

OBJECT LESSON FOR U.N.O.

A REFRESHING demonstration in favour of international harmony was provided by the three-day strike in September of the French Customs officials.

The *News Chronicle* reported that along the Belgium frontier smugglers had their grandest day . . . "Instead of using by-paths, they walked along the main roads bent under sacks and boxes . . . Coming from France were people loaded with bottles of liqueurs and perfumes. Cyclists were making many trips a day, carrying coffee which they obtained at 10s. a kilogram in Belgium and sold at 35s. in France." At the Swiss frontier "watches, tobacco by the stone, and lighter flints—for all of which there is unlimited demand in France—were the chief goods carried . . . For three days and nights smugglers were free to take into France everything Swiss Customs officials would allow them to carry out of Switzerland."

Unfortunately, this happy state of affairs—so eminently satisfactory and mutually profitable to the traders concerned—was not to last. The French Customs officials called off their strike; the erstwhile traders once more became odious "smugglers" and were clapped into gaol and penalised by the very society whose needs they were endeavouring to supply. Once again, the national economy of France was cramped into its straight-jacket—a very exclusive Paris model designed to keep figures well within bounds!

This strike gave but a fleeting glimpse of the tremendous improvement in international trade and relations that might take place if the standing armies of Customs officials throughout the whole world were disbanded. Then at last we might look to the future with confidence, for the free circulation of goods would ensure economic health for all nations.

DISTINCTION FOR MR. P. J. O'REGAN

WE offer hearty congratulations to Mr. P. J. O'Regan on his appointment, announced by Prime Minister Mr. Fraser, to the Legislative Council of New Zealand. Mr. O'Regan, who is now in his 78th year, retired from the Judicial Bench last year. He was appointed to preside over the Compensation Court when it was first constituted in March, 1940. Born on the West Coast, he gave his attention to gold-mining, farming and journalism before finally settling down to the study of law. He became Judge of the Arbitration Court in 1937 in succession to Mr. Justice Page.

It is impossible to speak of the progress of the land values movement in New Zealand without linking it intimately with the able and devoted service of Mr. P. J. O'Regan. This has extended over many years, and in the midst of an otherwise busy public life. A recent example of his masterly handling of the subject was his reply, published in *Board and Council* in October last year, to a hostile criticism of land value rating issued by the Lower Hutt City Council. The statement, under the title, "Rates and Rating Systems Compared," is exhaustive and convincing, and its historical account of the land values legislation adopted in New Zealand is the most detailed we have yet seen. Mr. O'Regan has kindly provided us with a supply of reprints, and copy is available free to any reader making application. This instructive material is a real gift to every one who desires testimony on the practical operation of the land value policy.

AUSTRALIAN PIONEER

The Sydney *Standard* (Editor, A. G. Huie) September issue, announced the death of the Hon. ARTHUR GRIFFITH, at the age of 85. He was in the N.S.W. State Parliament for twenty-two years being first elected as a Labour member in 1894. He played many and important parts in public life in his day but what he did in securing the passage of the 1916 Act establishing the State Valuation of Land Department is the most notable of all.

When the Local Government Acts, 1905 and 1906, were passed

which instituted the Rating of Land Values in municipalities and shires there was provision for local councils making their own valuations. This matter of locally made valuations proved unsatisfactory, the same being true of other States and it was agreed at a Premier's Conference that all the States should pass Acts for a public valuation on sound lines for all public purposes. New South Wales was the only State to honour the agreement.

Mr. Griffith's Valuation of Land Act, 1916, soon proved how necessary and desirable it was. Local influences had dominated in the locality, made valuations resulting in much unfairness and disparity. Many properties were under-valued or not valued at all and in one shire (Wallarobba) there was a particularly shocking case. When the new Valuation Department made a proper valuation, some aggrieved big landowners raised a great outcry and they induced a weak-kneed Government (in 1925) to amend the Act so as to give Shires the option of making their own valuations.

The 1916 Act however, stands on the Statute Book as Mr. Griffith's greatest public service. But still wanting is an adequate staffing of the Department because even now it has still large sections of the State, including the City of Sydney, to undertake. Meanwhile the valuations in such areas are made by the local Councils and the locally made valuations as well as those made elsewhere by the Department are revised periodically once every three years.

Recently Queensland has passed an Act establishing a State Department for Land Valuation. The need for such an Act in Victoria has been pointed out and the matter is getting consideration in West Australia.

AUSTRALIAN TARIFFS

(From letter by Mr. A. G. Huie, in the Manchester Guardian October 30, 1946.)

The policy or, more correctly, the superstition of protection has afflicted Australia since federation in 1900, when it was introduced under false pretences.

The idea of secondary industries to manufacture goods locally instead of importing them is not new; it was not started with a shock when Japan entered the war. It has been carefully fostered by privileged interests all along. Their pretence has always been of a "balanced economy," by charging the Australian consumers inflated prices for their goods. Hitherto Australia's exports of secondary industries have been negligible. Here are the facts from our year-book.

Total exports of primary products in Australian currency for the ten years 1931-2 to 1940-1 were 93.82 per cent.; secondary or manufacturing 6.18 per cent. In fact, our secondary industries until now have catered for the local market. Competition from abroad has been severely handicapped by excessive tariff taxes, but imports have still come in. The luckless consumer is the chief victim of these economic follies. While imports are taxed to provide revenue the price of local goods is kept up by the local maker for his own benefit.

As for the Tariff Board, it is a body appointed by a protectionist Government to bring in protectionist reports. It has never been an impartial body because the consumer, the victim of protection, is not represented on it. The idea of protecting industries in their infant stages is fanciful. The infants never grow up. The bigger they get the more sinister is their pressure upon politicians.

The surmise that Australia intends to supply other countries with manufactured goods rests on the assumption that Britain and other exporting countries will charge much higher prices than before the war. Experience after the 1914-18 war does not justify such an assumption. The only way that the war mushroom industries will be able to carry on will be by charging high prices inside the tariff wall and dumping their surplus for what they can get.

Let me show your readers how this high price to Australian consumers and dumped price for outsiders operates. Before the war Australian sultana raisins were selling to the local consumer at from 9d. to 10d. per pound. At the same time, the export value of those raisins was rather less than 4½d. per pound. Consider sugar. In 1938-9 nearly 56 per cent. of Australian production was exported, the value being £8 4s. 3d. per