



HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Successful New Term Classes Weekend Conference Well Attended

The April term of Economic Study Classes opened at Westminster and in Greater London on Tuesday and Thursday, April 23 and 25. In spite of sunny weather there was an excellent enrolment on both days for the Basic Course and a large proportion of previous students enrolled for the advanced Courses. The following Classes are now in session:

Westminster

7-9 p.m. at 4 Great Smith Street, S.W.1.

Tuesdays. Basic Courses.—Tutors: R. A. WARD and A. L. ROBERTS.

Thursdays. Basic Course.—Tutor: G. L. BIRCH.

7-9 p.m. at Church House, Great Smith Street, S.W.1.

Thursdays. Current Economic Theories.—Tutor: V. H. BLUNDELL.

Tuesdays. Current Economic Theories.—Tutor: V. G. SALDJI.

Welling, Kent

8-10 p.m. at Welling Library, Bellegrove Road, Welling.

Tuesdays. Basic Course.—Tutor: ALAN HALL.

Wednesdays. Series of Lectures.

Ilford, Essex

8-10 p.m. Seven Kings Library, Ilford.

Tuesdays. Current Economic Theories.—Tutors: J. FILMER and A. SAPSFORD.

THE "SHORNELLS" CONFERENCE

More than 70 students and associates of the School attended the Week-end School on Housing held at Shornells, Bostall Wood, Kent, on April 6 and 7.

The addresses proved stimulating and provocative, providing a wide field for discussion. Housing, it was clearly demonstrated, was not really an isolated problem. It could not be usefully discussed (other than superficially) without reference to the framework of privilege which, dominated by land monopoly and protectionism, made housing artificially dear and reduced the incentive to build.

SUMMARY OF THE THREE MAIN ADDRESSES

1. The Rent Bill

MR. V. H. BLUNDELL, Director of Studies, speaking on the *Rent Bill*, said that the present economic and political confusion over the new Rent Bill was the fruit of the Government's inflationary policy carried out during and since the war. The debasement of the currency was entirely responsible for the unrealistic rents of controlled

houses today. If rents were not permitted to rise, and inflation continued at the present rate, a decade hence houses would be controlled at rents equivalent to half-a-crown a week.

Rent control had been one of the prime factors in *causing* a housing shortage, Mr. Blundell said. "Who would buy a house where the total outgoings would be somewhere in the region of £3 to £4 a week when there was security in a rent-controlled flat or house for about £1 a week? Tenants in rent-controlled houses and flats have sat tight over the years and who can blame them? But if we are to get some sort of reality into rents, we must not only let them find their own level on the open market, but we must see that the market works in favour of the tenant. This can be done only by breaking down the barriers which impede the building of houses. Factors which contribute to the high cost of housing are: (1) the high price of land; (2) import duties upon building materials; and (3) our stupid and inequitable system of assessing houses for rates whereby the bigger and better the house the higher the rate contribution!"

"Basic remedies that are called for immediately are the untaxing of building materials, the sweeping away of import duties on the raw materials used for houses and for the finished products, and the levying of rates on the *site value alone* which would make more land available and encourage development, for no owner of land would be foolish enough to keep his land out of use for speculative purposes if he had to pay rates on it."

2. Town and Country Planning

MR. STEPHEN MARTIN described as "pretentious and impertinent" all plans for regimenting people into better living and working conditions, when he spoke on *Town and Country Planning* legislation. It was a negation of true liberty of the individual because people had different ideas of the kind of house they wanted, and where it should be situated. The greater the diversity of human effort the more need there was for economic freedom. Authoritarian location of industry was failing in its objective; as fast as industries moved out of congested areas others moved in and occupied their sites, he said. "Public money is being wasted in offering inducements to industry to move to trading estates. The impossibility of finding houses for people on the housing lists of local authorities has caused the Ministry of Housing and Local Government

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to order these people to go to the New Towns—and this in spite of the concept that these towns should be self-contained units with areas allocated to industry, housing and recreation.

“Early legislation laying down eight houses to the acre has been set aside and density of building in many districts has been increased. There is greater conflict between the local authorities and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government than ever before.”

Land monopoly continued to levy its toll, and by the restrictions placed on the use of land, the planners had greatly added to the speculative value of unrestricted sites. “Get rid of this monopoly—this genesis of all other monopolies—and there will be no need to impose plans or look to the Government for guidance as to where people should work, live and enjoy their leisure.”

