

## DENMARK REVISITED

GREAT HEADWAY is being made in Denmark in the advocacy of Henry George's principle and policy. The movement enjoys many advantages in the agencies that are working with it and the wider avenues through which its social philosophy is being spread. In the open arena of political discussion, "Georgeism" has passed into common usage, winning a recognised and respected place as the term distinguishing the school of thought which relies on economic freedom, equal rights and equal opportunities, to solve the social problem. In the field of legislation something has been achieved, building a solid foundation for further work and progress.

The national land value tax, now at the rate of 6 per mille (corresponding to 1½d. per £ capital value or, say, 2s. 9d. in the £ of annual value) is imposed on *all* land in town and country alike, yields a certain revenue although only a very small proportion of the total. Also over the whole country and on *all* land the local taxation of land values applies, taking on the average 40 per cent. of local revenues in counties and rural parishes, but in the towns considerably less. In Copenhagen the land value rate is 8 per mille, corresponding to 2d. in the £ of capital value or about 3s. 6d. in the £ of annual value. The rest of local revenues comes mainly by income and general property tax, burdens which it is the object of the Henry George movement to abolish. In addition to the national tax and the local rates on land values, there is a special increment tax which takes some part of the increase by which the value of any land has risen, the datum line being the 1932 valuation, and the increase is determined at each subsequent periodic valuation. It is not charged "once for all," but is an annual tax levied on that part of the land value which is shown to have increased in the interval. What has been accomplished thus far in the actual levy of land value taxation to transfer the rent of land into public treasuries and abolish taxation on trade and industry are but small steps. The vitally important thing is that land valuation has been securely established, revealing to the people the land value which is theirs and in itself providing the most conclusive of arguments.

The land valuation has been made periodically in 1915, 1924, 1927, 1932 and 1936. Thereafter it was to be quinquennial, but the occupation prevented the 1941 revision. Immediately the liberation came, the postponed valuation was undertaken and within a year it was completed. There was no Chancellor of the Exchequer to say he had no valuers for the purpose or that his staffs were otherwise too busy. But the Danes have an extraordinarily democratic and simple procedure (described in Mr. Kristensen's papers to our International Conferences), with publicity as its efficient assistant. The whole country, every street, every farm and holding, is mapped for the valuation, and the maps are published for anyone to have so that he can inspect and help to control the work. Even if the new valuation has not been able, in the very special circumstances of the time, to keep in touch with great and sudden increases in land prices, it has made such revision of the assessments as will correspond to a considerably increased revenue from the land value taxes. The fact that the Government so smartly tackled the matter is very significant testimony to the sentiment for land value taxation in the community and the importance attached to the valuation for other purposes, such as the revisable land-rents payable for smallholdings established under State auspices. Preliminary results for the whole country show that the total assessed land value has increased from 5,600 million crowns in 1936 to 6,800 million crowns in 1945. In Copenhagen the increase was 67 per cent. It averages 20½ per cent.

in the provincial towns and 25 per cent. in the agricultural districts.

In its educational and political endeavours the Danish Henry George movement is well favoured. Four periodicals are in regular publication, *Grundskyld* (the Land Due), organ of the Henry George Union, which is the educational propagandist association with branches in many parts of the country; and the three journals of the Justice Union, the monthly *Retog Frihed* (Justice and Freedom), the weekly *Vejeu Frem* (The Road Forward) and the daily *Nyt Dagblad* (The New Daily). They are assisted by an able corps of contributors, many of whom are also continually active in the campaigns of meetings and conferences. Instruction in social economy on the lines of the Henry George Schools is given by the Ecotechnical School, which at present has some 60 classes in operation. It is the publisher also of many booklets. Editorial, journalistic and educational services are all given voluntarily, and besides the production of the periodicals there is a continuous output of campaign literature by way of pamphlets and booklets.

But to come to the political campaigning (if it is possible to put the political, the propagandist and the educational in separate compartments), the immense asset the movement possesses is its political wing, the independent political party Retsforbundet, or Justice Union. It is ably led in Parliament to-day by Dr. Viggo Starcke, Pastor Ch. Norlev and Mr. Sören Olesen, and in every constituency it has its eager band of workers. Since by the system of proportional representation operative in Denmark every vote has a value, there is no impediment but every encouragement to form the local groups, to put up the candidates, to appeal to the electors with the utmost effect. They are organising now for the next General Election, which may not be far off. But election or no election, the propaganda goes on without pause to build in people's minds the conception of the Just State and show the way to it.

No account of the influences which have spread so widely the understanding of Henry George's ideas would be complete—but it would make a long story—without special reference to the teaching of economics and citizenship which with history, literature, etc., is given at the Folk High Schools where in the winter young men from the land and in the summer young women are in residence; and more especially to the support from the Housemen or small peasant proprietors, who are associated in a membership of some 90,000. Active interest in land value taxation began among the country people, which helps to explain why it is that the practical application of the policy is further forward in the rural districts than in the towns. "Agricultural Denmark taxes land values and all small farmers stand for the policy as wise and right." There's a message to send to British politicians. The Housemen gave out their famous manifesto at Køge in 1902—equal rights for all, no State support or subventions for any section, land value taxation, free trade and no taxes on the work of man's hands—and have repeatedly endorsed these demands. It was, in fact, their agitation for a just land and taxation system, their protest against what the new parliamentary government in 1902 did in taking taxes off land which brought the question right into politics.

