

AFTER messages and greetings from many parts of the world which opened the first session of the Conference on Monday, August 31, Joseph S. Thompson, President of the International Union, read a paper entitled "A Basic Income for Everyone." This proved to be a challenging and uninhibited call for the recognition of equal rights to land, to be secured not by the Single Tax alone but by a national dividend as well! Logically, said Mr. Thompson, we are all stockholders in the land of our birth. The rent of land would provide a basic income for everyone.

Mr. Thompson had critics for his super single tax idea. Even supposing that there would, in the long run, be enough income to pay all legitimate government expenses and some over for a dividend as well, would it be a good idea to give people money without working? Was not work itself (which guaranteed an income) a necessary factor in creating and maintaining land value? In other words, no work, no wages, and therefore no land value. Income under these conditions would and should be nil.

Mr. Thompson emphasised that his plan was not advanced as a practical measure for today. This was a long-term ideal put forward to bring out the fundamental philosophy of Henry George. It was popular today to talk of a basic living income for everyone; why not show the only just way of doing this? Ours was a far better concept of this idea.

This, many thought, was at best a dream of the future; but Joe was entitled to his dream: less credible ones he had seen come true in his own time.

At the Monday luncheon a proclamation by the Mayor of New York was read declaring the current week "Henry George Week" in New York. This was one of the many indications of the "respectability" which the proponents of George's philosophy have now acquired in the United States. "The trouble is," remarked one delegate, "we have a too silent opposition."

In a luncheon address, Raymond Moley, contributing editor of *Newsweek*, referred to the choice between centralism or decentralisation in government. But it is no good denouncing centralism, he said, without proposing an adequate source of revenue for local government. This is what political leaders have failed to grasp. Contrary to official opinion, the property tax is by no means exhausted. Land rent would provide the source of revenue for a revitalised local government.

Mr. Moley also referred to the land speculation on Staten Island sparked off by the proposal to link the Island with Brooklyn by a new suspension bridge. Nine out of ten dollars are going to people who never did a thing to earn it, he said.

Raymond Crotty, an Irish farmer and now a lecturer at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in his address to the Conference confined himself to the agricultural aspect of the land problem in Ireland and with the question of economic efficiency rather than with equity.

The "solution" to the Irish land question, following the agitation of the 1880s, had been peasant proprietorship, creating a more wide-spread vested interest in land

Conference

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, NE

(A separate report on the written papers presented)

ownership, yet benefiting only a minority.

There was little political pressure in Ireland for reform along Georgeist lines and large numbers of people found their own personal solution in emigration, leaving the less adventurous and the apathetic to accept conditions as they were.

Land-owners, estimated Mr. Crotty, take about 50 per cent of the produce of land in rent.

The average age of farmers is high and there is a large proportion of women farmers.

Mr. Crotty, who has made an extensive study of the Irish economy (to be published soon) estimated that agricultural production could be increased by 55 per cent.

Other facts emerging from this interesting address were: 90 per cent of farm land is owner-occupied and 10 per cent rented; little land designated as agricultural land is idle, but the total acreage farmed has been decreasing; property taxes are levied on a valuation made in 1851; government intervention has depressed low incomes and increased higher incomes.

Reports from Italy (Dr. Natale Pulvirenti), France (Max Toubeau), Austria (Philipp Knab) and the Netherlands (S. Sevenster) were read to the Conference during the latter part of the afternoon.

The day concluded with addresses by V. H. Blundell and V. G. Saldji which were well received.

In the reports from around the world the following day, the contributions from the Rev. Archer Torrey (Korea) and Mr. K. B. Sharma (Kenya) were most illuminating.

Mr. Torrey reported on the translation of the condensed edition of *Progress and Poverty* into Korean under the more recognisable (to Koreans) title of *The Way out of Poverty*.

Some attempts had been made to interest the United States advisors to Korea but there was much confused thinking on the subject of land-value taxation.

More success had been made in the academic field and a forthcoming Christian magazine would contain information on the taxation of land values and would advocate its adoption. There was no democratic tradition in Korea and what was needed was the development of a yeoman class, which land-value taxation would do much to produce.

