



Free Trade Debate at Devizes

We observe, with the utmost satisfaction, the proceedings of the numerous meetings of the friends of agricultural protection in every part of England; and none of them have been more important in character, or satisfying in result, than the great meeting in Devizes on Friday last, of which a full report is given in our 4th page. It has been already noticed in all the leading Metropolitan Journals, and its influence will extend to every part of the kingdom. Five Wiltshire Members - Mr. Long, Mr. Sotheron, Mr. Heneage, Mr. Bruges, and Mr. Neeld - were present; and every one of them expressed, in the strongest language, and upon the most solid grounds his resolution to give the most determined opposition to the Free Trade measures now impending. Mr. Bennet, the highly respected member for South Wilts, would also have been present, but for ill health.

The leading resolution, moved by the Mayor of Devizes, was appropriately seconded by Mr. Stephen Mills, who is generally known to our readers as one of the most extensive farmers in the West of England, and as a man of great experience, knowledge, and intelligence. He entered fully into the subject, in a clear and practical speech, full of facts and just reasoning, and which must strongly confirm the views generally entertained by his fellow agriculturalists. His observations upon the consequences to the labourers of the adoption of the present Free Trade notions ought to be laid to heart by this class of the community, who would, by means of them, be disabused of much mischievous stuff that has been instilled into their minds.

The effect of this and the other meetings of a similar character must be most important at the present crisis. "Not only (says a morning paper) do they show the animus of the agricultural community, but they act more or less directly on the opinions and conduct of their Parliamentary organs. They tend materially to strengthen the hands of the good men and true, who shall take part in the approaching debate. In every point of view they are of the greatest usefulness; they show the spirit on which we may rely in the event of a general election, and till that period shall arrive, they exercise a beneficial influence on those upon whose decision the great question of protection depends."

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 12 February 1846