The Liberal Party which had come to power in 1902 when the big political changes took place in that year, split later into Moderate and Radical wings, and it was the Radical Party which forced the pace for land value taxation. The principle and policy remains in the forefront of its programme.

The legislation that has since been adopted is largely to the credit of the Radicals and the Social Democrats acting in co-operation.

A holiday in Denmark during July was made doubly enjoyable and memorable by the opportunity that was given to meet a number of friends of the movement at various gatherings under their hospitable roofs, in Copenhagen, Klampenborg, Lyngby and Rungsted. Much was learnt at first hand about hopes and prospects in this fertile Danish ground, and there came also prominently into discussion the question of the next International Conference and where that should be. And so also at Bjerringbro at one of the conferences of the Justice Union which by fortunate chance it was possible to attend, a short distance from Spöttrup where the latter part of the holiday was spent. Spöttrup is an historic double-moated castle, restored by the Danish Government and made a show place. Its estate was subdivided into some 26 smallholdings, held under the "land-rent" principle which is applied, under provisions of the 1919 Act, whenever State lands pass into such use. The tenure is perpetual. All the buildings and improvements are individual property, and the holders have virtually all the rights of freehold, subject to the payment of the land-rent, which is revised periodically in conformity with the general valuation of the whole of Denmark. This is the latest settlement of the kind and during our stay it was visited almost daily by groups of Housemen from surrounding districts. First a general meeting of the visitors; then the inspection of individual holdings; the talks preceded and succeeded by song; and most impressive of all, the aspirations of these men that similar smallholdings should blossom everywhere, their conviction that land value taxation and free trade was the means. Those were Henry George meetings and conversations right enough! I would like, in conclusion, to give a word of grateful thanks for their kindly reception to those friends in Bjerringbro, to those who met us coming and going at Esbjerg (with interview published in the *Nyt Dagblad*) and to our hosts and hostesses in all the places mentioned. Crossing over in the boat to Denmark there was the impression that it was building a time-bridge across the terrible years that had shut off all communications. What a happiness to have been on it and to have helped to renew these contacts

A. W. MADSEN.

### JOHN ARCHER

WE REGRET to report the death of John Archer, which took place on August 7 at his home at 35, Cleveland Road, Huddersfield. He was aged 77. An outstanding advocate of the social philosophy of Henry George, he has done an immense work. His passionate concern was the moral aspect of the cause. In politics he was a Radical, but he was a politician with a religion, so sincerely preached that his message was ever an eloquent and moving appeal to the hearts as well as the minds of men. In Yorkshire his name was a household word through the many campaigns in which he took part. As an assiduous correspondent he had a very wide circle of friends, both in this country and overseas. He would say himself that personal letters were his best way of doing the propaganda, whereas perhaps others would find some suitable printed pamphlet and let that suffice. Unquestionably in these communications he wrote many a pamphlet for private consumption. He believed intensely in the personal approach. For a number of years he had suffered gravely from ill-health, but in spite of that severe handicap he never relaxed, his spirit was so all consuming. He will be sorely missed. He is survived by a widow and four married daughters, and to them, as well as to the intimate circle who surrounded him in his life's work, we extend our sincere sympathies in their loss.

### THE TRAMP

A correspondent, E.A.B., in Notts County, writes:

"In my journey to Denaby I see all the symptoms of a landless people. German prisoners are transported from their camp to the fields where they hoe and weed with a hopeless air. They are whisked back in the evening, standing mute in open lorries. A sturdy vagrant stopped me on the road to ask for a match. When I saw the look of misery in his face I got him into conversation. He had gone to London for work and being unable to find accommodation had stayed at a doss-house where he had been robbed of his clothing. He had tramped back looking for a job and had just found employment as a farm worker. He is willing to work hard for £3 10s. weekly, and will be pleased to be allowed to sleep in a barn. He says that when a man is really down, a bed and a good meal are all he asks for. The man's story was true enough because I tested some of his statements and found others to fit in with what he had no idea I could ever know.

"The tramp said that things were worse than ever before, a statement with which I entirely agree. I can go further and say that there will be a famine in this country this winter in spite of the Government's 'cheap' buying of their plaything, the Bank of England. Feeding-stuff is being cut down with disastrous results. Poultry of an age to lay is being sold cheaply, pigs likewise. Those who are keeping their stock are feeding it on human food. A breadloaf soaked in water, with the addition of a little meal, will feed poultry, but this dodge overcomes the lack of poultry meal only by its going into bread; and we are back where we started. A landless man will hardly survive but a smallholder will be in a reasonable position."

In 1941 the bombs destroyed Queen's Hall in London but they failed to destroy the value of the site. On the contrary the Crown Commissioners' agents say the land has gone up enormously in value since then. The owners of the hall wish to rebuild. Their lease of the site at £650 a year ground rent has still 21 years to run. The Crown Commissioners demand the surrender of the old lease and the making of a new lease to run for 99 years from 1941 at a ground rent of £8,000 (eight thousand pounds) a year. As a result, plans for a national concert hall to cost £500,000 have been shelved.—*News Chronicle*, May 24.

## WHY LIBERTY

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An Address

by

Wilfrid Harrison

With Declaration Relating to Personal and Economic Freedom, the Right Use of Power, and the Moral Principles on which alone a Just State can be established

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