

lians had become passive and such things as independent debating societies started to fade away. The practice among ordinary people of reasoning together diminished as the complacency of delegating one's thinking to others increased. When the Economic Blizzard came in the thirties people fell into a panic and without putting the question to genuine discussion and examining basic causes, free trade was abandoned together with proposed land reform. The way was opened for the spirit of monopoly: a spirit at once selfish, stupid and cowardly - for it dare not face competition. That panic, extending from America throughout Europe, brought Hitler to power and now the British and American people have been brought to the brink of totalitarian government themselves. We are on the road to serfdom. Professor F. A. Hayek, in his book under that title (1944) says: "We are rapidly abandoning not the views merely of Cobden and Bright, of Adam Smith and Hume, or even of Locke and Milton, but one of the salient characteristics of Western civilisation as it has grown from the foundations laid by Christianity and the Greeks. The basic individualism inherited by us from Erasmus and Montaigne, from Cicero and Tacitus, Pericles and Thucydides is progressively abandoned." Professor Hayek's socialist colleagues at the London School of Economics begged him not to publish that book.

Nearly a hundred years ago Henry George pointed out that if Western societies continued to ignore land monopoly and its affects, Western civilisation must eventually fall. Now we see, as was said before, that "he wrote history in advance."

To-day the outlook for Western civilisation is dark and we would delude ourselves to imagine there is any positive evidence to show that it is the darkness before the dawn. We know, however, that human nature cannot be changed in its essential. Some words of the Old Testament still touch our minds and hearts as they must have touched the minds and hearts of ordinary people thousands of years ago, before Rome, before Greece, before Egypt. Perhaps the

news we learn daily of violence and disorder, however stupid and selfish, is an indication that people are beginning to feel, unconsciously, they can never find happiness in servitude.

To think for oneself, to discuss honestly with one's fellows, to seek truth for its own sake: that is to be true to one's soul. Only by that path has humanity risen from the primeval slime. As long as men and women can still aspire to this there is some hope for civilisation.

The urge to be free is so irresistible that one sees it in all animate nature. A wild bird caught and thrust into a cage, offered food and protection against all dangers of the wild, will yet batter itself to death against the bars rather than submit.

The Influence of Henry George in Europe

S.C.B.



WHAT impact did Henry George make upon European thought and politics? A number of books about Henry George have dealt with this question to a greater or less degree but perhaps the best treatment of it so far, is contained in *Henry George in Europe* by Michael Silagi - unfortunately, as yet only in the German language.*

The story of the taking up of George's ideas politically in the various countries and of the attempts, some successful others abortive, of land reformers to introduce legislation along Georgist lines, covers the UK, Germany, Hungary, and Denmark. Included also is the story of the introduction of a Georgist tax policy in Kiau Chou, then a colony of Germany, by Wilhelm Schramier.

Of Britain, perhaps the most unsought for and unwelcome effect was on the socialists who saw in George an ally of great value. It will be remembered that the arch Fabian, George Bernard Shaw, claimed to have had the course of his thinking changed by listening to Henry George speak, but

It is for those who see that a corrupt civilisation falls worst upon ordinary people to show that if they will only think and act for themselves a happiness that now seems impossible is within their grasp. To call this task impossible because it looks formidable is culpable timidity. In the words of Henry George, "Let no one imagine he has no influence. Whoever he may be and wherever he may be placed the man who thinks becomes a light and a power."

We may be sure that within a generation or so the words of the most publicised experts and politicians of to-day will be as if they had been written in drifting sand. But words that were spoken two and a half thousand years ago still live on. Said Pericles, "Happiness is Freedom; Freedom is Courage."

that he then "went on to socialism." Certainly much of George's campaigning was seized upon as free ammunition by the socialists although George categorically repudiated socialism. Of subsequent socialist legislation with one notable exception¹, it may be observed that it well indicates that most socialists have never understood or wanted to understand George. Although Germany could claim the greatest organised movement for land reform, it was only in her colony of Kiau Chou that it was put to the practical test. Prominent land reform leaders in Germany were Theodore Stamm, Michael Flurschein, Boron Euleinstein and Adolf Damaschke, the latter the leader of the strong Bodenreform movement.

The story of Hungary includes an account of the work of Dr. J. J. Pikler², valuation chief in Budapest who began a valuation for land tax under Count Károlyi's 1918 revolutionary government.

