

The Memphis Henry George Congress

THE Henry George Congress held at Memphis October 10, 11 and 12 has passed into history. The attendance was not as large as those of other conferences of the Henry George Foundation, but it was fairly representative, with delegates from New York City, Cleveland, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Fairhope, Alabama, Massachusetts, Washington, D. C., Michigan, Seattle, Washington, Yuma, Arizona, and other cities and States.

The Southern Tax Conference, which was held conjointly with the Henry George Congress had representatives of taxing bodies who favored the convention with short speeches. The success of the event was due largely to the indefatigable efforts of the Chamber of Commerce of Memphis and its efficient secretary, P. M. Birmingham, to the active cooperation of Judge Pittman, Abe D. Waldauer, L. D. Bejack, Dr. W. D. Gaither, and others of the active Single Tax group than whom there are no more devoted souls anywhere in the movement.

The hospitality of the city of Memphis to visiting Georgists was all that could be desired. The newspaper publicity was generous, the *Commercial Appeal*, both morning and evening editions, and the *Press Scimitar* covering with liberal allowance of space the three days conference, including a half column interview with the editor of LAND AND FREEDOM in the *Press Scimitar*, and a statement of just what it is we are after in the *Commercial Appeal* from the ever ready pen of Judge Pittman. To these is to be added much front page stuff and liberal extracts from the speeches of every session, as well as the friendly editorial from the *Appeal* which our readers will find quoted elsewhere.

The book store window in the hotel lobby was given up to the display of Henry George's works with signs and advertisements. A few blocks away from the hotel on Second Street in the large book store window of General R. Taylor was a fine showing of the works of Henry George, arranged in attractive setting, such books and pamphlets having been supplied by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. Thanks are also due for this effective publicity to Dr. W. D. Gaither and also to General Taylor, who readily acceded to go the limit in this most effective display.

AN ATTRACTIVE LUNCHEON

On the arrival of the editor of LAND AND FREEDOM in Memphis a call was made on an old friend, Mr. Louis Geldert, editor and publisher of *The Cotton Oil Press*. Mr. Geldert is not a Single Taxer. He is a Republican, a friend of Herbert Hoover, and served with him on the Food Commission. But he has a lot of liberal minded friends, is a man of consequence in Memphis, and surrounds himself with the best people in the city. His wife,

who writes under the name of Grace Boylan, and whom it is a liberal education to meet, is the author of a number of books, some designed for the entertainment of children. She was president of the American Pen Women, an association which includes many of the best known women writers North and South.

Mr. Geldert called together a group of his friends for a luncheon to the editor of LAND AND FREEDOM. There were present Mr. Meeman, managing editor of the *Press Scimitar*, the Scripps-Howard paper of Memphis; Dr. Petrie, pastor of the Unitarian Church of Memphis, and who we may venture to say is more than merely friendly to our cause; Mr. M. G. South, real estate operator; Mr. Keebler, who was counsel for the Fairhope Corporation in a suit instituted against the corporation some time ago, and a prominent lawyer of the city; Mr. Haynes; and last but not least, Judge A. B. Pittman, leading Single Taxer of Memphis and Shelby County, and friend of Mr. Geldert, who does not select his friends according to their political stripe and so manages to get the best

It was indeed a pleasure to meet these men, representing as they do the cultural and forward movements of this southern city and typical of what is best within its borders.

This was followed by a visit to Mr. Geldert's apartment overlooking the park and an auto ride with Mr. and Mrs. Geldert to points of interest in the city, and so back to the Hotel Peabody.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10

Judge Pittman in opening this first session of the Congress explained the absence of the mayor who was to have delivered the address of welcome, and introduced Hon. Abe D. Waldauer, Assistant City Attorney.

For the benefit of the members of the Southern Tax Conference in attendance Mr. Waldauer described the situation confronting the Southern States. He pointed to the tremendous bonded indebtedness of Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas. He stated that one-fourth of the landed estate of Mississippi has reverted to the State for non-payment of taxes. It is exceedingly timely in view of the situation that the Southern Tax Conference was met to discuss the situation. He paid a tribute to "Progress and Poverty" which has given us the answer to our difficulties.

Mr. Waldauer said he was a Single Taxer since he was fourteen. He is sponsor for the Wall Hill enclave of Mississippi, and indicated that the lands now falling into the hands of government offered a great opportunity for the formation of enclaves and Single Taxers should give this movement their hearty support.

