

# Alphonse Daudé-Bancel

1870-1963

THE leading Georgist of France, A. Daudé-Bancel, died on April 4th, ending a long and illustrious career, both in the Georgist and cooperative movements. Editor of *Terre et Liberté* (Land and Liberty) right up to the end, Mr. Daudé-Bancel had written a brief autobiographical sketch for the April-May-June 1960 issue of that periodical, from which we glean the following information:

The cooperative movement was Daudé-Bancel's first great interest, he having been attracted to it as early as 1880, when he was only ten years old. This came about from reading a book entitled *Francinet, or a Tour of France by Two Children*, in which the Rochdale cooperative movement was praised.

Daudé-Bancel decided to become a cooperator, but at first made his living in pharmacy. In Montpellier, he came across Charles Gide, Professor in the Faculty of Law, who took an interest in the struggling young man. Later, Gide became president of the Union of French Consumer Cooperatives and invited Daudé-Bancel to be the secretary general. Thenceforth, he was in the midst of cooperative work—both the educational and business ends of it.

Through Gide, Daudé-Bancel

learned, too, about Henry George and the taxation of land values. In 1924, the Georgist leader of that time, Sam Meyer, asked Gide if he knew of someone who could edit the Georgist periodical *La Terre* (The Land), and Gide recommended Daudé-Bancel, who accepted. During World War II, Meyer became a victim of Nazi persecution, and the paper (which later became *Terre et Liberté*) was suspended. But after the war *Terre et Liberté* was revived with Daudé-Bancel again editing it.

One day, along with his friend Camille Belliard, director of *Amitié par le Livre* (Friendship through Books), Daudé-Bancel thought of a prize contest in the writing of a novel which should express both cooperative and Georgist ideas. The contest was launched and the winner was P. V. Berthier, a journalist for *Le Monde*. The book, *On a Tué M. Systeme* (Mr. System Has Been Killed), was published in 1959 and enjoyed a success.

When the Henry George School launched its correspondence course in French, Daudé-Bancel cooperated. His last years were devoted mostly to the Georgist movement. In spite of growing blindness and illness, he continued working right to the end.

## 1949 and 1959—a Reminiscence

In 1949, when the International Conference for Land Value Taxation was held in England, I was at the London office of Land and Liberty when word came that the French Georgist leader, A. Daudé-Bancel, was coming. He was taking the night train from Dieppe, and was to arrive at the Victoria Station the next morning.

Since he didn't know English and I knew some French, wouldn't I meet him at the station and escort him to the office? Yes, of course I would, and so I went over and found that the chore wasn't so simple! There were endless rows of tracks, and hordes of people racing in every direction.

At track 1, I asked where the night

train from Dieppe would be, and was told that it was over at track 8. At track 8 confusion reigned, and I tried in vain to spot Daudé-Bancel, who had been described to me as a small, wiry, elderly Frenchman with a moustache and a beret.

I was informed that another night train was arriving on track 1, and so I hurried back there. But all I saw amid the turmoil was a harried woman asking a frantic question in French of a London bobby. He replied in English that he didn't understand her, whereupon she repeated the question louder in French, and he repeated louder in English that he didn't understand.

I thought of Daudé-Bancel, and my heart sank. After an hour or more of the same, I decided to phone Land and Liberty. But I reckoned without the London phones, which had a series of buttons and contraptions that would put an Eniac to blush. After feeding a score of pennies and half-pennies into the monster to no avail, except to hear a dim voice at the other end as though it were a message from Mars, I finally learned how to operate the thing, and managed to get through to the office.

"Daudé-Bancel? He's here at the office!"

Shaken by my ordeal, at last I reached the office myself, and discovered how he had done it. Upon his arrival at the station, which I had somehow missed, Daudé-Bancel went

straight out into the street and pinned on his jacket the front page of Land and Liberty with the address. He would point at it, and passersby would nudge him along in the right direction. This went on until he came to his destination. French logic had won out over American derring-do!

My second encounter with Daudé-Bancel, ten years later, also had to do with a railway station, but was somewhat more felicitous. After the International Conference in Hanover, Germany in 1959, I visited Paris, and sent a telegram to Daudé-Bancel, asking if he would meet me at the station in Rouen, the nearest city to his little town of Mesnil-Esnard. He did, and we spotted each other instantly. He spent the entire day with me, discussing his work, the Georgist movement in general and in France in particular, current world affairs; De Gaulle, the cooperative movement, alcoholism and vegetarianism — all while conducting me on a tour of Rouen. Here was the cathedral bombed during the war and being rebuilt; there was the place where Joan of Arc was burned; and that was a statue of Napoleon, "*ce bandit, ce brigand corse!*" I was greatly impressed by the vigor, enthusiasm and alertness of my cicerone, nearly ninety years old.

Hail and farewell, Alphonse Daudé-Bancel!

—Robert Clancy

### From France

Another French Georgist of long standing, Max Toubreau, has recently issued an excellent pamphlet, *L'Impôt sur la Valeur du Sol—Objections et Réponses* (The Tax on Land Values—Objections and Replies). This pamphlet first states the case for land value taxation and emphasizes the justice of it. There follows a list of frequently-heard questions, with Mr. Toubreau's well-reasoned answers. Evidently the

same kind of questions are heard in France as elsewhere! "Is it fair to tax a landowner who has vacant land and not tax a man with a building who is getting a revenue from it?" "How can a single tax on land be enough to replace all the taxes we have today?" "Would it not be unjust to exempt from taxation people with great incomes not derived from land?"

Mr. Toubreau handles all these mat-