

Brisbane, Australia (Population 360,000), The City Assessor's Department: "It has brought idle land into use, with fewer houses per acre. It has not created congestion. We have no slum areas. It has been advantageous to householders, industry and the public welfare.

Napier, New Zealand (Population 18,500), F. R. Waters, Town Clerk: "It has brought idle land into use, improved housing, and reduced slums. There is very little slum area. It has encouraged more houses per acre. In my opinion, it has been advantageous to householders, industry and public welfare. Value of improvements greatly exceeds that of land values."

Witbank, Transvaal, British South Africa, J. J. Turnbull, Town Clerk: "The system has tended to bring idle land into use for the reason that a man pays the same tax for a vacant piece of ground as he does for a similar site with a valuable rent-producing building thereon. Generally, better buildings are erected now than prior to the introduction of the system. Improvement values are more than four times the land."

COMPARISON OF BUILDING STATISTICS

The April issue of *The Municipal Review of Canada* contained a table giving a comparison of the building activities in eighteen countries. The following figures are derived from that table. The year 1929 is used as an index year.

	1929	1932	1935	1937
Canada	100.0	16.8	18.6	24.0
United States.	100.0	17.7	26.9	47.9
New Zealand.	100.0	22.3	49.5	81.8
Australia	100.0	22.7	80.0	99.5

After the war Canada once more will be faced with the necessity of providing gainful employment for thousands of her soldiers as well as for other thousands now engaged in wartime industries. Might not the adoption of the Australian and New Zealand system of municipal taxation provide a solution for this problem and at the same time place our building trades on a sound basis?

THE first man who, having enclosed a plot of ground, took upon himself to say, "This is mine," and found people silly enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, how many wars, how many murders, how much misery and horror would have been spared the human race if some one, tearing up the fence and filling in the ditch, had cried out to his fellows: "Give no heed to this imposter; you are all lost if you forget that the produce belongs to all, *the land to none.*"—JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

Sydney and New York

By WALTER FAIRCHILD

MISAPPREHENSION has developed among earnest followers of Henry George as to the extent and value of the progress made in Sydney (which has a population of 1,400,000) and other Australian cities, and in New Zealand, toward collecting land rentals by taxation, and relieving buildings from taxation.

Valuable material on the Australian and New Zealand situation is contained in the foregoing article by H. Bronson Cowan, of Peterborough, Ontario. Mr. Cowan has visited all the large cities of Australia and New Zealand, and has had an unusual opportunity to study, at first-hand, conditions in these two dominions. As a supplement to this article, I should like to present some further information obtained from Mr. Cowan on the taxation system of Sydney as compared with that of New York.

Mr. Cowan informs us that he has received a letter from a New York Georgeist, which quotes from an Australian source to the effect that the benefits derived in Sydney have not been as great as anticipated, and which emphasizes the claim that New York is taxing land values more highly than Sydney. It was stated that the rate of taxation in Sydney is only two per cent, whereas in New York it is almost three per cent. This would suggest that New York affords a better example of the application of the Henry George system of taxation than does Sydney, and that Sydney has received much advertising to which it is hardly entitled.

Mr. Cowan has replied to the argument of his correspondent as follows:

"You state: 'The only difference between New York and Sydney is that in the former we tax improvements.'

"That difference is a tremendously important one. The tax you impose upon improvements is a repressive one. The elimination of such a tax would make a great difference. It has in Sydney. I venture to say that there is no comparison between the record for building developments in Sydney and New York over a long period of years.

"You assume that the only tax upon land values in Sydney is the municipal rate of 2% which you mention. Here again you are far from the facts. The whole attitude in Sydney towards the taxation of land values is so far ahead of the attitude in New York, and in this part of Canada also, for that matter, that again there is little ground for comparison. For example, in addition to the municipal tax of 2%, Sydney has at least two additional taxes on land values, and at times more.