He said there were not many Single Taxers in Memphis

but they were of a high quality, which commendation we enthusiastically endorse. He paid a deserved tribute to Judge Pittman and told how in his campaign for Judge of the Circuit Court of Shelby County his opponent made three charges against him. Judge Pittman replied that while not guilty on the first two counts he wished to plead guilty to the third charge. "Yes, he was a Single Taxer, and did the gentleman wish to debate it!" Judge Pittman was triumphantly re-elected, as he always is.

Clayton J. Ewing of Chicago in the absence of George E. Evans, president of the Henry George Foundation, responded to the address of welcome of Mr. Waldauer. He made a motion that a committee of fifteen on resolutions be appointed, which motion was carried.

George M. Strachan of Chicago followed with an address illustrated by charts, and made some telling hits.

A GREAT SPEECH

The editor of LAND AND FREEDOM presided at the noon-day luncheon and introduced Hon. Peter Witt of Cleveland, who he said required no introduction to Henry George men anywhere. In his remarks Mr. Miller briefly touched upon the activities being urged in New York, the work of the Schalkenbach Foundation, the Manhattan Single Tax Club, and the out-door meetings which were being held twice a week.

Mr. Witt's address which was broadcast was worthy of the cause and the occasion. Following are some of the things he said:

"I am naturally a rebel. My father was one of the 48'ers who left Germany with Carl Schurz because a king had been killed. He was a radical there, he was one over here."

"Mass transportation systems—such as the street cars—will be owned and operated by the cities. There won't be any fares—the system will be supported by general taxation."

"Man is a land animal—he will find that he cannot get by without land freedom. Correct things have a hell of a job getting recognized. Anything unusual or not generally the custom in thought, as in dress, is always subject to ridicule, looked upon as queer."

Mr. Witt concluded by reading the well known poem by Edmund Vance Cooke, "Uncivilized."

The afternoon of October 10 was given up to representative of the Southern Tax Conference. Uncertain and floundering these gentlemen had no solution to offer. Hon. Myles P. O'Connor, secretary of Tennessee Tax Commission, said that merchants were not adequately taxed in Tennessee, so these gentlemen will have to look out for themselves. Hon. Joseph Porter, of the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, pleaded for tax justice to the farmer, demanding to know why an income tax might not be nearer justice in that it would take the rent of land now paid to landowners who produce nothing from the soil they collect rent for!

J. Frank Colbert, of Minden, La., a former member of the State Tax Commission of that State, and an ardent Single Taxer, addressed this session. His address appears elsewhere in this issue.

At the evening session Judge Pittman again presided and Emil O. Jorgensen made a talk on unemployment, illustrated by lantern slides. Though we do not always agree with Mr. Jorgensen, this was one of the notable addresses of the Congress and it was listened to with interest by all present.

Hon. Kenneth McKeller, U. S. Senator from Tennessee, who had hurried by car to be present, spoke on Federal Taxation and gave many illustrations of the waste of the people's money. He revealed that \$52,000 had been spent by the government each year since 1862 in the study of the propagation of microscopic insects, without a single pamphlet being issued on the subject! He paid a high tribute to Judge Pittman. He said: "There is no man in Memphis I respect more."

OCTOBER 11

Otto Cullman of Chicago, presided at the morning session, and Mr. Robert C. Macauley of Philadelphia, was the opening speaker. He made an eloquent plea for the plan of his paper, *The Commonwealth*, and said that there was room for fifty more of the same kind.

Mr. Benjamin W. Burger of New York, read a carefully prepared paper, outlining the four steps taken by President Hoover to stem the tide of depression. He charged that all had failed because they had ignored the real cause of the breakdown. He said in part:

"We know the fundamental trouble is that two classes in society produce all the wealth while three classes divide it."

"We know that so long as land rent, which is publicly produced, is allowed to be privately appropriated it is a liability not an asset to the community."

"Instead of establishing economic justice to end these conditions, we are trying to alleviate suffering by charity. All we need is a declaration that the land of the United States belongs to the people of the United States and a determination, through taxation, to make real this simple remedy."

"Socialism is at the opposite poles of the Single Tax theory. Where Socialism would put the government into every activity, Single Taxers want to keep government confined to two or at most three functions, the chief one of which is collection of ground rent."

"Both Communism and Socialism thwart instincts of expansion, substituting for individual energy government lethargy, substituting for human personality the blind, mechanical spirit of the State. Not by snuffing out human personality can we hope to banish the evils which afflict us and to realize the ideal of all existence—a nobler and a finer life."

Mr. Burger in the course of his address detailed the

rious activities in advocacy of our cause, appraising their value and paying particular attention to the Schalkenbach Foundation, the lecture tours of Charles H. Ingersoll and other work.

