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EVAN PAN JONES—LAND REFORMER

IN his weekly review of the Welsh press for the *South Wales Daily News*, a correspondent, *Rhydycheiniwr*, attempted to describe the spirit of the age. The year was 1893. ‘The return wave of nationalism in Wales has brought with it many strange things, good, bad and indifferent. It has brought the cry for Disestablishment, for Welsh Home Rule, for a Welsh University; it has brought a Welsh Land Commission, tithe wars and socialism; it has produced Professor Rhys and Mr. Owen Edwards, Mr. Tom Ellis and Mr. Lloyd George, Michael Jones and Dr. Pan Jones, the Dafydd ap Gwilym Society, and other national societies, it has given us national magazines from *Cymru* and the *Geninen* downwards; it has “revived” the Welsh language, the Welsh Church and the eisteddfod. In a word it has infused a new spirit into the whole of Welsh life—political, social and religious.’¹

A shrewd commentator, *Rhydycheiniwr* had summarized all the elements that went into the making of that elusive phenomenon that may be called, for want of a better term, nationalism. Few modern historians would challenge either his list of leading issues or his general conclusions. But of the six personalities he mentioned, five only have an undisputed place in Welsh history. It will be the aim of this article to explain why Dr. Pan Jones was included among the leading figures of the age.

Born in 1834 near Newcastle Emlyn, Evan Jones was the posthumous son of an itinerant labourer. His mother scraped a living as a dairy maid and supplemented her meagre income by knitting and basket weaving; before he was nine years old, Evan, too, was skilled at knitting and weaving. Although a sickly child, he was soon engaged in a more profitable employment, stone breaking. His formal education during these years consisted of periodic visits to five different ‘schools’ held in various barns and cottages in the Llandysul area, but his mother taught him to read the Bible. He was evidently a promising scholar, since he was soon confirmed and appointed a Sunday school teacher at Horeb Independent chapel.²

¹ *South Wales Daily News*, 11 July 1893.

² The biographical details are based on Pan Jones’s own account, published in *Oes Gofion* (Bala, n.d. [1911]), and R. G. Owen’s account in *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*, ‘Atodiad’, p. 1,053.

Not long afterwards, he was apprenticed to a tailor at Llangeler, and, after serving two years' apprenticeship, secured employment with Joseph Samuel at Newcastle Emlyn. His master was a Unitarian and a man of some culture, who had a considerable influence on the young Evan Jones. Like many of his contemporaries, Evan soon resolved to leave Cardiganshire for the coalfield. Leaving his native Teifi valley for the first time, he travelled southwards from Llandysul on a lime cart and, seeing his first train at Llansamlet station, proceeded to Pentyrch, where he found work in a tailor's shop. He became a member of Bethlehem Chapel, and his services as a Sunday school teacher were soon required.

Evan was outraged at the amount of drunkenness in Pentyrch and the apathetic attitude of the chapel deacons, who were not above taking a glass in chapel after the service themselves. It became his object to establish a Temperance Society. After much campaigning, he overcame the opposition of the older deacons and the Society was founded; within a year Pentyrch saw a temperance procession of five hundred people marching through the village. Evan Jones was beginning to acquire a taste for public controversy and, as in the case of many other Victorian reformers, he was introduced to politics through the temperance movement. But his main interest was to remain in the temperance field for many years to come, and when he visited the South Wales Temperance Assembly at Brynmawr, he found that he had already made a name for himself.

Not long afterwards, he opened another shop at Crumlin, Monmouthshire, and became a lay preacher at Berea Chapel. The members encouraged him to enter the ministry, and to this end he abandoned his tailoring business and was admitted to Bala Independent College in December 1857. Here, Evan Jones came under the influence of John Peter, who persuaded him in 1860 to spend some time on the continent. He spent some twelve months in Germany and France, supporting himself by giving English lessons. After a further session at Bala, he transferred to the Independent College at Carmarthen, where, during his four years, he became embroiled in the internal dissension within the Independent denomination over the control of the denominational colleges, *Dadl y Cyfansoddiadau* ('debate of the constitutions').³ This debate gave him further experience in public controversy, since he became a leading figure in the ranks of the 'Old Constitution'. In 1866 he left

³ See R. G. Owen, 'Brwydr y Ddau Gyfansoddiad, 1877-85' (unpublished University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1941).

Carmarthen and was persuaded to visit Germany; he secured a post as a schoolmaster in Hanover. He then enrolled as a student in the University of Marburg, and after three years' study at Marburg and Giessen gained the doctorate of the state of Hesse. His degrees have been the subject of debate,⁴ but henceforth he would always style himself Evan Pan Jones, M.A., Ph.D., or simply Dr. Pan Jones.