3. Housing and Land Prices

During the course of an absorbing address on *Housing and Land Prices*, which he illustrated with maps, photographs and scale models, Mr. V. G. SALDJI said: “Britain is not over-populated. Land is not scarce but is simply ‘not available’ because of its high price. How many people can contemplate housing themselves when they will first have to pay £500 to £1,000 for a building plot? Housing land in Kent has sold at £2,000 an acre and more, whilst where local development favours industrial and commercial undertakings land has soared to £10,000, reaching £50,000 an acre in central positions.

“If the whole population of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales were comfortably housed at four persons to a house, with 16 houses to the acre, the total area so used throughout Britain would be less than the area of the county of Kent.

“Ministry of Housing and Ministry of Agriculture surveys have shown that at 12 houses to the acre as great a value of foodstuff could be produced as if the acre, without the 12 houses on it, were used for agriculture. At eight houses to the acre half as much again could be produced. So it is low-density housing that conserves the nation’s food resources—and its health.”

HOUSING CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Address of Welcome by the late A. W. MADSEN.

Old and New Properties. W. E. FOX.

House Purchase: Mortgage and Interest. JOHN BENNETT.

Leasehold (Landlord versus Tenant). KEITH BAYNES.

The Rent Bill. V. H. BLUNDELL.

Municipal Housing (The Council as Landlord). H. B. SOUTHCOTT.

Town and Country Planning. STEPHEN MARTIN.

The Municipalisation of Rented Dwellings. (The Labour Party’s Policy on Housing.) Guest Speaker, Mrs. L. Middleton (M.P. for the Sutton Division of Plymouth, 1945-1951.)

Housing and Land Prices. V. G. SALDJI.

Other advertised items were cancelled.

May, 1957

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Readers are invited to contribute items for inclusion in this regular feature.

—JOHN BATHE, the enterprising honorary secretary of the L.V.T. League, is always thinking up new schemes to promote our circulation. One is working particularly well: the League buys a bulk supply on wholesale terms and sends them to selected members to sell or give to friends, neighbours and business associates, or to place on sale or return with their local newsagent. In this way, many extra copies are being sold—for instance the news-vendor outside the Bank Tube station in the City of London each month sells the copies which VICTOR SALDJI places with him.

—LAWRENCE HUANG is a 45-year-old Malayan Chinese schoolmaster at present studying in London. Travelling in the Tube a few days before Christmas he saw and picked off the seat (where one of our readers had thoughtfully left it?) a copy of *Can Taxation Be Constructive?* He was impressed by the argument therein and applied for the further free literature which the leaflet offers. As a result, Mr. Huang is now a regular subscriber to LAND & LIBERTY and to the H.G. School Magazine; at his request we have sent literature to 16 friends in many countries; he has written to each of the political parties in Britain asking for their views of the taxation of land values (as suggested in our November issue), and has taken a supply of leaflets for personal distribution. Mr. Huang, a distinguished athlete, has had 10 years’ experience in business, and was chairman of the Selangor division and a member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party of Malaya. He writes: “If I am fully persuaded that the claims made in the leaflet are well founded, I would perhaps go on eventually to run a school for you in Malaya and Singapore.” The calibre of our new friend is most strikingly revealed when he writes: “Incidentally, I have benefited very much indeed by improved value of land after the war when a building boom developed in Malaya in 1948-49 which your system intends to destroy and I am only too glad to help.”

—MRS. EVA L. MAXWELL is now back at her post as Director of the San Diego (Calif.) extension of the Henry George School after three years in Tokyo. On her return to the States she looked in at our editorial offices. Her school’s monthly news-sheet, *By George!* gives us a fine and much appreciated advertisement as a “must” magazine for students, and reports that 75 students completed the basic course last term.

—MISSOURI. Professor Donald Hodges at the University of Missouri (where Professor H. Gunnison Brown used to teach) has chosen *My Neighbour’s Landmark* by the late Frederick Verinder as one of the texts for use in the course on the Philosophy of Justice which he is giving this semester. This excellent volume of short studies in Bible land laws (price 3s. 6d. net) may be obtained from our offices. It is extremely popular with American readers who may obtain copies from the R.S.F. in New York.