The substance of Mr. Burger's paper was discussed, and this discussion Messrs. Waldauer, Millikin, Platt, Harding, and Mrs. Marietta Johnson took part.

A motion was made that it be published in pamphlet form, but Mr. Waldauer announced that arrangements had been made with Mr. E. B. Gaston for its publication in the *Fairhope Courier*.

Mr. Western Starr was the final speaker at this session, and spoke effectively and with great feeling. The noon reception was given over to a meeting of the members and trustees of the Henry George Foundation.

Two new members were chosen for the Board of Directors, Miss Charlotte O. Schetter of Northport, L. I., N. Y., and Abe D. Waldauer of Memphis, Tenn. Miss Schetter has been actively identified with the Henry George Foundation for several years and Mr. Waldauer, who is Assistant City Attorney of Memphis, was Vice Chairman of the Memphis Convention Committee and had played an important part throughout.

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees, immediately following the general membership meeting, the following officers were unanimously elected for the ensuing year:

President: George E. Evans, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Vice Presidents: Clayton J. Ewing, Chicago, Ill., Joseph Dana Miller, New York City, Carl D. Smith, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Treasurer: William E. Schoyer, Pittsburgh, Pa. Secretary: Percy Williams, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Field Secretary: John Lawrence Monroe, Chicago, Ill.; Assistant Secretary: Francis Maguire, Pittsburgh, Pa.

At the afternoon session of this day E. B. Gaston presided and E. W. Pittman, brother of Judge Pittman, spoke on "The Political Situation." It was this address that precipitated the liveliest discussion of the convention. Mr. Pittman earnestly urged the support by Single Taxers of the Socialist Party and its candidates. He seemed to think the Single Tax was in the Socialist platform and so stated. He was corrected from the floor but pursued his argument in favor of Norman Thomas with great earnestness. It is clear however that no endorsement of the Socialist Party had any chance of passing, and the matter was not pressed.

Mr. Chester C. Platt next addressed the convention. Mr. C. J. Ewing then announced that a half dozen clergymen had come to this session and asked Judge Pittman to give a ten minute speech explaining the Single Tax. The Judge's talk was an admirable statement. "The question is often asked," he said, "how do you propose to give men jobs? We do not propose to give anybody a job. We propose to take away the policeman that stands between the man and the job. What we advocate is to

free the earth. When we hold conventions it is to tell people who come what we are after. Let us confine our discussions to preaching the quality of opportunity."

BANQUET, OCTOBER 11

On this evening there was held the banquet that is one of the features of every Henry George Congress. Judge Pittman acted as toastmaster. He told us that the only speeches he made were on the Single Tax. "I used to speak on other topics but my wife put a stop to that."

Mr. Williams read communications from those who were prevented from coming, and Mr. Hensen of Grand Rapids, Michigan, read a poem which contained our entire story.

Mrs. Marietta Johnson, head of the Organic School of Education at Fairhope, spoke on the School, and told interestingly of her theories of education, after which Clayton J. Ewing read an eloquent paper.

Mr. P. R. Williams paid a deserved tribute to the Memphis representatives, Judge Pittman, Hon. Abe D. Waldauer, L. D. Bejack, and Dr. Gaither who had done so much to make the convention a success. He also took occasion to praise the press of Memphis which had given us such generous publicity, more perhaps than had been accorded by the press of any city where these conventions had been held. Mr. Williams finished by announcing the receipt of a number of contributions defraying the cost of the convention.

The closing speaker was Judge Harry E. Anderson, Federal Judge of Tennessee, who has been of late more or less in the public eye of the whole country. He is a rapid fire speaker and told one good story after another. He told of a policeman who was awakened at mid-night by some one rifling his pockets. He had a badge for marksmanship, but was afraid to fire because he did not know whether the man was a porch climber or a revenue agent.

"There seems to be an idea that Single Taxers are a curious sort of people, believers in vegetarianism, the League of Nations or something queer like that. Even my friend Pittman once took up Fletcherizing."

Judge Anderson said the Democrats put a high tax on bank checks, tooth brushes and soap, thereby hoping to make the Republicans pay all the taxes!

He said the depression had been a good thing for some people. He knew of a man who had a legacy of ten million left him and straightway established a racing stable, three chorus girls and a farm. Then came along the depression—that made a man of him. He reformed—he gave up his farm!

Describing the way in which we might make converts to the Single Tax, Judge Anderson said if the man approached happens to be a Democrat you ask him if he wants his sister to marry a nigger, and if he is a Republican

you ask him if he wants anything protected, and both will cheer the Single Tax to the echo!

