

THE HENRY GEORGE CONGRESS IN NEW YORK

Annual Congresses have been organized for ten years in succession by the Henry George Foundation of America. Each year a different city is chosen from the place of meeting in a previous year. In 1934, Chicago and in 1933 Memphis in Tennessee brought delegates from near and distant parts. This year, as everyone remarked, the Congress in New York surpassed all its predecessors in numbers and in the scope of its representation, as well as in the work done and the influence left behind. The sponsors of the Congress, the Henry George Foundation which is a Philadelphia institution concerned mainly, if not solely, in such annual gatherings, had in New York the effective co-operation of the virile agencies of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation and the large and growing band of students and their teachers belonging to the Henry George School of Social Science. From overseas were present Messrs F. Folke representing Denmark and A. W. Madsen representing Great Britain; from Canada, Mr A. C. Thompson of Toronto and the Messrs Ellert of Milk River in Alberta; from Alaska, Mrs H. H. McEvoy. It would need space to list all who came from the States beyond the immediate area of New York, but a mention at random of some who took part in the discussions shows the representative character of the attendance: Mrs Truehart and her son, Bill Truehart, of Houston, Texas; Rabbi M. Aaronsohn and D. Margolis of Cleveland, Ohio; Col. Victor Rule and C. J. Ewing, of Chicago; Mrs M. Johnson and Mr Emil Knips of Fairhope, Alabama; Hon. Abe D. Waldauer of Memphis, Tennessee; Messrs R. E. Howe and R. P. Bowers of Pittsburgh; Mr H. Dennett of New Hampshire; Mr W. I. Swanton of Washington, D.C.; Mr H. Sudell of Philadelphia; Mr J. P. Kohler of Florida; Miss Zara du Pont and others from Massachusetts.

The Congress was held in the large Ball Room of the Hotel New Yorker during the three days 26th to 28th September under the able chairmanship of Mr Edmund P. Donovan, an Englishman now settled in New York who as a young man in Wandsworth, London, had Young Liberal associations in the days of the 1910 Budget campaign. Mr Donovan, as he explained at a later session, had been "roped in" to the Henry George fold by Mr Leonard Recker who was working with so much energy and enthusiasm for their ideas.

THE HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL

The Congress considered first the work of the Henry George School of Social Science and its extension classes, two sessions being devoted thereto under the chairmanship respectively of Mr C. J. Smith and Mr J. F. Oastler. These developments were interestingly described in the addresses of Mr Otto K. Dorn, the Business Manager of the School, and Mr John Lawrence Monroe (of Chicago) who is the Field Director and who in his travelling all over the States, has successfully established those extension classes that count for so much.

Impressive speeches on the developing activities of the School were made by Mr Richard E. Howe of Pittsburgh, Mr D. Margolis of Cleveland, Mrs R. B. Halpern and Mr Charles Erwood of New York and a number of others, the young Bill Truehart of Houston (who is 14 years old) speaking with a modest eloquence that held great promise. Mr Stephen Bell, foreign editor of *Commerce and Finance*, urged the need for a vigorous Free Trade campaign and said the School should have special classes on tariffs.

The School has a carefully prepared syllabus, with questionnaire, instructions and guidance for reading, serviceable to both students and teachers, which may very well be used as an example for study circles anywhere in any country. Mr Monroe was able to report the opening during this autumn of 42 new classes in 16 States of the Union, and many more were in process of formation. In passing it should be said that this class-teaching and recruitment of new adherents comes as a matter of gratification to those who saw Oscar Geiger struggling hard at its inception. Little wonder that Mrs Anna George de Mille, Miss Denbigh and others spoke of it with such admiration.

THE PROBLEM FOR SOLUTION

At the next session, the Congress got upon wider or more general ground in the consideration of "The Solution of our Present Economic Problems" where the addresses of Rabbi Michael Aaronsohn, Hon. Abe D. Waldauer and Mrs Marietta Johnson made appeal to the understanding of the basic principles for which Henry George stood. The Rabbi and Mr Waldauer were comrades in the war, both wounded and the Rabbi with loss of sight. The blind orator had an ovation and all stood in their places to mark their appreciation. Mrs Johnson spoke useful words on the wisdom of welcoming the co-operation of all who are willing to go part of the road to our goal, never mind the actual labels they attach to themselves or what may be their declared or alleged ultimate policy. Whatever socialism meant, we should use every avenue to explain the truth about the socialization of rent and thereby remove many prejudices and antagonisms at the outset.

PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE

A comprehensive statement was made by the former Assemblyman, Mr James G. Blauvelt, of Ridgewood, New Jersey, at the session devoted to the "Legislative Application of the Principles of Henry George," over which Mrs Mary Ware Dennett presided. Mr Blauvelt said he had drawn upon *Land and Freedom* and *Land & Liberty* and George Geiger's book *The Philosophy of Henry George* for his information. He surveyed what had been done in Australia, Canada and other countries, and his treatment of British legislation in 1909 and 1931 ably described the situation. The discussion was so eagerly engaged as to have deserved an adjourned session. It ranged over not only what has been done in numerous countries but also on the proposals for practical legislation being brought forward in various States of the Union, for example in California under the Ralston plans for Constitutional Amendment. The latest reports in that regard were given by Mr Joseph Dana Miller and Mrs Anna George de Mille. Mr Harold Sudell described the Bill he had prepared for Philadelphia. The good results achieved in Pittsburgh, which had gone part way by its shift of taxation from improvements (now taxed at half-rate) to land values, were described by Mr Percy R. Williams; and after Mr Walter Fairchild had spoken for the work of the Society for Scientific Taxation, the lady chairman ended the session on the very practical note that Bills should be prepared for submission to the legislature in every one of the States. Another who would have been heard to great advantage on this occasion was Mr J. B. Ellert of Milk River, Alberta, but time could not be given. His account (told at some of the group meetings held after hours) of what Milk River has done to apply the land value policy with beneficial effects that could not be challenged was most informing.

METHODS OF EDUCATION

The Congress returned to the general ground of the educational work, discussing at one session the question "To Reach the Masses—How?" and at another "What to Emphasize in Teaching the Philosophy of Henry George," sessional chairmen being Mr R. C. Bowers of Pittsburgh and Col. Victor Rule of Chicago. The chief contributions were made by Miss Antoinette Kaufmann reviewing the work of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, and by Mr Roy A. Foulke, the manager of Dun and Bradstreet's Analytical Reporting Department, who gave a paper on "The Effects of Land Speculation on and by the Business Enterprise." Five minute reports were made by representatives of various Henry George organizations throughout the States, as by Mrs G. E. Mackenzie of Washington, D.C.; Mrs Eva Maxwell reporting for the *Forum* and *No Taxes* of Stockton, California; Mr A. N. Chandler of New Jersey; Mr Edward Polak describing the High School Essays and other activities he had organized; Mrs B. B. Truehart of Houston, Texas; Miss Charlotte O. Schetter, Mr Fred Leubuscher and many others including Professor Franz Oppenheimer who

had just "happened along" at the Congress on his arrival in New York for a tour in the States. Closely followed also were the addresses of Mr C. H. Kendal and Mr Benjamin W. Burger. The latter made notable use of Mr Alexander Ure's famous "Six reasons for Taxing Land Values" which the United Committee printed by the million copies in the campaign preceding and succeeding the Budget of 1909-10.

SPREADING THE LITERATURE

The great service rendered by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, the group of twenty-one trustees appointed under the will of Mr Schalkenbach, was not only in publishing and distributing Henry George's books and allied literature but, as Miss Kaufmann the Executive Secretary explained, in organizing and conducting an educational campaign widely extended over the country. This involved a large and growing correspondence, linking up with many schools and colleges, the supply of Press material and syndicated news columns, help and advice given to many educators who had become such after study of the books. Since 1926 there had been distributed or sold no fewer than 41,762 copies of *Progress and Poverty* abridged or unabridged, and 16,652 other Henry George titles including *Protection or Free Trade* and *The Land Question* together with over 800,000 sundry pamphlets and tracts. (These were mostly the Foundation's own and new publications, supplemented by such titles as *The Science of Political Economy* and *The Condition of Labour* obtained from the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain.) In nine years, in fact, as many Henry George volumes had been distributed as the former publishers of the works in the States had distributed in the previous 45 years, according to their own records. In these activities Mr Hennessy, the President of the Foundation, had taken a leading and hard-working part, and through his influence as President also of the International Union they were in close touch with many Single Tax groups in other countries.

