

The Henry George Centenary International Conference

HOTEL COMMODORE, NEW YORK CITY, AUGUST 30 TO SEPTEMBER 2

THE Henry George Centenary International Conference came to a dramatic close with the address of the Hon. Samuel Seabury at the "Casino of Nations" at the World's Fair. This speech will rank with the great orations of the past, in behalf of the Georgeist cause. In its subject matter, its delivery and the eloquence and earnestness of the speaker, we cannot see how it could be surpassed.

From the opening addresses of welcome by Anna George deMille and the the Mayor of New York, the Hon. Fiorella La Guardia, at the Hotel Commodore on August 30, the Conference was marked by the constructive note in practically all of the speeches. There was a minimum of telling each other what we all know and in its place an earnest and optimistic effort to consider the actual furtherance of the cause.

This, the first International Conference with delegates attending from all over the world, was a notable and memorable gathering. The sound content of the addresses was more evident than eloquence although, as in the orations of Mr. Harry Weinberger at the banquet and Mrs. Ivy Akeroyd of New South Wales we were moved by both their eloquence and the high moral treatment of their subjects.

Mr. Bue Björner of Copenhagen, Denmark, President of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade depicted the disordered state of the world in general and Europe in particular. He declared this is clearly the natural consequence of lack of knowledge and understanding because of which, men and nations have been misled into a morass of regulations, restraints and conflicts. Mr. Jakob Lange, also of Denmark, speaking at the luncheon at the World's Fair, read a letter from Henry George written in 1888, in which George expressed certain ideas regarding mortgages. With this as his text Mr. Lange outlined his personal views as to the effects of mortgages on the progress of Land Value Taxation and referred to situations and the experiences of New Zealand, Australia, Canada and England.

Rabbi Michael Aaronson of Cincinnati, in his address, "Farewell to Magic," dwelt on the religious and the moral aspects. He presented an exposé of the futility of the wisdom of man and his whimsical legislative schemes, and the certitude of the justice of God.

Speaking on behalf of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, of which he is President, Mr. Lawson Purdy outlined

the provisions of the will of Robert Schalkenbach under which he left about half his fortune to a corporation which he directed should be formed. The corporation was authorized to select its own name and twenty-one trustees have directed its work. The powers and purposes of the corporation are as broad as they could be made. The corporation was empowered to expend the income "in such a manner as to the corporation may seem best for teaching, expounding and propagating the ideas of Henry George as set forth in his book 'Progress and Poverty' and in his other books, especially what are popularly known as the Single Tax on land values and international free trade" The certificate of incorporation goes into more detail but does not limit the directors. It does contain the following, enabling the corporation "to receive and administer funds from the estate of Robert Schalkenbach, deceased, and any other property that may be donated, devised or bequeathed for any or all of such objects." It is the hope of the trustees that others may be moved to make gifts to the capital funds of the corporation either by will or during their lives:—such gifts can be made for the broad purposes of the corporation or for special purposes not inconsistent therewith. Generally it is best to leave the corporation free to spend money in such ways as from time to time may seem best.

Mr. A. C. Campbell of Ottawa, Canada, contrasted the mechanical device with the invention and in making this distinction characterized Henry George as the "Man who invented Plenty."

Mr. J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco, spoke on the subject of Tax Delinquency in the United States. He outlined the effects of moratoriums which protect tax evading land holders and how, on account of inability to collect taxes communities are unable to fulfil their bond obligations. In other words the landowner was and is saved at the expense of the bondholder. Mr. Mason also showed that as decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court now stand, "Congress has the power to destroy public bonds under the bankruptcy clause." Hence the court has in effect ruled that the taxing power of our government is inferior in dignity and importance to the bankruptcy power. Heretofore the rulings have been that "the taxing power is paramount," but now it seems it must give way when it jeopardizes titles to land.