On his return, he accepted the pastorate of Cysegr chapel in Mostyn, Flintshire, where he was ordained on 11 January 1870, and where he was to stay for the remainder of his long life. He soon renewed his acquaintance with Michael D. Jones and with the temperance movement. In 1870 he spent some six months in America with M. D. Jones, collecting funds for their cause, and immediately after his return founded the Mostyn Temperance Society with its associated benefit club.⁵

In his early years at Mostyn, Pan Jones was instrumental in the foundation of the Flintshire Independent Sunday Schools Union and of the Mostyn Free Church. It was at this time also that he became tutor to the young Herbert Lewis.⁶ The wanderer was now beginning to settle down and to take an interest in social, if not political, affairs. Travel continued to fascinate him, and he visited the Holy Land in 1878. Yet, his main concern was still with religious discord. His defence of the 'Old Constitution' in the *Cronicl*⁷ caused him to be sued for libel in 1881. His costs were all cleared by public subscription.

Pan Jones, already forty-seven years of age, had achieved fame so far largely through his association with his old master, Michael D. Jones. Politics still lay outside his interests. His early career, remarkable though it had been, had given little indication of the reputation he was to enjoy later.

It was during the early 1880s that Pan Jones began to take an interest in politics, more particularly in the issue of land reform. Why he became politically active from this time is not certain. It may be that, after travelling the world for twenty years, he was reminded of his boyhood struggles by the impact of the agricultural depression that was now beginning. Declining agricultural prices were intensifying the tension between landlord and tenant in the

⁴ J. Vernon Lewis, 'Graddau Pan Jones', *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 19 September 1945.

⁵ *Cymdeithas Cynyldeb Rhewl Mostyn*. Its account book (dated 26 June 1871) is preserved in U.C.N.W., Bangor MS. 2083.

⁶ K. I. Jones (ed.), *Syr Herbert Lewis* (1958), p. 8.

⁷ *Y Cronicl*, August 1880.

Welsh countryside. Perhaps Jones's concern was further aroused through his contact with the Rev. Michael Daniel Jones, who was active in almost every field of Welsh affairs.⁸ The latter had been especially vocal in his protests against the eviction of tenants which followed the elections of 1859, 1865 and 1868. He also provided a link with the earlier radical tradition of Samuel Roberts, which dated from the agitation for repeal of the Corn Laws. All this served to mould the growing political awareness of Pan Jones.

In England also, interest in land reform was increasingly marked. Alfred Russell Wallace, the noted naturalist and colleague of Darwin, published in the *Contemporary Review* for November 1880 an article entitled 'How to Nationalize the Land: a radical solution to the Irish land question'. In March of the following year, he established a Land Nationalization Society.⁹ This body was the culmination of a long tradition of land reform agitation, dating from John Stuart Mill's Land Tenure Reform Association and the Marxist Land and Labour League of the 1870s, back to the Chartist land scheme of Bronterre O'Brien and the earlier experiments of Robert Owen.

Significantly enough, Wallace's original article had referred in its sub-title to the land question in Ireland. Here, rural discontent was to be seen in its extreme form. The landlord ascendancy was all-powerful and the peasantry had to resort to terrorism. Gladstone's Irish Land Act of 1870 remained a dead letter; it had been intended to establish fair rents but had failed to do so. In addition to fair rental, the Irish also demanded rights of free sale and fixity of tenure—the famous 'three F's'—and, to secure these aims, it was increasingly felt in Ireland that political action was required. No-one responded to this need more forcefully than did Michael Davitt. When in 1878, a year after being released from prison, he visited the United States, he came into contact with the American land reform movement. In New York, he met the journalist, Henry George, who was soon to publish his *Progress and Poverty*, which was to become the bible for land reformers in Britain and the United States alike.¹⁰ Davitt returned to Ireland to form the Land League; in 1879 it was established, with Parnell, the Irish parliamentary leader, as president

⁸ See Alun Davies, 'Michael Jones a'r Wladfa', *Trans. Hon. Soc. Cymm.*, 1966, part I, pp. 73–87.

⁹ A. J. Peacock, 'Land Reform, 1880–1919' (University of Southampton unpublished M.A. thesis, 1961). Wallace, a trained surveyor, lived in Neath, 1841–48. It was he who designed the Mechanics' Institute in Church Place, where a plaque now commemorates his association with the town.

¹⁰ J. E. Pomfret, *The Struggle for Land in Ireland, 1880–1923* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1930). See also Elwood P. Lawrence, *Henry George in the British Isles* (East Lansing, Michigan, 1957), chaps. II–III.

and Davitt as secretary. All shades of Irish opinion were represented within its ranks as a result of Davitt's negotiating skill. It proved to be a powerful force in Ireland in the general election of 1880, as Gladstone recognised the following year when he introduced his second Irish Land Act. This measure instituted a land court, and recognised tenant right—in practice 'the three F's'—but bad feeling between landlords and tenants continued to hamper its operation. However, Davitt had now shown that it was possible to organize a peasant population for political purposes. It was a lesson that the Welsh were quick to learn.