INTERNATIONAL SESSION

On "International Night," the second evening of the Congress, speakers were Mr A. W. Madsen of Great Britain and representing the International Union as its Secretary, Mr F. Folke of Denmark and representing the Danish Henry George League as its President, and Col. Victor A. Rule of Chicago who among his other credentials is author of the new book *Chain the War God*.

Mr Charles O'Connor Hennessy, presiding over this session, read the message the Congress had received from Lord Snowden in which, regretting his absence, he expressed himself most emphatically on land monopoly and trade barriers as the root causes of the world's economic distresses. (The full text of the letter was given in last month's *Land & Liberty*.)

Mr Hennessy said Henry George had shown the inevitable relationship between the causes of war and those that produce periodical industrial depression and widespread poverty. In his Fourth of July Oration in California in 1877 he forecast the idea of a League of Nations in these words: "Is it too soon to hope that it may be the mission of this Republic to unite all nations of English speech . . . in a League which by ensuring justice, promoting peace, and liberating commerce will be the forerunner of a world-wide federation that will make war the possibility of a past age and turn to works of usefulness the enormous forces now dedicated to destruction?" Tennyson's notable prophecy in his *Locksley Hall* of a "Parliament of Man and Federation of the World" did not precede that, since the poem was published in 1886. The idea underlying our present League of Nations had been lost in the shuffle of the treaty makers at Versailles. When the Economic Conference was called at Geneva in 1927 our young International organization submitted an address in which the truism was pointed out that the struggle for raw materials and new markets, expressing itself in Colonial expansion and the forcible annexation of territories had been one of the chief causes of international jealousies and discord. He did not believe that the arguments then presented were without influence, for the President of the Conference, Mons. Theunis of Belgium in his final review used this

language: "The main trouble with the world to-day is neither any material shortage in the resources of nature nor any inadequacies in man's power to exploit them. It is all, in one form or another, a maladjustment—not an insufficient productive capacity, but a series of impediments to the full utilization of that capacity. The main obstacles to economic revival have been the hindrances opposed to the free flow of labour, of capital and of goods." A better argument for what was then and was now the matter with the world could hardly be made.

Mr A. W. Madsen related the difficulties that his colleague, Mr F. C. R. Douglas (the author of the Memorandum), and he met with at Geneva in the endeavour to get the views of the International Union officially accepted by some Government or other, but without success. Yet the document was placed in the hands of every one of the delegates and it had since been translated and circulated in fourteen languages, so that it had far wider notice and certainly very many more readers than anything the Conference itself produced. Since Geneva, with its futile resolution that tariffs had been raised high enough and should not be increased, more and more trade barriers had been erected. Added to the fiscal weapon of customs tariffs they now had the actual physical stoppage of goods by quotas, exchange restrictions and prohibitions. It was the mentality of war and was bringing the world to another Armageddon. As long as tariffs produced revenues, free trade would have the bitter opposition of the financial interests and the occupiers of the "house of have," who considered themselves secure under systems of indirect taxation. Free Traders fought a losing battle who did not see this connection and imagined that protectionist manufacturers were the only interests concerned, whereas the tariff issue was the "blanket code" for loading the burden of taxation upon the shoulders of the working people as a whole. The Governments of the United States, Canada and Australia, not to speak of other countries, had contributed savagely to this process of taxing their own citizens to enrich privilege within their own boundaries. But the trade interferences led to reprisals taking the form, such is the madness of it all, of taxes and tribute imposed by other Governments on their own nationals. In Great Britain before the 1931 panic, Mr Ramsay MacDonald then Labour Prime Minister had supported the urgent demand for another World Conference to seek the return to sanity. The pretences and insincerities of that time were shown in the result. The new Government in 1931 deliberately surrendered British Free Trade. The protectionists led by Mr Neville Chamberlain had to get their way. The tariff was imposed, followed by the Ottawa Agreements which were the greatest blunder and greatest crime any Governments, of whatever nations, have committed. The world was faced by an accomplished fact. The Economic Conference was repeatedly postponed and when it was held, in 1933, it became a farce which was rudely hissed off the stage. What Canada had done with its tariff in destroying agriculture and producing despair in the West was illustrated by the mental collapse of a whole people now worshipping the printing press as the distributor of a national dividend. Western Australia, similarly afflicted industrially, but not losing its head, proposes severance from the rest of the Commonwealth if it cannot otherwise enjoy the benefits of freedom to trade. It was no wonder that with markets closed against them, or treated as the special perquisite of some nations, that countries like Japan, Germany and Italy used the language of war in asserting the need for expansion or that, surrounded by the tariff walls they themselves built, they complained of being overpopulated, refusing the produce that the rest of the world could supply in overwhelming abundance. In Great Britain, the Government called National had not only enforced the tariffs and its many schemes to uphold the rent of land but had also, without a mandate and in betrayal of its pledges, repealed the Land Value Tax and Land Valuation provisions of the first Finance Act of 1931 with its enormous promise for the future. Ministers of the Government in very shame of their action tried to get rid of that legislation in the fewest possible words but the Premier Mr Ramsay MacDonald, (who had absented himself from all the debates), was stung to an

