

LAND & LIBERTY

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THE LESSON OF THE CONFERENCE

In our time, as in times before, creep on the insidious forces that, producing inequality, destroy Liberty. On the horizon the clouds begin to lower. Liberty calls to us again. We must follow her further; we must trust her fully. Either we must wholly accept her or she will not stay. It is not enough that men should vote; it is not enough that they should be theoretically equal before the law. They must have liberty to avail themselves of the opportunities and means of life; they must stand on equal terms with reference to the bounty of Nature. Either this, or Liberty withdraws her light! Either this, or darkness comes on, and the very forces that progress has evolved turn to powers that work destruction. This is the universal law. This is the lesson of the centuries. Unless its foundations be laid in justice the social structure cannot stand. . . . But if, while there is yet time, we turn to Justice and obey her, if we trust Liberty and follow her, the dangers that now threaten must disappear, the forces that now menace will turn to agencies of elevation. Think of the powers now wasted; of the infinite fields of knowledge yet to be explored; of the possibilities of which the wondrous inventions of this century give us but a hint. With want destroyed; with greed changed to noble passions; with the fraternity that is born of equality taking the place of the jealousy and fear that now array men against each other; with mental power loosed by conditions that give to the humblest comfort and leisure; and who shall measure the heights to which our civilization may soar? Words fail the thought!—Henry George in *Progress and Poverty*, Book X., Chap. V.

The Copenhagen Conference has passed with dignity and resolution into the annals of the organized movement for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, to the credit of all who stand for this economic justice and freedom, so defined. Pending the publication of the official report we have issued a summary of the proceedings in pamphlet form containing the President's inspiring address. This piece of literature will be welcomed by members of the Conference who look for a statement of the kind before the event grows cold or gets behind local propaganda, more or less insistent.

The Conference was fortunate in its setting, and in having as its President Charles O'Connor Hennessy, who will be remembered by all in attendance for his outstanding ability, his tact and his polished good humour, no less than for his

clear-cut apprehension of what the Conference had met to consider and advise. From the first there was a happy though unexpressed feeling in the room that the right man was in the right place, and when the Presidential Address was finished the speaker was master of the situation. It was personal triumph for the man and an assurance to his audience that the chair was occupied by a true disciple of Henry George and one with the experience necessary to guide their debates.

A Danish correspondent has since written the United Committee describing the Conference as "ten times more successful than any of us ever expected when we first jointly put our hands to the organisation of it." Conference members and the whole movement are deeply indebted to Mr. Folke, Mr. Brink and others for all their good service. No fault whatever could be found with the plans and arrangements made for the comfort of their visitors and guests. The friendship and hospitality, as Mr. Hennessy would put it, was "well taken" and was always in joyful competition with the orders of the day.

The printed programme was certainly well taken by the Danish Press and the newspaper reports of the speeches and papers read, together with informing interviews by representative members, were day by day in overflowing abundance. There was a majestic touch in our coming together in the Danish Houses of Parliament that nothing could surpass. In the eyes of the strangers it was a gesture that gave tone and character to the assembly and placed the land value policy at the very heart of Danish politics. In no other country in the world can we conceive of such a national welcome to a Conference called to advocate the teaching of Henry George. It can be taken at its face value as a striking tribute to the enlightened and progressive public opinion of Denmark.

Yet the Danes seemed to take it as a matter of course: Parliament had adopted the Taxation of Land Values as part of its curriculum, therefore the Conference had a status that the Government naturally and gladly recognized. Verily, it was a unique experience, a sign of the times that counted for so much righteousness in the troubled sea of European politics. We shall not be surprised if the various Governments of the Continent go one better and contribute to the cost of our next International and ultimately put the movement on a permanent basis, financially speaking, like the League of Nations! In passing we cheerfully put on record the fact that Mr. Pavlos Giannelia represented the Greek Government at Copenhagen.

The teaching of Henry George has come to stay and given the right direction it will play its part in the coming transition from strife and despair to International unity and peace. The problem that confronts society is economic, not political, and safety lies in the general welfare of the toiling masses. From first to last the State rests on their labour, and political freedom must and will be used as a stepping stone to more solid ground where want and the fear of it will no longer follow their industry, nor tenaciously cling to their hopes and aspirations after the things of the spirit.