In Wales, sympathy for the Irish cause was slow to develop because of the religious antipathy of Welsh nonconformists for Roman Catholicism. The Welsh press certainly carried reports of the Irish struggle, but editorial comment was almost invariably hostile. But gradually some Welshmen came to realise that 'the three F's' were hardly operating in Wales either. Rackrenting and the threat of eviction were frequently used by landlords to bring tenants into line, while the land hunger among the peasantry made their task easier. Anti-landlord propaganda, in the form of references to the political evictions of 1859 and 1868, had now become the stock-in-trade of Liberal speakers throughout Wales, while denunciations of the established church and its links with the gentry constantly rang out from nonconformist pulpits. Clearly it would not be long before Wales would have a land reform organization of her own.

* * *

The Welsh land reform movement, in common with other political campaigns in the country, expressed itself through existing forms of religious organization. Its early mouthpiece was *Y Celt*, a weekly journal published by the 'Old Constitution' faction in the Independent denomination. First issued in 1878,¹¹ it was revived in June 1881 by a syndicate of Independent ministers, with the backing of David Davies, a coalowner of Aberdare.¹² Pan Jones was now appointed its editor. However, the early numbers contained little to distinguish it from the numerous other sectarian journals circulating throughout Wales.

The year 1882, however, saw a notable surge in public interest in the land question. The influence of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* was now beginning to be felt. The publication of this book

¹¹ The last number of the first series appeared on 16 May 1879.

¹² Celt Publishing Company papers. N.L.W., D. S. Davies Collection, 4614A, 4618E.

in the United States in 1879 had created something of a sensation, although the views of Alfred Russell Wallace, who seems to have reached his conclusions independently of George, were more advanced.¹³ Like many other contemporary commentators, George was concerned that industrial progress seemed to be accompanied by increasing poverty. He would have agreed with Marx that the gulf between rich and poor was widening, not narrowing, and that the only possible conclusion would be the collapse of the capitalist system. But, in contrast to Marx, George ascribed this whole phenomenon of poverty to one cause: 'The cause of poverty is rent, which sucks up like a sponge the wealth produced by the industrious classes'. His view of society was evidently one which recalled Saint-Simon's simple division of society into producers and non-producers. It was hardly applicable to the conditions of modern industrial society, and yet George proceeded to advocate that the state should levy a 100 *per cent* tax on rent, leaving landlords in the position of being unpaid tax-gatherers. The landlords would remain in theoretical possession of the land as well as in actual possession of all buildings and 'improvements' on it. The revenue thus gained would make all other forms of taxation superfluous, and so the rent would be 'the single tax'. The appeal of this idea lay in its very simplicity, for few of its supporters ever considered its practical application.

The year 1882 also saw the publication of Wallace's *Land Nationalization*. He avoided the major weakness of the Georgeite theory, the fact that landlords were to be allowed to remain in possession even though they transferred all of their rent to the state. Wallace now proposed that the state should take over completely the functions of the landlord, but that those landlords who could show that either they or their ancestors had paid cash for their estates would be compensated in the form of government bonds.¹⁴ The remainder were to be expropriated without compensation.

In fact, the ideas of Henry George gained wider currency than did those of Wallace, especially in Ireland. George realised that Ireland was especially ripe for the adoption of new land reform theories, and in 1882 he spent some time lecturing there and meeting members of the Land League. While his visit caused little reaction in England, here also enthusiasm for land reform was on the increase. The Trades Union Congress, somewhat surprisingly, passed a motion in favour of land reform against the advice of the platform.¹⁵

¹³ G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, II (1954), 384.

¹⁴ A. R. Wallace, *Land Nationalization* (1882).

¹⁵ G. D. H. Cole, *A Short History of the British Working-Class Movement* (1926), II, 147-48.

In Wales, this mounting interest was reflected in the columns of the *Celt*. It carried long articles on the land question, written in general terms by Pan Jones, with no coherent basis in economic theory. Many of these articles attempted, with varying success, to trace the origins of private property in land, which was usually dated very precisely to the reign of Charles II. Some correspondents demanded a land court for Wales on the Irish model. As yet, these voices were too divergent and incoherent to justify being associated with a movement, but the increasing use of expressions such as *pwnc y tir* (the land question) and *Landlordiaeth* (Landlordism) testify to the fact that the issue was becoming plain to increasing numbers.¹⁶

In February 1883 Pan Jones began a series of articles entitled ‘Y Tir a’i Berchenogion’ (The Land and its Proprietors). This was his first attempt to provide a theoretical basis for land reform. He cited feudal tenure as an early precedent that showed the state taking the place of landlords, and Magna Carta was quoted at length in translation to prove the point.¹⁷ Like most of his contemporaries, Pan Jones was unduly optimistic, but unlike Henry George and, to a lesser extent, Wallace, he realised that these proposals entailed not reform but revolution. Thus, he was almost unique in Wales in being able to give full support to the Irish struggle.

