cliff. Taken together, they covered about 2½ acres. The vendors wanted £5,143. The arbiter awarded £1,750.—*Estates Gazette*, 18th September, 1937.

These four valuable plots, being vacant, were exempt from local taxation.