

the individual, and such he would prevent the State from appropriating, by making illegal any taxation on the results of work on buildings, improvements and commodities bought and sold. He was the complete and logical Free Trader, who would liberate all private enterprise from monopoly and privilege and fiscal burdens, which was to be done by "abolishing all taxation save that upon land values."

Of course, one cannot in a letter expound this principle and policy any further; but I do take Mr Massingham to task for not observing, in the first place, that when George was referring to the mediæval age he was pointing out that the landholders held their land subject to the feudal dues, and that stage by stage they had contrived to repudiate their dues and the over-lordship of the sovereign, so that stage by stage taxation in so many vicious and injurious forms has been thrown upon production and exchange. Fiscally, if the feudal system of the dues required from landholders was modernized, we would have the taxation of land values to-day and Free Trade in its fullness. State management, interference and regimentation would be a thing unheard of because absolutely unnecessary.

Secondly, the fault running through Mr Massingham's statement is common enough, unfortunately, in thinking and speaking of land only in agricultural terms. This is to forget all about high rents in towns and cities, the speculation in land values in their midst and surroundings; and not to recognize that the question of the price of land for all purposes in both town and country is "the land question" and the industrial question, too, which is basically, as George saw it, the relationship of rent to wages. "To see human beings in the most abject, the most helpless and hopeless condition, you must go, not to the unfenced prairies and the log cabins of new clearings in the backwoods, where men single-handed is commencing the struggle with Nature and land is yet worth nothing, but to the great cities, where the ownership of a little patch of ground is a fortune."

Yours faithfully,  
A. W. MADSEN.

## INCREASED FARES The Railway Ramp

At the commencement of the war control of the railways was taken by the Minister of Transport. He now proposes that passenger fares and freight charges should be increased by ten per cent. It appears from the Minister's statement in the House of Commons on 23rd April that this increase is intended to cover an increase of working costs which is estimated to amount to £22,500,000 for the 19 months ending on 31st March, 1941. This is equivalent to an increase of £270,000 per week. On the other hand the Minister stated that the receipts of the railway companies had increased by £9,750,000 during the 32 weeks since the commencement of the war. This is an average increase of £305,000 per week, and more than the average estimated increase in working costs.

Unless it is desired to place the railways in a better financial position than that in which they were when war broke out, there is no excuse for the increase in fares and freight charges. The extra charges will be for the benefit of railway shareholders. This appears to be an extremely undesirable result of Government control, especially when it is remembered that a large part of the nominal capitalization of the railways represents merely monopoly rights in the shape of the value of the land on which the lines, stations, and other property of the companies is situated.

## GEORGE NICOLL BARNES

*It is now over fifty years ago that I first got knowledge of "Progress and Poverty." I espied it one cold winter's night on a wretched little contraption of a second-hand bookstall in the City Road. It cost me sixpence and it opened up for me a new world.—THE RIGHT HON GEORGE BARNES.*

Nothing that has been written, in the many Press appreciations of the life and work of George Nicoll Barnes, reveals the true inspiration of his devoted life of public service as does his own confession, which is quoted above.

He passed to his rest on 21st April after long illness, full of years (he was 81) and of honours—Privy Councillor, Companion of Honour, and Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causâ*. He could look back on an extraordinarily varied career. The boy who went to work in a Dundee jute factory at the age of ten, and afterwards served an apprenticeship in engineering, became later the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. He took part in the formation of the Labour Party, entered Parliament in the memorable election of 1906, and was Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1910. During the Great War, he became the first Minister of Pensions in 1916, and then a member of the Supreme War Cabinet. At the Peace Conference at Versailles, he strove skilfully, persistently and successfully for the establishment of the International Labour Office, in whose work at Geneva he took an abiding interest. It survived, as the *Manchester Guardian* notes, "as the only one of the idealistic provisions of the peace treaties which did not degenerate into a broken promise."

Feeling that his special work in the Government had been done, he resigned. "The time has come," he wrote to the Prime Minister, "for me to resume my place in the ranks." But he was sent as one of the British delegates to the first Assembly of the League of Nations.

He was too honest to be a mere Party man, and, on more than one occasion, sacrificed opportunities of advancement because of his faithfulness to principles which he held sacred.

Half a century ago he read his sixpenny copy of *Progress and Poverty* with his almost life-long friend, the late Frederick Batty. They both joined the English League, and both remained faithful supporters of the League and of the United Committee for the rest of their lives. Barnes has been one of the Vice-Presidents of the League for many years. Whatever might be the political group with which he was working, he remained faithful to his own deepest convictions. The Independent Labour Party published a pamphlet which he wrote, when he was M.P., on "Henry George." The Engineers' Union, whose secretaryship he resigned, because the Executive was supporting a strike, which he believed to be unjustifiable, published in their monthly journal, some years later, a series of articles from his pen on Taxation of Land Values. It is pleasant to know that he retained the respect of those from whom he separated himself because of honest differences of opinion on important questions of principle.

Through all his great public career in times of stress and strife, he remained the same modest, unassuming, "dependable" man who came into our movement fifty years ago.

The sympathy of those with whom he thus became associated will go out to his widow and family in their heavy bereavement.

FREDK. VERINDER.