In March he introduced the Land Nationalization Society to his readers, but added that the existing political parties would never adopt its policies. On these grounds he advocated workers’ representation in Parliament. ‘We the workers, must have people from amongst ourselves to represent us, until they form in Parliament a completely independent party’. Only an independent Labour Party would secure the passage of an effective land nationalization bill. The land would then be administered by the Lord Chancellor’s department and, after a government valuation, rents would be paid directly to that department. Only those landlords who had bought their land in the previous twenty years were to be compensated. This last proposal was even more radical than the policy of the L.N.S. itself. He admitted that the change would cause hardship, but ‘we should not concern ourselves with the hardship, only with justice’.

By June 1883, the L.N.S. had become ‘Cymdeithas y Ddaear i’r Bobl’ (Society of the Land for the People) and its inaugural meeting

¹⁶ *Celt*, 11 August 1882.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1883.

was held at Cysegr schoolroom in Mostyn in August.¹⁸ This was followed by a series of articles explaining the aims of the new society. Pan Jones's analysis of social conditions was remarkably lucid. He echoed the Marxist view that the gap between rich and poor was widening; he condemned the burden of taxation which always fell on the poor, and also the economic policy which was ruining Welsh agriculture. Most of these grievances could be laid at the door of the landlords, who always had the power to act like their Irish colleagues should they choose to exercise it. 'Cymdeithas y Ddaear i'r Bobl' would expropriate *all* landlords and establish the single tax. A land court would be instituted to decide all questions of rent, eviction and compensation. These long-term aims were supplemented by a short-term programme. The government was encouraged to acquire land on the open market and to accept land in lieu of duties, while tenants were to be furnished with credit to buy their holdings.

In the autumn of 1883, meetings were held to publicize these demands. Pan Jones visited Llanfair-caereinion,¹⁹ while Helen Taylor addressed gatherings at Mostyn and Bala.²⁰ Miss Taylor, who was already known to readers of *Y Celt*, was the step-daughter of John Stuart Mill and a leading member of the L.N.S. and the S.D.F.

For a time Pan Jones and his society were ignored by the leaders of Welsh opinion. The first substantial criticism came from John Roberts, brother of Samuel Roberts (S.R.), who wrote; 'His text is giving the land to the people, but his sermon means giving it to the government'. He criticized land reform schemes because they would inevitably lead to the morcellation of holdings, with the result that they would be even less capable of competing with low-priced food imports. John Roberts realized also that state administration of the land required a bureaucratic machine of a size unheard of in 1883. In fact, he revealed a breadth of vision which was rare among Welsh political commentators.²¹

The following winter saw a great expansion of campaigns for land reform throughout Britain. Henry George himself conducted an extensive lecture tour,²² but Pan Jones was at pains to explain the differences between himself and George. He failed to make contact with George, although he attended his meeting at Liverpool in January. George's only visit to Wales was to address a meeting at

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, June–August 1883.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 October 1883.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 16 November 1883.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 30 November 1883.

²² Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

Cardiff called by the local Liberal association.²³ Not long afterwards Pan Jones did make contact with a more significant figure in the land reform movement, Michael Davitt, whom he met at Chester.²⁴ This meeting was to lead to important developments.

Pan Jones and his movement suffered a severe setback when the coalmines at Mostyn were flooded and the members of Cysegr Chapel drifted away to seek employment in Lancashire and Staffordshire. Writing to Daniel Lleufer Thomas in 1895, Pan Jones commented: 'As long as the church here was strong I got on very well, but when the people were scattered I was nearly crushed'.²⁵ More trouble was to follow. Jones decided to relieve the burden on the chapel's finances by taking leave to visit the U.S.A. During his absence an action was brought against him in a Chester court by Lord Penrhyn, alleging libel in an article published in *Y Celt* for 27 February 1885.²⁶ Pan Jones arrived home in August to face a bill for £10 damages and over £600 costs; it was all cleared by public subscription.²⁷

Pan Jones, therefore, was not concerned with the election campaign of 1885, and there is no evidence that 'Cymdeithas y Ddaear i'r Bobl' played any part in it. This election, the first to be held after the Reform Act of 1884, brought the Welsh rural labourer into the political arena. Following the fashion set by Joseph Chamberlain, Michael D. Jones produced a six-point programme: it advocated a Welsh parliamentary party, education through the medium of Welsh, reform of the game laws, a land bill on the Irish model, disestablishment of the church and reform of the House of Lords.²⁸

These points now became the stock demands of some Welsh Liberal speakers, but Pan Jones insisted that land reform should take precedence over the others. Gradually support for this view developed. The enfranchisement of the rural labourers made it necessary to have a cheap weekly newspaper in Welsh, a need which was met, at least in North Wales, by *Y Werin*, a halfpenny paper published in Caernarvon by a company formed by W. J. Parry, the

²³ *Celt*, January–February 1884.

