

MR. ASHLEY MITCHELL IN CANADA AND U.S.A.

By a fortunate coincidence Mr. Ashley Mitchell, Treasurer of the International Union, was due to make a business visit to America soon after the Conference at Swanwick. He arrived in New York on October 1 and left almost immediately for Montreal, thence via Winnipeg and Calgary to Vancouver. After turning south to California he returned via Chicago to New York, leaving that city by air on November 11 in time to attend a meeting of the United Committee in London on the following day and give members a fresh and vivid account of his meeting with so many friends in the International movement. By chance another member present, Dr. A. R. Lee, had also recently returned from America and was able to confirm some of Mr. Mitchell's impressions.

From Montreal, where Mr. Mitchell stayed for a week, he found time to address a meeting of the Ottawa group at the home of Mr. Herbert Barber, Messrs. Owens and Code being among those who attended. He also met G. R. Donovan, W. Halls, Arthur and Ernest Farmer, and others in Toronto, where a group is being re-formed. In Montreal Miss Strehel Walton arranged a goodly gathering of supporters, presided over by Mr. James, to learn from Mr. Mitchell of the success and encouragement of the Swanwick Conference. There Mr. Turner and Mr. Boelens were present. At the home of Mr. and Mrs. Woodward in Vancouver he met other friends of the movement in Western Canada, including the veteran, Mr. Peddie, Mr. Simmons and Roy Hollins, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Hollins, who were at Swanwick.

In California the energy and inspiration of Rupert Mason, President of the International Union, ably assisted by Joseph Thompson and Robert Tideman, was apparent in the arrangements for Mr. Mitchell's reception. On October 25 he addressed an important luncheon meeting, at which Mr. Thompson presided, at the Bohemian Club of San Francisco. Henry George was one of the founders of that club. Many of the leading citizens attended and from correspondents we learn of the profound interest with which the audience followed Mr. Mitchell's review of England's experience of Socialism and his indication of the only alternative. On the following day, at a luncheon of the Immigration Section of the Commonwealth Club, he was unexpectedly called upon to speak. From correspondents also we learn of the impression created even by a brief impromptu address. At the Henry George School in Los Angeles, of which Mr. Bill Truehart is the Director, Mr. Mitchell noticed the enthusiastic ingenuity of the teachers who have evolved a method of illustrating economic law by working models exhibited by H. T. Bode, another striking example of a veteran busy spreading the truth of the younger generation.

In Chicago, under the inspiration of John Lawrence Monroe, Mr. Mitchell was impressed by the progress of the School and Group. Denied the medium of political action, the movement in Chicago has directed much of its efforts to persuading business men of the danger to themselves unless they awaken to the urgency of promoting the only alternative to the influences which throughout the world threaten all freedom of enterprise. At a large Commerce and Industry luncheon meeting, attended by leading personalities in business, Mr. Mitchell was able to drive this lesson home. Among old friends present were Henry and George Tideman, Judge Korshak, Jerome Joachim and George Strachan.

In New York, although the movement for some time past has tended rather to confine itself to the educational sphere, the enthusiasm of members to make practical contribution to public affairs cannot be restrained and is expressing itself through the S.A.G.E. organisation, the Society for the Advancement of Georgeist Economics. This organisation arranged a gathering, attended not only by Georgeists but also by others interested in the deeper aspects of social affairs. One of the appreciative letters received is from Miss Alice Davis, Editor of the *Henry George News*, in which she referred to the enthusiastic remarks following Mr. Mitchell's talk. Dr. Ashner, the physician, said it was very unusual in New York to find a group of "intellectuals" who were not Left Wing! Another guest went about the whole week telling of her experience, which she said was the most thrilling intellectually since she came to New York.

Mr. Mitchell noticed to what a surprising extent England was still considered to be a leader in social thought. So long does the influence of the great Free Trade leadership with all its associations of advancing civilisation and tolerant humanity endure. Even the bad example which Britain has now set is for that reason not appreciated as the warning it should be. British members of the International Union will be pleased to know that Mr. Mitchell's visit has done something to check this danger as well as to strengthen the link which is binding together the uncompromising lovers of fundamental liberty in a world-wide organisation which they hope will in the not so distant future lead the revival against Collectivist illusions.

F. D. P.

"PLANNING IN PRACTICE"

Leading Article in THE TIMES, November 7

Six experts, none of them hostile to planning, record in the current issue of the *Journal* of the Town Planning Institute their views on the first year's experience of the Planning Acts of 1947. None is more than cautiously optimistic.

A well-known county planning officer states that "the Act is not working and is highly unpopular even with many persons who are not against planning in principle."

A Scottish expert holds that, "In drawing up the code for planning, too little has been left to the discretion of the public or their representatives and an attempt has been made . . . to prepare a meticulously detailed set of rules and regulations which are cumbersome and for the most part incomprehensible. . . . There is far too much work for far too few planners."

A surveyor states bluntly that "the great 'governing principle,' namely, that land should be 'freely and readily sold at its existing use value' . . . in practice is proving a paper fantasy and the merest wishful thinking."

Though there is hopefulness about the progress of surveys and local development schemes, there is also agreement that planning staffs are swamped by the voluminous daily routine inseparable from the detailed regulation of building and land use, and that this burden of immediate decisions as to what particular citizens may or may not do with their property is hampering the planning authorities' fundamental task—that of determining what kind of communities they want to have. The severest criticisms are reserved for the "compensation and betterment" sections of the Act.

All seem to agree that Mr. Silkin's development rights scheme . . . is not achieving most of the desired results.