explanation by the public protest the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values had made. The letter he wrote in reply unwittingly but completely smashed the conspiracy of silence, for the Committee took care to let it be known through the Press that by virtual admission of the Prime Minister this National Government had simply obeyed the behests of the landed interests. It was the only possible explanation. In conclusion, Mr Madsen said it was argued that whether a country had protective tariffs or free imports the condition of the worker would be reduced to the same low level by the stranglehold of land monopoly. That was true in the long run, just as it was true that public education, improved sanitation and all material advance would be absorbed by the privileged receivers of rent under the law as now constituted. It showed how urgent was the land value policy and how essential it was to link that with free trade. But the economic injuries caused by protection were not the least. Far greater was the poisoning of the spirit, the moral corruption and degradation, fostering suspicion and hate, making every man's neighbour his enemy, Ishmaelites not only in national spheres but in the everyday affairs of our individual lives.

Mr F. Folke taking as his text "Land Value Taxation in Politics and Practice in Denmark" explained how deep seated was the sentiment for freedom and social justice in the Danish mentality. It was a cultural heritage of the people. It found expression for example, in the historic statement of the poet and popular educator Grundtvig, the founder of the remarkable Danish "People's High Schools" who wrote in 1853:

"Every people is the ground landlord of its own Fatherland and cannot by any law lose its right. Only the results of the beneficial use of land can be disbursed by the law and become the objects of purchase and sale. No law can make wrong right."

Henry George's teaching was brought to Denmark in 1884 by Jakob E. Lange, and the seed fell on fertile ground, although the advocates of Henry George's practical application of social justice had to struggle hard before Parliament gave effect to even the small instalment they had so far got. Overcoming the opposition of the larger landed interests, they had secured a national tax, a measure of local taxation on land values, the periodic assessment of all land values, and a supplementary annual tax on increases in land value arising between the date of one periodic valuation and another. Mr Folke described this legislation in some detail, including also the Act of 1919 which out of land surrendered to the State established small holdings so that the land value, periodically revised, was secured for the community while the small holders had absolute property in the improvements. It was the same instructive story (in an all too modest setting not admitting Denmark has accomplished much although advocates of our policy elsewhere envy this progress) as he told at the Henry George Commemoration Dinner in London, September 17th, and reported in our previous issue.

Mr Alan C. Thompson of Toronto spoke for Canada and predicted the great Liberal victory which has since been achieved with the prospect now held out that Canada will begin to lead the nations back to common sense. The "International Night" concluded with a rousing speech by Col. Victor A. Rule, exhorting everyone to renewed endeavours.

AT HENRY GEORGE'S GRAVE

The final day of the Congress (28th September) was noted for the pilgrimage that took place in the afternoon to the grave of Henry George in the Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn. About 100 of the delegates attended the ceremony along with Mrs Anna George de Mille. Tributes to an imperishable memory were offered in speeches by Col. Victor A. Rule (in place of Mr Peter de Witt who was unavoidably absent), Mr F. Folke and Mr A. W. Madsen, the two latter laying wreaths that had been brought across the Atlantic. One was placed in the name of the Danish Henry George League and was made of heather flowers gathered and bound by the hands of Danish countrymen. The other, of laurel leaves, was laid in the name of the

followers of Henry George in Great Britain and throughout the International Henry George Movement. The Press reporting the ceremony spoke of it as a very impressive event.