²⁴ T. W. Moody, 'Michael Davitt and the British Labour Movement', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th series, III (1953), 53–76.

²⁵ Pan Jones to Lleufer Thomas, 10 May 1895. N.L.W., MS. XDH 1305, AI.

²⁶ The article followed the dismissal of one quarryman and the eviction of another by Lord Penrhyn following a poaching conviction. Pan Jones wrote: 'This is landlordism with a vengeance . . . My lord should be thankful that he does not live in Ireland!' *Celt*, 27 February 1885.

²⁷ *Oes Gofion*, p. 124.

²⁸ *Celt*, 5 June 1885.

quarrymen's leader, and some associates.²⁹ This paper openly supported the more advanced views published in *Y Celt*, including the formation of a Welsh parliamentary party; and the Rev. D. S. Davies added, in a review of the year 1885, 'I believe that the best backbone for any Welsh party would be a Land League for Wales'.³⁰ Land reform was winning substantial support outside Pan Jones's own circle for the first time.

In Wales, as elsewhere, the radical victory at the polls in 1885 was confounded by the question of Irish home rule. The Welsh land reform movement naturally suffered as a result. As early as October, Michael D. Jones had circulated leading Welshmen about the proposed Land League.³¹ Shortly afterwards, a meeting was held at the *Baner* offices in Denbigh, attended by Thomas Gee, W. J. Parry, Michael D. Jones and Pan Jones. Here, it was proposed that Michael Davitt be invited to address the inaugural meeting of the Welsh Land League, but no decision was taken.³² Meanwhile, the landlords were not passive; a North Wales Property Defence Association was founded with Lord Penrhyn as its chairman.³³

A few days afterwards, on 15 December, the news broke of Gladstone's conversion to Irish home rule. The fragile unity of the Welsh radicals was shattered. Thomas Gee withdrew his support, saying that 'the Irishman's visit would be the ruin of Liberalism in the Principality'.³⁴ W. J. Parry, who was negotiating independently with Davitt,³⁵ was very cautious in committing himself. *Y Werin*, however, thundered its approval, ending an article on the subject with 'Be men! Be brave! Be united! Be determined to secure victory'.³⁶ In this atmosphere, Michael D. Jones and Pan Jones resolved to invite Davitt to address a meeting at Blaenau Ffestiniog, although it would be impossible to establish a national league without the support of Gee and his associates.³⁷ Michael Davitt toured North Wales early in February, speaking at Flint and Llandudno as well as at Blaenau Ffestiniog. At this last meeting, he was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the Welsh audience and by the eloquence of the young David Lloyd George, who proposed a vote of thanks.³⁸

²⁹ It first appeared on 17 October 1885.

³⁰ *Celt*, 1 January 1886.

³¹ The letter to H. Tobit Evans, 17 October 1885, is extant. N.L.W. MS. 18438B.

³² *Oes Gofion*, p. 176.

³³ See J. E. Vincent, *The Land Question in North Wales* (1896).

³⁴ Quoted in *Oes Gofion*, loc. cit.

³⁵ See N.L.W. MS. 8823C.

³⁶ *Werin*, 2 January 1886.

³⁷ *Celt*, 8 January 1886; *Werin*, 9 January 1886.

³⁸ *Celt*, 19 February 1886; *Werin*, 20 February 1886.

A motion of censure from the floor received no seconder. Nevertheless, the meeting had evidently alarmed the more respectable elements in Welsh Liberalism. Their view was strengthened when they read the report alongside accounts of the 'Black Monday' demonstrations in London.³⁹

Thomas Gee now proceeded to organize his own league, one which would not transgress Liberal, let alone Liberal Unionist, sentiments.⁴⁰ Therefore, he concentrated on the tithe issue, and soon Anti-Tithe Leagues were being founded in Denbighshire and Flintshire. Having severed his connexion with the Unionists, Gee felt free to establish his own Welsh National League.⁴¹ This body would be formed by the amalgamation of the local farmers' leagues. Pan Jones attacked these new developments, saying that all these leagues were merely organisations of substantial farmers who naturally supported the abolition of tithes but who were openly hostile towards wider measures of land reform.⁴² In opposition to Gee, Pan Jones toured South Wales with the ideas of 'Cymdeithas y Ddaear i'r Bobl', and distributed leaflets supplied by the L.N.S. Meetings were held at Llandysul, Clydach, Seven Sisters, Glyncoirwg, Pontycymmer and Bargoed.⁴³ But they made little impact at a time when Thomas Gee and Tom Ellis were securing wide publicity for the tithe 'war' which had broken out in North Wales.⁴⁴