Land values in some parts of Korea had risen from twenty dollars an acre to 1,675 dollars an acre in eight years; the general rise in prices had been only five-fold. Although there was a legal restriction on the extent of land ownership, it was frequently circumvented by the

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(The following report follows the conference)

registering of land holdings in the names of relatives. Owner occupiers were handicapped by the lack of capital, and the rate of interest at times reached 10 per cent per month.

During the discussion that followed promises of help were made to Mr. Torrey, and the International Union promised financial assistance for future activities.

A plea for help and advice was contained in a rousing report given by Mr. Sharma on the conditions in Kenya and the attempts to interest people in the ideas of Henry George. Africa was ready for Henry George's philosophy, said Mr. Sharma, and the association of progress with poverty was very evident in Africa today.

Mr. Sharma was formerly a correspondence student of the Henry George School in New York. He is, by profession, a teacher in Nairobi, and opportunities were being taken for education in Henry George's ideas as part of the school curriculum. Great sacrifices are being made by impecunious African fathers to send their children to school. There is a great hunger for education and a great shortage of text books and other written materials.

It is Mr. Sharma's intention to start classes of the Henry George School in Nairobi and his visit to the Conference gave him a rare opportunity to study the various methods practised in England and North America and other parts of the world. Mr. Sharma said he would not advertise the classes too widely for this would be bound to bring a flood of applicants greater than he could cope with. His first job, however, would be to study the formal courses of the Henry George School and to train teachers to take classes.

A spontaneous reaction to Mr. Sharma's address was made by Philip Wallace of Jamaica who initiated a collection on the spot and presented Mr. Sharma with two hundred dollars.

After the presentation of the official reports from Australia and New Zealand by E. P. Middleton (Sydney) and a supplementary report on Melbourne by Mrs. E. Serpell, a lively discussion was evoked by a personal contribution from Mr. Middleton. He made a plea for revision of the terminology used by Georgeists in advocating the ideas for which they stand and was ably supported by Mr. Bernard Donohue, presenting the views of the Australian School of Social Science. Mr. Donohue took the opportunity to underline his points at subsequent sessions of the Conference.

One of the outstanding events of the Conference was the banquet held on the final Saturday. A message to the Conference from Mendel Fisher, Secretary-Consultant

of the Jewish National Fund, was read for him (Mr. Fisher was not able to attend) and rousing addresses were given by Ashley Mitchell, Perry Prentice and the Toastmaster, Joe Thompson, who were received with standing ovations.

Ashley Mitchell entertained his audience with stories of his encounters in the political field. His amusing anecdotes delighted his audience not only for their wit but for the sharp lesson that each one contained. Mr. Mitchell told of his inquisition at the Customs on his entry into the country, during which he took the opportunity to "say a few words about the Single Tax." The customs official replied "That seems like a hell of a good idea" and ushered him through without further ado.

Mr. Prentice, Vice-President of Time Inc., who introduced himself as "a man of a few thousand words," referred to the conferees as very important people — people who had saved Henry George from being forgotten. George, he said, had been far ahead of his time; his prophecies were coming true today. The case for land-value taxation was stronger than ever. "Henry George is anything but out of date" he declared. His message is alive today.

A surprise guest at the speakers table was Agnes de Mille, well-known choreographer and grand-daughter of Henry George, who said a few words to the Conference.

A visit by the conferees to Philadelphia on the anniversary of Henry George's birth was another outstanding success. At a special dinner to mark the occasion, held at Temple University, the highlight was a talk given by Professor Clyde Reeves. Professor Reeves (a professor of English) was interested not so much in what George said as in the way he said it and in giving examples of George's use of paradox to underline his arguments, he commanded the interest of everyone, including those who were familiar with all the writings of Henry George. Lacing his talk with wit and humour, Professor Reeves presented an entirely new angle on George and was roundly applauded for what was perhaps the most skilful summary of George's philosophy that many had heard for a long while.

Mr. George Collins, Director of the Philadelphia Henry George School presided with distinction. During the course of the evening he introduced a representative from the Mayor of Philadelphia who declared by proclamation that September 2 was Henry George Day in Philadelphia.

A visit to the Worlds Fair was constituted as part of the general programme and in the Hawaiian Pavilion Miss V. G. Peterson presented her paper "Land Reform in Hawaii." This was a factual and encouraging report of the progress in legislation along the lines of land-value taxation.

The second half of the Conference was devoted to discussions among Directors of the Henry George Schools, which members of the Conference were free to attend.

