

# Ground Due Part of Danish Language

By F. FOLKE



**L**OOKING BACK from my 74th year I can see clearly the pattern my life has followed since early childhood. My father was a farmer, born in deep poverty, who at the age of nine was sent away from home and forced to support

himself. My mother was from a home of old rural culture, and her poetic mind had been deeply influenced by a visit to a Folks High School. Both my parents were devoted disciples of the founder of these schools, N. F. T. Grundtvig—a great religious personality and promoter of liberty and justice. He died a year before I was born.

It is now 100 years since Grundtvig expressed his views on the land question in words which might be translated thus:

"In every country the people are the proprietors of the land and can never by any law lose this right of possession. It is only the utility and use of the land that can rightly be settled by the laws of the country and be bought and sold. Injustice never can by any law be changed into justice."

Could Henry George have said it better?

In this spirit of devotion and freedom I grew up as an only child. My youth was stamped with the violent struggle of the common people against the aggression of a landed aristocracy for the preservation of their constitutional rights and liberty. I went through the Technical High School and graduated in 1898 as a civil engineer. Four years later on my wedding trip to England my young wife and I found ourselves one evening listening to a lecture by John Wilhelm Rowntree on "The Garden City of Tomorrow." I did not then realize fully how much this would influence my later life, though I had a premonition of it.

We both felt strongly the influence of the speaker's personality when in his clear and convincing demonstration he told how the housing problem had hitherto been neglected in our modern society. As an engineer I had been educated to the promotion of technical progress, especially in city life, and there before me stood that prophetic young man, pointing out that the modern city with all its facilities, is not a flower of our civilization but rather a tumor upon it—a sign and source of social sickness.

My professional work in the civil service of Fredericksberg (an independent part of Copenhagen) chiefly concerned with water supply and fire fighting, gave me the opportunity to follow and occasionally to influence the evolution of the housing problem, and to take part in the discussion of it. Gradually a number of people became convinced of the necessity of a radical reform but none was able to find the way.

It was therefore a revelation when I met Henry George and felt that at last I had discovered the fundamentals. That conviction has never left me since the time, in 1909, when I

entered the Danish Henry George Union, of which I was chairman for 23 years. The purpose of this Union was, briefly, to promote the solution of social questions through the economic liberation of the people along the lines indicated by Henry George—complete land value taxation, free trade, and the abolition of all taxes on income and values created by labor.

We have sought to realize this object through education of public opinion by means of public addresses, writings, and political activity within all parties. It has been a long and troublesome way, but always worth the effort as we marched along, step by step. In 1911 we succeeded in having a first tentative land valuation and in 1915 a common valuation. But not until 1922 was a common state tax founded on land values. In 1926 the same principle was adopted in communal rating. In 1932 we got a land value increment tax of two per cent in principle but with great deductions (exemptions) and now this year, we hope to have it raised to four per cent and to have the deductions reduced.

This last step has been possible because finally an increasing number of people have come to understand that the speculation in land values is at the root of our housing crisis. When, during the first world war, such a crisis arose, a committee on the housing question was appointed by the government. As a member I then tried in vain to convince them of this underlying factor. Nevertheless the truth is always marching, how ever slowly.

Though the idea or spirit of Henry George is even now understood by only a small minority, the principle of land value taxation has been adopted by a strong majority, even by the Socialists and Communists—but only as a component of an exorbitant taxation. Today the taxes on land values amount to less than one per cent of the state taxes. When I retired in 1945 I became editor of our periodical *Grundskyld*. This name means "ground due," or "duty toward the community," as contrasted to *taxes* which depend upon the power of the State. Through constant reiteration by us, this word has now become a part of the Danish language and has been introduced into our legislation. With this much accomplished it should be easier for succeeding generations to carry on the battle for justice and to experience the joy and happiness which is its certain reward.

## ICI France

**O**UR FRENCH colleagues are busy reviving Georgist activity in the land of the Physicists. We are especially gratified to see the reappearance of *Terre et Liberté*, the French Georgist quarterly, which was obliged to suspend publication during the war. The July-August-September issue has reached us, and its masthead proudly announces that this is the 16th year of publication. While the journal must be mimeographed for the time being, we note at least one significant advance—it is published simultaneously in France and Belgium, in the French and Flemish languages. A. Daude-Bancel is editor of the French edition and Marcel Cortvriend edits it in Belgium under the title *Grand en Vrijheid*.

# Dispatch from

By T. A. M

**I**T SEEMS that Gino Callaioli, one of the many thousands of sharecroppers, has "gone Communist." There are 300 more like him on the ancient Corsini feudal estate which covers 60 square miles, about 38,400 acres.

Gino lives in abject destitution. Water must be carried several hundred feet to this house. He has no stove, so meals are cooked over an open fireplace. He works 18 hours a day in the summer; 12 in the winter.

The Communists promise Gino they will oust the Corsini family, and give him the 25 acres he works; and all kinds of other things, free.

What does Gino want? Not much. He would like to own what his labor produces, and not to share it with the Corsinis. He believes this would give him a better life, and as the Communists promise to do this, he is for them. No other relief is offered him.

What to do? A "do-nothing" policy, a "let things revert to the status before the war" will fail. Dividing the land into minute peasant farms is not the answer. Russia has tried this in conquered Prussia and the peasants are worse off than before. Who can say whether Gino should have the 25 acres he cultivates. Some other farmer may receive 15 or perhaps 40 acres. Or, better or poorer quality soil. Possi-

## America's Answer

**O**RGANIZED at the University of Notre Dame in September 1945, the national Decentralist Conference met for the fourth time at Parsons College, Fairfield, Iowa. Referring to the conference theme, "Decentralization—America's Answer to Communism and Monopoly," Upon Close explained to a large luncheon audience Communist strategy for taking over the reins in the United States. Later he joined Ralph Borsodi; R. J. Blakely of The Des Moines Register, and Don Berry, publisher of the *Indianola Record*; in defining the *American Way* as the way of initiative and freedom from monopoly as well as decentralization of ownership, control, government, production, population, and education.

Ways of implementing decentralist ideas were presented by able leaders on "The Productive Home," "The Small Community," and "The Challenge of Rural Life." Ralph Borsodi of Suffern, New York; Noah Alper of St. Louis; Louis Weitzman of Newark; and Royal Rood of Detroit; participated in a discussion of "Decentralization of Control" presided over by J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco.

A gala fall festival of dancing and original rural songs concluded the two-day sessions. An executive secretary will be employed to further integrate the efforts of various groups whose aim is to resist regimentation.

"The Decentralist Answer," by Mildred Jensen Loomis, a reprint from *The Christian Century*; together with a valuable bibliography by Mrs. Loomis, originator of the Conference; will be sent to any reader, upon request.