While Gee and his supporters were repudiating the Irish example, Pan Jones was considering co-operation between the Celtic peoples to solve the land problem. Dr. G. B. Clark, the Scots crofters' leader, called a conference at Bonar Bridge, Sutherland, to discuss problems common to the three Celtic nations all labouring under the yoke of 'Saxon' landowners. Wales was represented by Pan Jones, Michael D. Jones and the Rev. Keinion Thomas. Parnell frowned upon this development and no Irish representatives were present. A motion was carried calling for 'Home Rule all round', and a Keltic League was established with J. S. S. Glennie as organizer for Scotland and Pan Jones for Wales.⁴⁵ Needless to say, the movement was stillborn.

³⁹ For a Welsh view of these disturbances of 8 February 1886, see T. I. Ellis, *Cofiant T. E. Ellis*, I (1944), 170.

⁴⁰ T. Gwynn Jones, *Cofiant Thomas Gee* (1913), p. 496.

⁴¹ 'Cynghrair Cenedlaethol Cymru.' A circular letter, dated 30 June 1886, is preserved in N.L.W. MS. 8310E.

⁴² *Celt*, 12 March 1886.

⁴³ *Celt*, 13 August 1886.

⁴⁴ See Frank Price Jones, 'Rhyfel y Degwm', *Trans. Denbs. Hist. Soc.*, II (1953), 71-105.

⁴⁵ *Celt*, 8 October 1886; U.C.N.W., Bangor, MS. 3033.

The anti-tithe organizations now flourished; a meeting held at Denbigh was addressed by three local members of parliament, Cornwallis-West, Tom Ellis and Bryn Roberts. But when Pan Jones, speaking from the floor, proposed a motion calling for land nationalization, it was not seconded. A more moderate proposal by Bryn Roberts, supported by Tom Ellis, was carried instead. Pan Jones was evidently conducting a one-man campaign against overwhelming odds.⁴⁶ The opposition to him was to become even more intense as the Liberal Party improved its organization in Wales. At the end of 1886 the North Wales Liberal Federation was founded, followed by the South Wales Liberal Federation early in the new year.

As the tithe war erupted once more at Llangwm in Denbighshire in May 1887, Thomas Gee made another attempt to establish a Welsh Land League, this time with the grandiose title 'Welsh Land, Commercial and Labour League'.⁴⁷ It was very difficult to distinguish between its policies and those of the newly formed North Wales Liberal Federation. It maintained a separate existence until 1890, when it finally merged with the Federation.⁴⁸ Throughout its existence, it was constantly under attack by Pan Jones as he continued to tour north and south Wales at least once a year with his land reform lectures. His was a thankless task, but sometimes there were glimmers of hope, such as in 1889, when branches of 'Cymdeithas y Ddaear i'r Bobl' were founded at Blaenau Ffestiniog, Cwmtwrch and Neath.⁴⁹ News of the London Dock strike increased public interest in social reform, and Helen Taylor made another tour of North Wales, addressing *en route* the newly-formed branch at Blaenau Ffestiniog.⁵⁰

The reasons for the slow progress made by Pan Jones are not hard to find. The years following the election victory of Tom Ellis in Merioneth in 1886 were exciting ones for Welsh radicals. Wales seemed to be on the threshold of great new developments in the fields of religious freedom, education and perhaps even home rule.⁵¹ But Pan Jones did not share this enthusiasm; for him, education, disestablishment and even home rule itself were irrelevant as long as the land of Wales remained in private hands.

⁴⁶ T. Gwynn Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 498; *Celt*, 5 November 1886. Soon *Y Celt* was to be called 'that spiteful and Republican little weekly sheet' by the Conservative *North Wales Chronicle*: *ibid.*, 13 May 1887.

⁴⁷ Pamphlet in N.L.W.: Thomas Gee, *The Welsh Land, Commercial and Labour League* (1887).

⁴⁸ *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire*, Evidence, IV, 324.

⁴⁹ *Celt*, March 1889.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13 December 1889.

⁵¹ See the account in Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922* (1963), chapter III, pp. 76-119.

