

values were rising again. "Another land boom," says Mrs. Hill. "Values were rising in a swift upward climb, until they reached £200, £300, £400 an acre." Blocks bought by settlers for 30s. an acre in the crash, they sold for £350 an acre in the boom, and, because no better investment offered, bought others on a rising market, with the banks behind them. "Common sense had taken wings." This boom, however, was short-lived. By 1923 land values ebbed to less than half again. Since that time conditions have favoured greater stability. Marketing has been better organised. In 1901 Federation led to the removal of inter-State tariffs. Then there came Imperial Preference in 1931 and the capture of the British market for dried fruits after Ottawa. For thirteen years the voluntary organisation of marketing and price-fixing in the trade became statutory and compulsory for all growers until these powers of monopoly were shattered by a Privy Council decision in 1938 and the industry was brought back to a voluntary basis.

There is another side, however, and C. B. Fletcher in *The Murray Valley* (1926) says that Protective duties on imports tend to be prohibitive and the man on the land says they are an eternal brake on progress. A great area of the soldier settlements is held from the Crown on long leases and does not give much in the way of security when money has to be raised.

Both Mrs. Hill and Mr. Fletcher in their books speak of the need for overseas markets for the fruit products of the Murray Valley. Mrs. Hill looks to a continuance of the Ottawa policy of preferential Empire tariffs, to protect the Victorian growers against the competition from California and Greece. How this is to fit in with the world's need for freer trade, and the present Anglo-American movement away from Protection, we are left to guess. Mrs. Hill seems to think that the Victorian fruit cultivators want British housewives to pay more for their dried fruits and other foodstuffs from Australia. Mr. C. B. Fletcher puts another alternative to Australia. He admits that "unless dried fruits from Australia can be landed in the world's market to compete successfully with the produce of the Mediterranean and American vineyards and orchards, our irrigation efforts may as well be abandoned." He goes on to show that reduced "overheads" is one of the secrets. Water carriage along the Murray is not fully developed. Reduced duties on imported agricultural products and machinery, etc., would also help. It is also true that these townships along the Murray are backward in adopting the system of relieving improvements from local taxes and concentrating local taxes on land values. They have the experience of paying State and Commonwealth land value taxation, but continue to raise most of their municipal revenue from taxing the industry and improved property of the cultivators. This does not make it easier for them to compete in world markets.

A former chairman of the State Rivers and Water Commission of Victoria, Mr. Cattanach, C.M.G., has calculated that if each family in Victoria ate only one pound more per week of fruit produced by Victorian irrigation settlements, there would be none left for export. So much for the supposed necessity for a guaranteed and protected export market. Various estimates, varying between five and ten millions, have been made as to the population that could find a prosperous occupation of the wide lands along the Murray Valley when irrigation has had its full effects. With land and markets freed from monopoly a thriving home demand would form the natural foundation for a prosperous export trade. Then would the marvellous works of irrigation that harness the great river bring their true reward and find their full justification, and the "Water turned into Gold" would enrich the whole people and not the protected few.

D.J.J.O.

GERMAN LARGE ESTATES

AN ARTICLE in the *Fortnightly Review* for March on "Land Reform in Germany," by Mr. Tibor Mende, contains some interesting information about what has been happening in the Soviet zone. The object of these changes is not merely economic but also political, aiming at eliminating the influence of the Junkers. A calculation by Georg Schmidt, former president of the Union of German Agricultural Workers, is quoted in support of the statement that between 1924 and 1930 the Reich spent no less than 3,264 million marks upon the support of the large estates. It is also stated that during the Nazi régime the estates of 16 princes were enlarged by 600,000 hectares. In March, 1939, there were 5,554 big landowners owning $5\frac{1}{4}$ million hectares of land. (One hectare equals 2.47 acres.)

The partitioning of land carried out in the Soviet zone of Germany resembles that in Poland, Rumania, and Hungary. The estates of Nazi leaders and supporters and of all owning more than 100 hectares were confiscated, together with all stock and equipment. This land is divided among small farmers, farm workers and refugees in holdings of five to ten hectares. The recipients pay a price equal to the value of one year's crop at autumn 1945 prices by instalments to be spread over 10 to 20 years. The new holdings cannot be sub-divided, sold, leased, or mortgaged. The agricultural machinery is handed over to mutual aid committees. This, coupled with the small size of the holdings, enforces a certain degree of collectivisation or co-operation.

Shortage of equipment and livestock has in many cases made the practical carrying through of the proposals impracticable. "In addition to the material damage inflicted by battle, millions of Red Army men lived off the land and requisitioned not only grain, potatoes, and livestock, but also tractors and other agricultural machinery."

A system of compulsory deliveries of quotas of produce according to the fertility of the district has been instituted. What remains to the farmer can be sold in the free market. This resembles what is in operation in the Soviet Union.

A TRADE UNION DEMAND

For the Annual Delegate Meeting of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, being held in Blackpool in May, the Preston Branch has submitted Resolution in the following terms: "This A.D.M. believes that to prevent an alarming growth of unemployment in this country, the Government should be urged to include in the next Budget a tax on land values, such as was contained in the Labour Budget of 1931 and repealed by the reactionary National Government in 1932. This Delegate Meeting realises, as did the Tories in 1932, that a tax on all land values would provide public revenue out of the public fund now enjoyed by private landlords, and would force unused land in town and country into good use, thus providing new opportunities for useful employment in the production of food, homes, minerals, etc. As the Labour Party has long advocated this policy, this Delegate Meeting declares that the time is opportune for prompt action by the Government on these lines."

2d. HOW THE ENGLISH PEOPLE BECAME LANDLESS. And How to Regain the Land.

1s. 6d. PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE. By Henry George. Abridged Edition, in stiff paper covers; in full cloth, 2s. 6d.

2s. 6d. LAND VALUE RATING. Theory and Practice. By F. C. R. Douglas, M.A., M.P.

2s. 6d. SOCIAL PROBLEMS. By Henry George.

3s. 6d. PROGRESS AND POVERTY. An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth. By Henry George.

3s. 6d. LAND AND FREEDOM. New and comprehensive treatise on Land Value Taxation. By Fredk. Verinder.

12s. THE LIFE OF HENRY GEORGE. By Henry George, Jr.