OCTOBER 12

In the morning session G. J. Knapp talked on Pueblo and his desire to start a campaign in that city. He was the leader of the movement which some years ago nearly succeeded in making Pueblo a Single Tax city. He would like to try it again and thinks there is an excellent chance.

E. B. Gaston followed with an address on Fairhope and explained the enclavial plan. Hon Abe D. Walsauer, who acted as chairman of this session, presented to Fairhope a deed for one hundred acres.

He introduced Fiske Warren who sketched briefly the progress of the enclavial movement.

Mr. Waldauer declared himself in favor of political action but pointed out the obstacles in the way in the Tennessee constitution which since its adoption in 1870 has seen no change in the organic law. He declared himself in favor of the enclave and told how he had gone enclavian. His address appears in this issue.

Speaking of the American Legion, of whom he is one, he said these men do not want the dole. They want employment. You ask how this can be done. That is a fair question as it seemed to him. The answer was Wall Hill. Mr. Waldauer closed with an eloquent plea for the enclave.

The luncheon of the last day, Dr. Gaither presiding, was devoted to the Henry George School of Social Science. A short message from the Director of the School in New York, Oscar H. Geiger, was read by Joseph Dana Miller.

Mr. Miller in the course of his remarks threw out a suggestion for Single Taxers to act upon. He said that every now and then he was reminded by some one that the governor of this or that State was favorable to our proposal. He urged that those who might succeed in gaining the ear of any governor suggest the appointment of a commission to examine and report on the collecting of the economic rent for public purposes. He knew the objections that might be urged against this recommendation, namely that little attention is paid to commissions and their reports. He thought in this case and at this time such a report would not be received with indifference. He recalled that a good deal of attention had been given some years ago to the Bucklin Report in Colorado, and more still to the Report of the Royal Commission in Great Britain appointed to examine into the merits of land value "rating." He thought that an equal amount of publicity and newspaper discussion would result from such a report, no matter in what State it originated.

Mr. Miller prefaced the reading of Mr. Geiger's message to the Congress by describing the Henry George School and its work. He told of the coming book by Prof. George Raymond Geiger, son of Oscar H. Geiger, entitled "The Philosophy of Henry George," fathered by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, and soon to be published by the Macmillan Company. He called it the most significant

work since "Progress and Poverty" and described it in some detail.

The afternoon and closing session of the Congress Clayton J. Ewing presiding, listened to Dr. Millikin who has the distinction of having attended every meeting of the Foundation.

Secretary Williams read communications from Messrs Warriner and Madsen of England, after which the resolutions were adopted. Short speeches by Messrs. R. E. Logsdon, of Memphis, and Malcolm H. MacDowell, of Sewanee, Tenn. Willis Malone, of St. Louis, also spoke.

The following resolution prepared by Dr. Mark Millikin and presented at this session provoked an animated debate

Whereas, the Bonus Expeditionary Forces, an organization of ex-soldiers, has made a demand on Congress for employment, and the immediate payment of the bonus, and

Whereas, their organization is still active and capable of bringing about fundamental reform through political pressure, and

Whereas, the members of the Henry George Foundation now in Memphis, Tenn., sympathize with the B. E. F. in their extremity, and

Whereas, the Henry George Foundation believes that the mere payment of the bonus, whether adjusted or in full, will have only a temporary beneficial effect, and

Whereas, it believes that permanent employment can only be had and guaranteed through access to land,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Henry George Foundation urge the B. E. F. to demand of Congress a sufficient tax levied on land according to its value, to make it unprofitable to hold land for speculative purposes.

Be it further resolved that such action on the part of the B. E. F. would stamp its members as fundamental reformers; and that the adoption of such a plan would do more to end the depression than any measure so far proposed.

Be it further resolved that the Henry George Foundation will aid in every way possible the B. E. F. in such activity.

Though this resolution did not seek to commit us to the payment of the bonus through a tax on land value or otherwise, it seemed objectionable to many because it would have the effect of putting us on record as taking a sympathetic position toward the bonus. It had been the settled conviction of the Resolution Committee that any resolution which aroused a measure of antagonism and failed to receive substantial support should be withdrawn in the interests of harmony. So this resolution was tabled though it was clearly evident that the ex-service men had the friendly interest of the Henry George Congress.

Thus closed the Seventh Annual Congress of the Henry George Foundation.

HENRY GEORGE'S teachings are the only practically workable philosophy of liberty.—FRANK H. SOMMER, Dean of the Law School of the University of New York.

WHAT a noble income would be that of a Duke of New York, a Marquis of Philadelphia, or a Count of San Francisco, who would administer the Government of these municipalities for 50 per cent of present waste as a stealage!—*Social Problems.*