"In addition to the municipal rate, they have imposed what are known as Main Road Rates and for years they had an extra rate to pay for the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In 1937, the revenues raised from these three rates were as follows:

Municipal Rate	£896,615
Main Road Rates.....	41,108
Harbour Bridge rates.....	44,277
	£982,000
Total	£982,000

"In addition to the foregoing, the state imposes a special state tax on land values. The state tax is small in New South Wales but fairly heavy in some of the other states. In Victoria, it produces well over \$2,000,000 a year, and in Queensland, almost \$2,000,000 a year. Bear in mind that the population in these states is not large.

"The revenue raised in New South Wales—much the greater part of it in Sydney—for the Sydney Harbour Bridge alone, over a period of years, was in excess of \$10,000,000. That was all in addition to the municipal tax rate. Have you ever heard of New York, or any other municipality on this continent, doing anything of that kind? That is why I say that when you count in such taxes as these, add them to the municipal tax, and allow for the fact that improvements are not taxed, you are very far astray when you say, or intimate, that New York can be compared with Sydney in these matters.

"Mr. Hodgkiss states that they have slums and other undesirable social conditions in Melbourne. But remember that Melbourne still taxes improvements. Alderman Firth and other authorities state that there are no slums in Sydney. Note the following statement by Alderman Firth:

"Sydney and New Castle, in New South Wales, and Brisbane, in Queensland, the three cities that have made the most marvelous progress in Australia, all enjoy the new system of rating, while Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, under the old system, makes no corresponding progress. Melbourne also has stuck to the old system. It is a remarkable fact that while Melbourne not many years ago was larger than Sydney, it is altogether outdistanced by Sydney.'

"You further state in your letter: 'The elimination of the taxes on improvements, where the tax on land values is not increased to an even larger extent, is to stimulate speculation in land.'

"That is true only where a city needs improvements. The first effect of the elimination of the tax on improvements under such conditions is to promote the erection of the needed improvements—surely a fine thing—and this in turn increases the demand for land and enhances

the price of land. But that condition continues only until the needed improvements have been supplied. To erect improvements after that is just a waste of money. I have in mind two large buildings erected in Vancouver, during the boom period, costing several million dollars, which have been scarcely used at all since they were erected.

"Now let us see what the effect of the land tax was in Sydney. Again I will quote from Alderman Firth:

"There was a case of a man in my own Borough of Strathfield who was paying under the old system £80 a year in rates on a section of land lying vacant. The first year the land value rating came into operation, he had to pay £800. The second year he had sold the bulk of his land. It was taken up by many who were eager to use it. At the same time, others whose land had been developed, who had their house and home on it, found that their rates of £8 or £10 a year had been reduced to £2 or £3 under the new system. In short, the new system is of immense benefit to the man who uses his land well, by taking from his shoulders the burdens he had to bear when improvements were taxed and land values were largely exempt.'

"Surely statements by such men as Alderman Firth, City Clerk Roy Hendy and others, and all to the same effect, as to the benefits derived under the new system, should carry weight."

"Harvest" — Man and Nature

IN recent years the French cinema has risen to the rank of a cultural achievement. The films produced in France combine poetry and realism in penetrating commentaries on different aspects of life. One of the best of them is "Harvest", the theme of which is "the mighty *deux à deux* between man and nature".

It is the story of a deserted farming village. All have left, except one man, Panturle, who lives a half-savage life, until the woman, Arsule, comes. Here now are the elements of a new society—man, woman and the land. Together they live, together they plough the neglected fields, sow the seeds, grow wheat. Panturle threshes the wheat with his own hands. Then he brings it to the market. There is a shortage of wheat that season and Panturle's wheat is the best in the countryside. He gets a good price for it. This from the land that was not considered worth cultivating, that was deserted for the lure of the cities. But, as the caption in the film tells us, Mother Earth will not tolerate being despoiled and deserted. Man must always return to her and learn the lesson all over again. Only thus will society thrive