Professor Hiram L. Jome of De Pauw University made a very fine analytical address entitled Henry George—A Lesson in Continuity. It should be read together with the speech of Mr. DeWitt Bell which is entitled Principle and Policy. We intend to publish both addresses, possibly in two issues. Professor Jome prefaced his theme by a statement that "Progress in thought represents the pull between two forces, the old attempting to maintain its position and the new seeking acceptance." He then asks and later develops the question: "Was Henry George's system part of a stream of thought or was it merely of an 'essentially personal character, peculiar to its author'?" This address merits careful study and in reading, it should be kept in mind that what are given as weaknesses and disadvantages of the Single Tax do not necessarily represent the views of the writer but are given under the heading in which he states "as with all great theories, the Single Tax has been subjected to powerful criticism."

As heretofore we found we had much to learn from our English friends both as to sound analysis and ways and means. However eloquent the addresses of Mr. F. C. R. Douglas, Mr. Ashley Mitchell, Mr. E. J. Craigie or Mr. George Green of Ireland, the undercurrent of all they had to say, both in their programme speeches and from the floor breathed the furtherance and the practical application of the Single Tax on land values. They spoke from the school of experience both political and academic and while "the grass always seems greenest in the next pasture" we continue to be impressed by the fact that the land values group in England and the colonies has done and is doing most effective work.

Papers written by Dr. Kurt Schmidt of Germany, Ferdinand Mero of Hungary and Boris Guduleff of Bulgaria and presented by Mr. George Green gave the progress of Georgian economic philosophy in those countries.

This outline would not be complete without reference to the humorous and hard hitting speech of Mr. Donald McDonald of Alaska. As Rex Beach informed us years ago: "there is *no* law of God or man north of 53;" now *the* LAW (as given by Henry George) is presented in that far country and in no uncertain terms.

Lack of space prevents further detail of the addresses of Mr. Lancaster Green, Mr. Nathan Hillman, Mr. H. Bronson Cowan and Mr. Gilbert Tucker who spoke very interestingly on their respective subjects as given in the programme.

The consensus of opinion of the Conference seemed to be that the Henry George School is a great agency of the Single Tax movement and much interest was expressed concerning it. At the same time, it was definitely brought out in the Conference proceedings and floor debates that the school is but one of the many phases of the movement and should not be emphasized to the exclusion of the others which include publications, political action and associations.

Address of Welcome by Anna George deMille

IN behalf of the Henry George School of Social Science I give our welcome to all who have come from far and near to confer. We realize full well, all of us, that this gathering cannot be merely a love-feast of friends who, thinking alike, have come together to compare notes and to report progress. It must needs turn into a council in which all differences as to methods for spreading our message must be put aside, all small intolerances as to ways and means must be forgotten. We must use our entire strength for spreading the light; our lamps must be trimmed to burn brighter than ever before.

Civilization at this moment is standing with back against wall facing destruction. Communism, Nazism, Fascism have sprung out of the poverty that is the result of denying the Natural Law. They are the antithesis of democracy—of democracy that stands for freedom; freedom of production and freedom of trade, as well as freedom of speech and press and religious expression. Democracy is a way of government but freedom is a way of life.

And so we must each of us go forth from this Conference, strengthened, encouraged, inspired—to spread this philosophy of freedom as taught by Henry George. We must always remember that there are as many ways of spreading the truth as there are people to spread it; there are as many ways of spreading it as there are ways of it being accepted. "Each in the station to which he has been called, let us do what is set us, and we shall not clash. From various instruments set to different keys comes the grand harmony."

POEM READ BY ANNA GEORGE DEMILLE
HENRY GEORGE
CENTENARY. 1839-1939

Time slumbers, but the centuries advance,
Bearing high legends that do not abate,
Of men symbolic of what's good or great
Who, in the world's arena, broke a lance
For all mankind. Their task was to enhance
The common heritage, and dedicate
Their strength and genius, heeding not the hate
Of those who grasped the reins of circumstance.
To a young printer, earnest and self-taught,
Was granted inspiration to proclaim
A just and equal means of opening wide
The gates of opportunity, fast caught
By law and custom. In full flower he died
Today he lives, as we invoke his name.

His great repute progresses with the years,
His message marches forward with the days
And rests not on mere rhetoric or phrase.
Its sheer, compelling logic never veers.
The world of men—wherein all men are peers
As sons of Mother Earth—moves in a maze
Of tangled statutes, and stares through a haze