THE FINAL EVENING

At the Banquet in the evening which concluded the Congress, Mr Edmund P. Donovan presided over a company of 220 members and friends. He said they could congratulate themselves on a most successful conference from the point of view of attendance, interest and work done, as well as the Press reports, the New York newspapers having done well in the space devoted day by day to their proceedings. It was valuable publicity. The speakers at the Banquet were Mr Percy R. Williams, Mr F. Folke, Mr A. W. Madsen, Mayor Macnair of Pittsburgh and Mrs Anna George de Mille.

Mr Williams, on behalf of the conveners of the Congress, expressed thanks for the splendid co-operation which had ensured success and the great profit everyone had derived from the counsels they had taken together.

Mr Folke, who was introduced in an engaging speech by Mr Helmuth Möller the Danish Vice-Consul and himself a Henry George man, communicated greetings from colleagues and co-workers and gave an interesting account of his first impressions of America, over which he was about to travel many miles. Material achievements in New York City were immense. It seemed as if to human genius, allowed scope, nothing was impossible. But the greatest gift his country had received from America was the "good tidings from the West" when Henry George's teaching reached them. There was something inherent in the moral perceptions of the Danish people by which they had a listening ear, attuned to the ideals of liberty and equality of opportunity. He hoped that they would soon again hear the message of true democracy in that Western wind, an inspiration and encouragement not only to his own people but to the rest of the world.

Mr Madsen also conveyed greetings to the Congress, these being in the name of the British movement and in written messages and cables from many parts of the world, from Alaska to Cape Horn, from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and from nearly all the countries of Europe exceptions being Portugal, Italy, Russia and the Baltic States. When they looked abroad to see what legislative progress had been made and the fellowship existing to promote their ideas they could in truth say that no social reformer had been so justified in his day and generation as Henry George. In Great Britain, land value taxation was written into the programmes of the Liberal and Labour parties. Briefly sketching the nature of the campaign work conducted by the United Committee and the Leagues with the many agencies at their disposal, he traced the Parliamentary history of the movement with its successes and setbacks. Most important was what the municipalities had done and were doing in their official capacity, action that had been initiated years back in Glasgow by the pioneer work of Bailie Burt. Mentioning a number of large municipalities that had engaged in this agitation, he pointed to the lead now being given by the Cardiff City Council which had just held a representative conference of Welsh counties and towns. There was a vast opportunity for organizing the forces that could speak to some purpose and in the wider national sphere as well, insisting on land value taxation as the way to both freedom of production and freedom of trade. He could not help reflecting on the misuse of the phrase *laissez faire* which rightly interpreted meant "let things be done," with all restrictions upon production removed. It was not a negative but a positive policy, a command to landlord, tax-gatherer and bureaucrat alike to get out of the way and give equal freedom a chance. It was another way of saying that the moral law must be observed, reminding him of a thought to which John Paul often recurred, and is the essence of the Henry George philosophy, that our civilization cannot flourish but is doomed if moral progress halts behind material progress. There was all the truth in the injunction of the prophet of old who cried: "Ye people rend your hearts and not your garments" when affliction

prevailed, not through any fatality beyond our control but because of an elemental injustice for which the people themselves were responsible in their laws. Instead of bewailing the circumstances, rending our garments and trying now to make clothes of our tatters (which is what present day Governments are doing) we must fight the wrong and in our hearts assert the right whereby there shall be opportunity in abundance, wealth and happiness in abundance, for all the sons of men.

Mayor MacNair of Pittsburgh gave a light touch to the proceedings with some amusing reminiscences of incidents that do fall to the lot of a public man, who in the midst of serious affairs has the saving grace of a sense of humour. (He faced an audience that laughingly took his sally asking if there was any one present who didn't want to make a speech.)

suited to the occasion. It was not goodbye but *au revoir*, *auf Wiedersehen*, or, as the Danes say, *paa Gensyn*: "in the hope to meet," as the rare Ben Jonson puts it, "shortly again and make our absence sweet." "Most of us," she said, "who have been in the Henry George movement have found it difficult at times to keep our light burning in this darkened world. To know that now it burns more brightly than for many a long year is indeed encouraging. It is not merely our common desire to bring about an economic reform that binds us so strongly; it is a spiritual bond, a fraternity, a fellowship that must carry our cause to victory."

The final meeting was over, but that the conference had not ended and that there was still business to do was testified by the large number who remained for conversations, continuing till well after midnight.