Government based on the right to vote and the liberty to tramp in search of a master with the means of employment cannot last. Its false economics, its protection to favoured industries, its subsidies and its doles, what are they but the distribution of Roman corn to keep the disinherited and distracted masses quiet and submissive? All this vast and growing expenditure is taken from the producer of wealth. He is urged by his high-placed mentors to greater and greater efficiency, and as he pulls his best he is menaced and taunted with the success of his competitors in other lands.

Labour leaders as they cry out against the "Capitalist System," would tax the rich to benefit the poor, and as this is accomplished the greater becomes the concentration of capital. The British Labour Party has just put forward a land policy that would endow the landlords with the rent of land; the British Liberal Party is on the same road to ruin, and the British Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer now tells us that "the royalty owners have as much right to their property as any man in the country has to his house, his shop, or his allotment." They are all out at large with their own economic compacts designed to protect the land speculator and deny the rights and needs of the community.

There is no mystery about the problem to be solved and the need for prompt action is everywhere in evidence. In Henry George's words: "There is a vague but general feeling of disappointment; an increased bitterness among the working classes; a widespread feeling of unrest and brooding revolution. If this were accompanied by a definite idea of how relief is to be obtained, it would be a hopeful sign; but it is not." This penetrating vision of the trend of events fifty years ago applies to-day with even greater force, and our new organization conceived to function on a wider and more influential stage must make its own appeal. It has come in good time and not a day too soon; the call is to all with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Those who stand for Free Trade without Land Value Taxation are not slowly having the ground taken from under their feet. Nor is this to be wondered at. A Free Trade system that has nothing but statistics to offer the unemployed and the hard pressed business man, to show how, generally speaking, things would be no better but worse under protection, has run its course. The hopeful sign with the definite idea is to be found in the more embracing policy we advocate.

The cry in all lands is for a more equitable distribution of the fruits of industry and progress, and until this is assured those who look to efficiency or to improved organization for relief are living in a fool's paradise. In competing nations there is equipment enough and to spare, in all departments of industry, to save civilization itself from impending disaster; but the catastrophe cannot be averted that way. The past fifty years of industrial efficiency have produced a harvest that is the marvel of the age we live in. It is common talk and understanding that there is nothing in all history to show such triumphs in patient research,

invention, capacity, improvement and power of production; yet "the insidious forces that, producing inequality, destroy Liberty" have shown such scant courtesy to this fatal belief in the doctrine of efficiency that its votaries in the public press and on the platform are daily and hourly whistling to keep up their courage.

The current opinion that this wonderful progress with parliamentary power to correct minor (and create major) abuses is calculated in due time, to take us out of the gloom into the sunshine of abiding peace and contentment is a pure delusion; otherwise the condition of labour would speak for strength and stability instead of frailty and "brooding revolution." Education, poetry, music, oratory, the magic of science are one and all unfitted to stem the rising tide of popular disaffection. In giving the vote to millions within a week or less of starvation we have been "tying burning brands to foxes' tails and turning them loose in the corn."

The worker is held down to lower levels not because the war and its devastation have left Europe impoverished; nor is bad trade the result of this wrong-doing. If the war and the debt are to blame for present hardships, what was the cause of industrial distress when peace prevailed and the debt was a mere trifle compared with what it is to-day? It is land monopoly here and now, in 1926, that blocks the way to any betterment. The war left its crop of calamities, but there is not one acre the less to cultivate. And since the war there have been fresh discoveries of natural resources in abundance in minerals and oil wells, but as the hatches were opened the monopolist was there to say, "this is mine!"

In the wide field of international and municipal inquiry *Progress and Poverty* stands unchallenged as a *vade mecum* to all who would solve social problems by first getting to know how the problems arise and how they are sustained in common thought and practice. Land monopoly has been revealed as the prime source of social inequality. The Taxation of Land Values together with Free Trade will put an end to it. Here is a policy that will open doors everywhere now closed to labour, and these new openings will lead in every direction to independence, employment and co-operative effort. If we would liberate trade and commerce from political interference, if we would free those civilizing agencies from the nefarious designs and stupidities of the huckstering politicians, we must get at the root of the mischief. Is it such a difficult lesson to learn that the land question is the labour problem to-day, as it ever was, and ever will be?

Copenhagen will be remembered by us for many cheering signs of grace and chiefly for the wisdom shown in bringing into existence the new International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. The Union stands for peace and good will among the nations and were its policy adopted, internecine strife would disappear like dismal fog before the rising sun. A union of forces is wanted to make good this claim and the new organization has come to make its grand appeal. It will bind our people together in all lands as never before and so provide more effective opportunities for

propaganda. The disciples of Henry George know what they want and how to get it; and given that good start their number is worth ten times that of those who are not so certain. Let us not hide our light under a bushel.