The story of Georgism in Denmark is perhaps better known, be-

*Published by Etana, Taku-Fort-Str 13C, Munich 82, W. Germany, 1973, Price DM 25, approx. £4.25.

¹ Snowden's Finance Act which called for a measure of land value taxation well in line with Henry George's ideas.
² See *Symetry in Budapest in Land & Liberty*.

ginning with the successful agitation of the small farmers who campaigned for taxation to be transferred from their improvements to their land, followed by the story of the growth and influence of the Danish Justice Party dedicated to the principles of Henry George.

An interesting aspect revealed by the author is the origin of the

Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* - devised as a counter to Georgist ideas.

Sources explored are both old and new and among the latter are some unpublished letters of George in correspondence with European supporters, and statements by Sun Yat-Sen's son, Sun Fo.

A Field Day For Land

(By a Participant)



I RECENTLY spent rather a heady day "Thinking about Land," at Ewell Technical College where a seminar with that title had been organised.

The first speaker was Leslie Blake a (newly qualified) lawyer by profession but an economist at heart. He suggested in his historical appraisal of land tenure in England that perhaps an earlier recognition of common and equal rights to land might be looked at again in our own day, particularly as lawyers do not admit the existence of privately *owned* land in English law. He suggested that the tenures of freehold should be tenures and nothing else and subject to the rendering of dues to the Crown acting as trustees for the people. Not so much a "back to the land" speech as a "back to the land laws" one.

Roger Pincham, Liberal P.P.C. for Leominster, and a highly professional amateur economist, followed with a talk on "Natural Law and Land Tenure." For those of us who have followed the unnatural laws of recent governments in relation to land tenure, this was a most welcome change but it must have come as something of a revelation to some to learn that there are natural laws in economics as unavoidable and as immune to legislation as the law of gravity. This was good basic stuff for the uninitiated.

V. H. Blundell, Editor of *LAND & LIBERTY*, gave a rapid fire commentary on the urban land scene over the last fifty years covering the evils of ribbon development,

leapfrogging, land speculation, urban sprawl, and urban blight; problems of road widening, land acquisition etc., all of which he laid fairly and squarely at the door of our present system of land tenure. He spared some time to look at council houses, rent controls and the green belt only to conclude that the wrong policies have been so consistently followed that our present land problem was several layers thick and would take some shifting. As though to prove he knew what he was talking about, he gave an encapsulated lesson in land economics covering Ricardo, the economic nature of land, the effect on it of taxation, planning, betterment levies, supply and demand etc.

He said more - about the mobility of labour, inflation, employment, agricultural home ownership, mortgage - and succinctly and significantly related these apparently independent problems to the basic one of land tenure, use and taxation.

The ideas of Robert Owen and of others who saw the benefits of intensive farming, "the spade versus the plough", were discussed by Dr. Deavin in his talk on the disenchantment with industrial society and the movement for return to the land.

Dr. Deavin is a plant biologist at Ewell Technical College and a member of the Soil Association. Dr. Deavin brought a wide experience and study to his subject which removed it far from the field of "crankiness" that critics love to associate with farm and

food reforms.

There then followed a series of five-minute speeches from representatives of a number of groups dedicated toward proper use and distribution of land.

Some wanted cheaper land for homestead settlements where they could design their own style of living, others wanted land for smallholders to raise crops independently of man-made fertilisers, sprays and other unnatural aids.

The Vegan Society, concerned with food, the environment and related matters, tried to persuade the audience that we should abandon all forms of animal products in favour of plant life. The speaker got sympathy for some of her arguments but, I imagine, few converts.

The conservationists/ecologists also made their points, but the one cry that was common to all was the cry for land. Whether it was the New Villages Association, The Community Land Trust, Home Gardening, Marketing, they were all land hungry. They felt trapped by our land tenure system or by our planning system or both.

A new note was struck by Mr. Oliver Smedley, who, speaking for the Anti-Deer Food Campaign, drew attention to the right of every housewife to choose and buy her food from any overseas supplier offering it. She was effectively prevented from so doing by import duties, quotas and other political devices, not to mention EEC membership. The division of labour applied equally well among nations as it did among our own towns and cities - perhaps more so because of the immense differences of the soils, seasons and climates of the world.

The well attended seminar closed with the panel of speakers answering questions - and asking them.

A nuclear war had destroyed all life on earth, save two microscopic algae, hidden in a cleft of rock. They surveyed the ruin dismally. Said one to the other: "I suppose we shall have to start this evolution business all over again. But this time, remember, no brains."

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