Pan Jones was a great admirer of W. T. Stead and his *Review of Reviews*. One result was the publication of a radical monthly magazine in Welsh entitled *Cwrs y Byd*. The first number appeared from the press of Edward Rees at Ystalyfera in January 1891. Its aim was to bring the land reform issue before a wider public, because very few people outside the Independent denomination ever read the *Celt*. Social reform was beginning to be a fashionable subject for discussion and both journals reported the first May Day celebrations in London.⁵²

It was also the fashion for English radical movements to organize 'Van Crusades': Blatchford's *Clarion* made great use of this technique later. A horse-drawn van would tour the countryside; open air meetings would be held and literature distributed. The first of these tours took place in 1889, when Joseph Hyder, the secretary of the L.N.S., took his Yellow Van to East Anglia. In 1891 the Georgeite English Land Restoration League began to operate its Red Van in the same area. Consequently, the L.N.S. decided to concentrate on the west country and Wales.⁵³ Pan Jones was to take charge of the van at Newport and conduct it on a comprehensive tour of Wales. As part of the campaign, he prepared a number of pamphlets and handbills, including a land reform song book entitled 'Croesgad y Van' (crusade of the van).⁵⁴ They were mostly translations of L.N.S. tracts, but in an original tract, *To the Workers of Wales*, he again advocated workers' representation.⁵⁵ At the same time, he realised that rural depopulation was beginning to undermine the very society that he sought to save. For him, land reform was justified if only because it would prevent the drift to the obnoxious towns. Paradoxically, his greatest support came from the industrial areas, Mostyn, Blaenau Ffestiniog and the Swansea valley. The van crusade provided him with ample proof of this.

From Newport he toured the valleys; the most successful meetings in this area were at Pontardawe and Brynamman, where land reform songs were sung with passion and conviction, and local ministers proposed votes of thanks.⁵⁶ In marked contrast was his cold reception in rural Carmarthenshire, which was due, he said, to the proximity of Golden Grove and the Bishop's Palace at Aber-

⁵² *Celt*, 29 May 1891; *Cwrs y Byd*, June 1891.

⁵³ Peacock, op. cit., pp. 128-52.

⁵⁴ The others were *Y Tlodion a Gwrteithiad y Ddaear*, *Ein Cynigion* and *Gobaith i'r Gweithwyr*. N.L.W. and U.C.N.W., Bangor MS. 3033 (74).

⁵⁵ Pan Jones, *At Weithwyr Cymru* (n.d. [1891]).

⁵⁶ *Celt*, 10-31 July 1891.

gwili.⁵⁷ The crusade continued northwards to Aberystwyth, through Montgomeryshire and the Severn Valley to Oswestry, then along the Dee and Clwyd Valleys to Chester.⁵⁸ His experience in Carmarthen-shire was repeated in the Vale of Clwyd, but he was warmly received in the Unitarian hamlets of southern Cardiganshire and in the uplands of Denbighshire. However, only on one occasion did the collection cover the day's expenses, and the tour was heavily subsidised from the funds of the English L.N.S.⁵⁹ In 1895 another van campaign was undertaken in mid-Wales in connection with yet another attempt to re-establish 'Cymdeithas y Ddaear i'r Bobl'. Two years later the Yellow Van appeared in North Wales, but the reception was luke-warm; the same was true in 1898, when the Van was seen in Wales for the last time.⁶⁰

Welsh Liberals were jubilant in 1892 when the general election resulted in Gladstone's fourth administration being dependent on Welsh support in the Commons. A solution to all outstanding problems was expected, especially by partisans of 'Cymru Fydd'. But Pan Jones was unenthusiastic. He had already condemned Tom Ellis's unsuccessful 1892 Land Bill;⁶¹ now he trained his fire on Gladstone himself. During the election campaign, the Grand Old Man was condemned by Pan Jones as a 'dog in the manger' with regard to Welsh aspirations.⁶² Jones received ardent support for the first time from *Ffabius*,⁶³ Dr. David Rhÿs Jones, a Cardiff medical practitioner and a native of Llandysul. Throughout the campaign, they prophesied the demise of the Liberal Party if it would not embrace the cause of the workers. To them, the much vaunted land commission was another irrelevance. As an advocate of land nationalization, Pan Jones realized that the commission was an attempt to improve the functioning of the existing landlord-tenant system. On a more practical level, he expressed fears that Welsh farmers would be unable to present their case adequately before the commission.⁶⁴ However, the appointment of Daniel Lleufer Thomas as its secretary was welcomed, for evidently he was sympathetic to some of Pan Jones's views. He wrote that the commission was restricted to 'questions relating to the tenure of agricultural land only, and the Report contains little or nothing on such questions as

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 October 1891.

⁵⁸ For the complete route, see *Oes Gofion*, p. 189.

⁵⁹ Peacock, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁶⁰ *Labour Annual* (1899), p. 84.

⁶¹ *Celt*, 25 March 1892.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 20 May 1892.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1892.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 February 1893.

leasehold enfranchisement, the taxation of ground values or mining royalties.⁶⁵

Pan Jones's evidence before the commission at Wrexham on 29 August 1894 was unique. He made no secret of the fact that he questioned the right of landlords to exist in a modern society. He condemned the Irish theory of dual ownership of the land as an ineffective compromise, and supported outright nationalization.⁶⁶ But he was evidently regarded by the commissioners as eccentric. The only other witness to advocate land nationalization was Dr. Rhys Jones, who was described by the secretary as the only socialist to appear before him.⁶⁷ Pan Jones and Rhys Jones were neither surprised nor disappointed when the Unionist government disregarded the commission's recommendations.