From Copenhagen we turn to Glasgow. It is a piece of good news that the Glasgow City Council has once more resolved to raise the standard of Land Values Taxation. In previous years Glasgow took the lead on this reform, and in its decision (see p. 213) to call the Scottish local rating authorities to a national conference for considering the matter anew, there is every prospect of a stirring campaign both within and without municipal circles. Our friends in other countries should have no difficulty in understanding the importance of the step taken by the Glasgow Corporation. If the Mayor of New York City were to issue a call to all the local taxing authorities throughout the State of New York to meet and consider the question of deriving public revenues from land value apart from improvements, colleagues across the Atlantic would find themselves in the front line of attack and be aroused to new responsibilities. The same argument can be applied to Toronto, Paris, Berlin or any other great metropolis, which might well be a centre of light and leading.

What Glasgow is thinking to-day, other cities may be thinking to-morrow, and so the cause makes headway. Time was when Glasgow influenced land value legislation for good far beyond the boundaries of Scotland, and it can do so again. And to-day there is more hope and promise in this vigorous action, there is a bigger and better informed public opinion for land value taxation, than there was twenty-five years ago. That is certainly a priceless possession.

There is much to be done from now to the next International Conference, and the good news from Scotland coming immediately after the Danish legislation is a sign of the times. It will act as a stimulus to members of the Conference and to all others who maintain that the value of land is the true source of public revenue, and that when it is taken in taxation the relief of industry is assured. The Glasgow Corporation has done more than invite the Scottish Local Authorities to a consideration of this question; it has arrested the attention of a vast public still more interested in the reform. In this adventure there are opportunities for instruction that may not be taken lightly, and it is the duty of all in our movement to make the most of the occasion.

J. P.

On 16th July a meeting was held in London to welcome the members of the International Conference on their way to Copenhagen from near and far. The gathering included many who for one reason or other were precluded from travelling to Denmark. Bailie Peter Burt, J.P., presided and a most interesting evening was spent in good company. One of the most instructive speeches delivered was that by Mr. E. J. Evans, who described the progress and the working of land value taxation in East London and Cambridge in the Cape Province.

NOTES AND NEWS

The Report on Agricultural Policy recently issued by the General Council of the Trade Union Congress and the Executive Committee of the Labour Party is reviewed in another column. On the same report there is an article of outspoken condemnation in the *New Leader* of 17th August by the Rt. Hon. Col. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the late Labour administration. The proposed policy is one for land purchase, which would simply "leave land monopoly as rigid as ever." It ignores altogether the case for land value taxation, which has been demanded over and over again in the Labour programme and was specially urged last year at the Liverpool Conference. Mr. Wedgwood calls upon the Labour Conference, meeting at Margate this month, to reconsider "this reactionary report," and we trust his exposure and powerful protest will not pass unheeded by those of his colleagues who thought to make public sentiment for proposals that would put to shame the most outrageous Tory document.

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Mrs. Anna George de Mille and her daughters, Agnes and Margaret, are being entertained by the United Committee at a dinner party in the St. Ermin's Restaurant, Broadway, Westminster, on Friday, 10th September, previous to their departure home for California. Mrs. de Mille gave a Press interview in London on 28th August, and on the 30th good reports of the interview were published in many newspapers. She spoke with enthusiasm of her happy impressions of Denmark and the International Conference.

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Mr. Robert Jacobs, son of Mr. Louis P. Jacobs, sailed on 4th September for the United States. He will visit New York, Washington, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and perhaps California. He can be assured a cordial welcome by all whom he meets in the Henry George movement.

THE BADGE OF THE MOVEMENT



By courtesy of Bailie Peter Burt, J.P., the designer of the emblem that is here printed and is now familiar to most of our readers through its use on our publications and our stationery, we have been furnished with a supply of badges of same design and stamped on bronze or gilt silver. The words "True Liberty means Equal Liberty" stand in gilt on blue enamel; and in gilt on red enamel are the words "Free Land, Free Trade, Free Men."

The badges are mounted with a safety pin and on the back is the inscription "In memory of Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty*." The prices are: Bronze Badge, 1s.; Silver Badge, 5s.; postage 1d. extra.

There should at once be a large demand for such a useful, simple and effective means of advertising our cause. It is something to delight the wearer and enable him or her by its attractive appeal to make many new friends for the movement.