Consideration of space precludes any detailed report of these proceedings but they were well attended and fruitful.

Also included in the School's programme were reports from many parts of North America giving details of the

various avenues of approach adopted by proponents of Henry George's ideas advocated under the auspices of organisations formed especially for the purpose. Among these were the Canadian Research Committee on Taxation, the Henry George Foundation, the Erie Land Tax Association, the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation and the Statewide Homeowners Association of California.

The programme also included two visits to the Henry George School in New York. A graduation ceremony was a most encouraging event, presenting as it did the views of recently graduated students on the course or courses they had taken. On the final Sunday there was a buffet supper and evening programme at the School.

It was an exhausting Conference. The temperature was

often in the nineties and but for the iced water and air-conditioning the Conference might not have proceeded!

The Conference ended with a visit to the New Jersey Henry George School and a picnic at Forest Lodge in New Jersey. Here, over a transistor radio, picnickers heard a representative of the Columbia Broadcasting System present his recording of an interview with Joseph Thompson, President of the International Union, and V. H. Blundell, one of its Joint Secretaries. Both acquitted themselves well in what was an unrehearsed and unprepared-for interview at the hotel on the ideas and aims of the Henry George Schools and the International Union.

The verdict of many: the best conference yet!

The Conference Papers

A PAPER entitled "Agitation for Land Reform in Great Britain" was read by Mr. V. H. Blundell, Joint Secretary of the International Union, and Secretary of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values (Great Britain).

Outlining the various demands for land reform, including those from left-wing socialists who propose land nationalisation and those from the Liberal Party, which is in favour of site-value rating, Mr. Blundell compared the various proposals inside and outside political parties with those of the Georgeists.

Although land taxation has aroused a great deal of interest in Britain, Mr. Blundell told the Conference, the whole problem of land values is not fully understood. It is the high land prices, the extent of land speculation and the "windfalls" accruing to private persons when planning permission is granted that make the headlines.

But currently there is much more genuine concern among building societies, rate-payers associations, homeowners associations, town planners, local authorities, architects, builders and in fact among all those who suffer from the effects of land monopoly and the private appropriation of economic rent.

Looking back into the past, Mr. Blundell spoke of the opportunity the Labour Party had when it came to power in 1945 to re-introduce the repealed provisions of the Labour Finance Act of 1931 which embodied the taxation of land values. But this opportunity was thrown aside. Instead, in an attempt to collect "betterment," the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, with its notorious Development Charges, was passed. This, of course, was a failure and the Conservatives lost little time in abolishing the Development Charges when they returned to power in 1951, although they left the network of town planning regulations contained in the Act.

Meanwhile, although Liberals had only a small voice, a pressure group of Georgeists in the Liberal Party — the Liberal Liberty League — gave warnings against

Keynesian solutions to economic problems. The League was disaffiliated from the Party and it seemed that everywhere Georgeist proposals were falling on deaf ears.

By 1959 the scene had changed. People were growing impatient with the lack of good housing, the slums, the soaring price of land. These scandals made news, as also did the dissatisfaction with the system of raising local revenue. Even site-value rating was being commonly discussed as a possible substitute.

Under the leadership of Mr. Peter Stubbings the Rating Reform Campaign was launched and is still keeping up steady propaganda to educate local councillors in the importance of rating reform. Recently, the Whitstable Report, described as "political dynamite," produced gratifying results. All M.P.s, all local authorities and all newspapers plus a great many trade, professional and political journals, were circulated by the United Committee. Soon, councillors, architects, valuers, town clerks etc. were asking for more information; and by this time the Liberal Party had at last adopted site-value rating as official party policy.

Mr. Blundell concluded by saying that it must be made quite clear that what is required is not merely a tax on land values when permission to develop has been given, but a tax on *all* land values.

The United Committee will continue to educate and to agitate for land reform along these lines.

A FULL EXPLANATION of the importance of the Whitstable Report was given by Mr. V. G. Saldji, Joint Secretary of the International Union.

His talk, entitled "The Whitstable Land Value Survey," began with a description of the location of Whitstable Urban District, chosen by the Rating and Valuation Association for its pilot survey.

This big task, which involved the assessing of the annual land value of each separate site in the area, enabled a comparison to be made with the assessments on which