The years 1898–99 in some ways represented the end of an era in Welsh politics. They saw the passing of many of the veterans, Gladstone, Thomas Gee and Michael D. Jones; also of Tom Ellis, his promise unfulfilled. Henceforth, Pan Jones was to be even more an isolated figure. However, during the last years of his life Thomas Gee had modified his attitude towards him. Writing in 1895, Gee had mused: 'If we could perfect a good scheme of land nationalization and start with a good working committee, something like the Anti-Corn Law League—and a few good men and make it known, we would sweep Lord Salisbury and even Toryism itself root and branch from the boards.'⁶⁸ The reference to the League was significant; these were the reflections of a disappointed old man rather than a coherent political programme.

By the turn of the century, Pan Jones himself was beginning to appear in the same guise. He appeared to be completely out of touch with the new industrial movement for social reform based on trade unions and the socialist societies. He did, however, associate himself with the opposition to the Boer War: his chapel at Mostyn was ridiculed as 'Capel y Boers'.⁶⁹ It is important to note that his van campaigns avoided the slate-quarrying districts of North Wales. One reason for this was the differences between himself and W. J. Parry, dating from 1886. These differences were more than personal

⁶⁵ D. Lleufer Thomas, *The Digest of the Report of the Welsh Land Commission*, p. 12.

⁶⁶ *Welsh Land Commission, Evidence*, IV (C.7757), 53–54.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Appendix, p. 195 and *Evidence*, III (C.7661), 407.

⁶⁸ Gee to T. H. W. Idris, 27 November 1895. N.L.W. MS. 8311E. See also his article in *Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig*, X, 910.

⁶⁹ *Oes Gofion*, p. 195: 'The Chapel of the Boers'.

ones: Pan Jones disagreed with all existing forms of workers' organization; he despised contemporary trade unions and the narrow vision of their leaders, and looked back to Robert Owen and his concept of 'one grand union to defend the workers' rights'.⁷⁰

One of the axioms of land reformers was that industrial workers would flock back to the land when land reform had made it possible. They chose to ignore any evidence to the contrary. This helps to explain Pan Jones's extraordinary behaviour during the great Penrhyn Quarry strike of 1900–3. His attitude to the strikers was little short of hostile. 'Our sympathy is with the workers but our judgement rests with the employers.'⁷¹ He condemned the strike as a futile struggle which the workers could never hope to win. Lord Penrhyn, who was both landowner and quarryowner, could afford to lock out the men almost indefinitely, but, should he be made to pay rent and royalties to the state under a scheme of land nationalization, he would soon accede to the men's demands. In Pan Jones's opinion, any union leader or striker who failed to appreciate this argument was unworthy of support.

Although he lived most of his life in the industrial village of Mostyn, he was, like Lloyd George, relatively out of sympathy with industrialism and with movements which had developed from within the industrial community. Yet, he realized that these were the forces of the future and that the Liberal Party was doomed unless it could incorporate them into its organization. 'The only salvation for Liberalism is to absorb quietly the socialist societies, the I.L.P. and the Democratic League and thus transform itself.'⁷² But with Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith in control, the party seemed to be moving in the opposite direction.

In the turbulent politics of the Edwardian age, Pan Jones had become an anachronism. Welsh radicalism generally had lost much of its earlier impetus.⁷³ What vitality it retained was now largely associated with the rising star of Lloyd George. Jones's land reform movement now quietly faded away. *Cwrs y Byd* ceased publication in December 1903. The Celt Publishing Company was wound up and the paper restarted as *Y Celt Newydd*, an Independent denominational journal for South Wales. An attempt to revive the old *Celt* failed in 1905 and it was incorporated with its rival, *Y Tyst*, in 1906.

⁷⁰ *Celt*, 19 January 1894.

⁷¹ *Cwrs y Byd*, March 1901.

⁷² *Ibid.*, September 1901.

⁷³ Kenneth O. Morgan, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 ff.

In the following year, Pan Jones retired from the pastorate of Cysegr chapel.⁷⁴ He wrote his strange autobiography and continued to live at Mostyn in comparative obscurity. He played no part in the revived land campaigns associated with Lloyd George in the years 1912–14, or in the controversies surrounding the first world war. He died quietly in 1922, the forgotten man of Welsh radicalism.

PERIS JONES-EVANS.

Ystradgynlais

⁷⁴ E. Pan Jones, 'Oriol Coleg Bala-Bangor' (unpublished MS. in the library of Bala-Bangor Theological College).