

## THREE SUBSTANTIAL GAINS IN VICTORIA

### Malvern, Castlemaine and Warrnambool

The latest news received from Victoria (by air letters from Mr. A. R. Hutchinson, editor of *Progress*, and Mr. R. N. Collison, honorary secretary of the Henry George League) emphasises once again that when people have had fairly explained to them the benefits to be derived from the land value policy, and are afforded the opportunity to decide whether local taxation shall be imposed on the composite value of land and buildings, or in the site value alone, they have no hesitation in choosing in favour of the latter.

Such a choice was offered on Saturday, August 27, to ratepayers in Malvern City (situated close to central Melbourne), in the provincial town of Castlemaine, and in Cobram Shire. Results were two emphatic victories and one narrow defeat, the voting being:—

	MALVERN	CASTLEMAINE	COBRAM SHIRE
To adopt L.V.R. ...	11,758	1,860	816
Against ...	6,339	1,175	1,096

*Malvern.* The credit for this good victory goes to the Malvern Rating Reform League which conducted one of the most intense and best organised campaigns in favour of the policy ever held in the State. There was so high a poll that the result means in effect that almost two out of every three ratepayers were persuaded of the desirability of making the change, and they were so well spread throughout the city that at fourteen of the eighteen polling booths, there was a majority in favour of adopting the rating of land values. Even among the postal voters (who included absentee owners of land held for speculation) a majority decision was given. Unsuccessful polls had been held in Malvern in 1925 and in 1948, and on that latter occasion the 4,811 in favour had been outnumbered by more than a thousand. On the strength of this Malvern had come to be regarded as being "resistant" to change. In addition to this poll of all the ratepayers, there was also an election in the East ward to fill a vacancy on the city council. Confronted with the choice between an ardent supporter of land-value rating who campaigned on that issue, and a former Councillor who had opposed the policy in 1948 and whose current attitude was indecisive, the electors returned the land values man by 6,138 to 3,358 votes.

By its decision, Malvern follows the lead given by a number of municipalities in Greater Melbourne, and it is expected to exercise great influence on neighbouring municipalities which still cling to the old system of taxing improvements. The following statistical data is taken from the September issue of the Melbourne *Progress*: Malvern covers an area of 4,022 acres and has a population of 46,875. There are 14,012 dwellings, 823 shops and other buildings, and 929 vacant sites. The assessed capital value of land and buildings is £44.54 million, which is comprised of £13.32 million in respect of site value, and £31.22 million in respect of buildings and other improvements. Hitherto a rate of 2s. 6d. in the £ has been levied on the Nett Annual Value (of land and improvements) of £2.23 million. To raise the same annual revenue under the land-value system, a rate of 5.025d. in the £ of capital values will be required.

*Castlemaine.* This was the first time that a poll had been held, and there are hopes that the opportunity will be taken of the option open to inland councils to levy also the sewerage rates on site values. There was not an intensive campaign conducted in the town, and therefore the result

is very gratifying. Covering an area of 5,760 acres, the town comprises approximately 2,400 assessable properties, of which about 600 (one quarter) were vacant lots. The assessed capital value of the land, £611,000, was just under one-fifth of the value of buildings and other improvements. Under the land value system a rate of 10½d. in the £ levied on the capital value of the land will yield the equivalent revenue to that secured by last year's rate of 3s. 6d. in the £ on the (composite) Nett Annual Value.

*Warrnambool.* Under the title "How an Australian City Could Prosper" we reviewed in our June issue this year a pamphlet issued by the (Melbourne) Land Value Research Group, which showed the benefits that could be secured in this city of ten thousand population if it were to adopt the rating of land values. We now learn from Mr. Hutchinson that the change was made by resolution of the city council, and that Warrnambool has now completed its first year under the new system. The water and sewerage rates however have not been put on the site-value basis.

#### Prospects in South Australia

Writing from South Australia in July, Mr. E. J. Craigie reports that there are hopes of further advances for the land value principle in that State. In Payneham, a suburb of Adelaide, a tentative assessment was then being undertaken and when it has been completed a poll of ratepayers will be taken on the question whether or not to adopt the rating of land values. On the West Coast a poll will be taken next year in the Streaky Bay District, and a member of Franklin Harbour District Council, also on the West Coast, intends moving for a poll.

Mr. Craigie sends also good news about Marion which adopted land-value rating by a poll of ratepayers last May. Difficulties arose when, at the instance of vested interests, Councillors were unable to agree on the rate to be levied. Instead of a uniform rate being imposed on the value of all land within the municipality, by the casting vote of the Mayor, Mr. P. W. Tippings, a land-value rate of 6d. in the £ (of capital value) was struck for urban land, while on rural land the rate levied was only 4d. In the July local government elections, Mr. Tippings was defeated because he had voted against the move to impose a flat rate of 6d. Mr. Craigie remarks that "as the Council is now constituted it is not likely that land-value rating will be challenged by the opposition."

#### COMMEMORATION IN MELBOURNE

##### Address by R. R. Stokes, M.P.

A popular annual event in Melbourne is the Henry George Birthday commemoration gathering, sponsored by the H.G. League of Victoria. The celebrations this year, held a day early, on September 1, were particularly memorable, not only for the erudite Commemorative address delivered by Mr. E. F. Halkyard, honorary secretary of the Henry George Foundation, Australia, but because there were present as distinguished guests Mr. R. R. Stokes, M.P., who was in Melbourne on business, and Mr. W. A. Dowe, director of the Australian School of Social Science, from Sydney. In what our correspondent describes as "a most refreshingly forthright speech," Mr. Stokes told how he had been introduced thirty years ago to the ideas of Henry George, and