

Our Australian Letter

LAND VALUE TAXATION—MUNICIPAL AND FEDERAL

PEOPLE often ask what progress, if any, the Single Tax is making in New South Wales. We have long given up the hope, which we once cherished, that the advent of the Great Reform preached with such fervor by Henry George was at last within sight. Since his visit we have learned from experience what a long and dreary road has to be traversed before we even get a glimpse of the Promised Land. We have been specially deceived by the Labor Party, which we at one time thought was going to back up the movement for the abolition of land monopoly and the introduction of free trade; but that hope we have had to abandon.

It is true that in the municipal sphere the Georgian principle has been enforced in both Queensland and New South Wales, as well as in many other parts of Australia, but in the Federal sphere it has been so mutilated by the Labor Party that, instead of being the most equitable, it is the most inequitable tax we have. All land up to and under £5,000 in value is exempt, while all land value over that amount is supertaxed to make up for the loss sustained by the exemption. Recognizing what a hotch-potch this was of the Georgian principle, all the other parties—Nationalist, Country Party and Independent—adopted it, seeing that, so long as some land was taxed and other land was supertaxed, land monopoly would flourish more than ever and all hope of undermining or abolishing the evil would be squashed. In fact, the exemptions and graduations introduced by the Labor Party and supported by all the others have made land monopoly even worse than it was before, and done us irreparable harm in other ways.

Then it slowly dawned upon us that the only thing left for Australian Single Taxers to do was to educate the people on the right lines and endeavor to get the obnoxious legislation repealed. To carry out this purpose Single Tax papers have been established in at least four of the States—New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia; meetings in the various capitals have been regularly held in connection with the different Leagues, and especially in the Sydney Domain, where all sorts of reformers—Socialists, Communists, Anarchists, Protectionists, Single Taxers and Red Ragers—proclaim their principles every Sunday afternoon to more or less admiring crowds. The Single Tax Leagues also have classes for public speaking and for the reading of "Progress and Poverty," weekly lectures and addresses are delivered, and country tours are organized by the secretaries of at any rate two of the Leagues—those in New South Wales and South Australia.

MR. HUIE'S COUNTRY TOUR

Mr. E. G. Craigie, M.L.A. for Flinders in South Australia, the secretary of the South Australian League, has

done some splendid work in that direction, his successful carrying out of which was mainly due to his election to the South Australian Parliament, where his speeches on the land question have made those ancient fogies, his fellow members, sit up with a vengeance. Mr. Hobbs, a business man in New South Wales with a remarkable capacity for expounding the Single Tax, has interested large audiences throughout the Mother State, while Mr. A. G. Huie, our indefatigable secretary, has just completed a lecture tour, details of which I now propose to give. I will only premise by saying that the work of education has been immensely strengthened in the Mother State and elsewhere by the generous donation of £20,000 by Dr. Culley, an American physician long resident in Melbourne, which has enabled the various Leagues to considerably augment their work, besides offering prizes for essays on the subject and publishing them in leaflet form. Mr. Huie commenced his tour this year on January 8, when he left Sydney in the "Lizzie," a motor car presented to him some years ago by one of his admirers, and spent five days in Goulburn, which he describes as "the most favorable to the Henry George cause among all the country centres in New South Wales."

A BRILLIANT SINGLE TAXER

I never was in Goulburn, but I remember very well the days when the *Goulburn Evening Post* was edited by the late Mr. Hebblewhite, one of the most brilliant writers on the Single Tax in Australia. Recent editors have followed in his steps and frequently publish articles and letters denouncing Protection and advocating the Single Tax. "The abject failure of Protection," writes the secretary, "and the complete falsification of the promises of its most blatant exponents have at last quieted the advocates of trade restriction. You can slate the tariff in unmeasured terms and large audiences do not raise a single protest." Many of the residents at Goulburn signed a petition in favor of proportional representation, "the feeling in favor of electoral justice being strong, and is irrespective of existing parties." The abolition of P. R. in New South Wales was a reactionary step which Single Taxers have had much cause to regret. Its abolition was mainly owing to the faulty manner in which it was put into operation, the "improvements" with which it was saddled being the principal cause of its non-success. But proportional representation, in connection with non-party government as carried out in Switzerland with marked success, is, in my opinion, a great desideratum in many other countries besides New South Wales.

DECLINE OF THE RURAL POPULATION

After leaving Goulburn the secretary touched at Braidwood, a centre he had never previously visited, and near which there is a good country which could be put to better use. The rural population, he says, is declining. In 1926-7 there were more than 800 fewer rural holdings in the southern table land than in 1920-21. The secretary next visited

Canberra, but as I dealt fully with his remarks on this part of his tour in my article on Canberra, I will pass on to the neighboring town of Queanbeyan, which has much altered and improved since his first visit many years ago.

At Yass, one of the principal cities, by the way, in the running for the capital, the secretary specially noticed the demoralizing effect of the dole. At one place near by the police inspector told him that it occupied four hours of his time daily in administering the dole. There are camps near the towns where the men stay. "In all centres," the secretary points out, "there is work about a town which might be done with advantage. If men did half a day's work, or a day a fortnight—a day a week would be better—they would be earning what they get and the town would have something to show for it." This idea has since been favorably commented on and is being put into operation in various places. The men themselves generally prefer it, although it is, of course, opposed by the trade unions, and especially by the communistic element, which denounces it hip and thigh.

The secretary had an attentive meeting at Carcoar, where things are bad and many are on the dole. He pointed out that there was nothing wrong with the country and that unemployment was due to shockingly bad management by politicians. He mentioned that when the first section of our railways was under construction the work was held up for two years for want of men. In those days there were more jobs than men. One of those present, eighty-five years of age, said he remembered the fact very well and added that they had to import men from England to finish the job. "Now," said the secretary, "we have more men than jobs, although the country is capable of supporting 100,000,000 of people."

SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

Mr. Huie next went to Bathurst, "the Queen City of the Plains," remarkable for its beautiful situation, its delightful climate, at any rate in all but middle winter, and for its popular park. I have many personal reminiscences of Bathurst, where I first met the late E. W. Foxall, a friend of Henry George's and a former great champion of the Single Tax in New South Wales. I was editor of the *Bathurst Times* when Mr. Foxall delivered a lecture there. He was then spending his holiday in lecturing on the Single Tax in several country towns. It was one of the finest lectures on the subject I ever heard, the lecture itself being singularly lucid in style and the delivery exceptionally good.

I was very enthusiastic at that time (as I hope I am still) and managed to interest the city Aldermen in favor of rating on unimproved land values instead of on improvements as was then the method in use. They all signed a petition in favor of the change, which was afterward made law by Sir Joseph Carruthers, who is still alive and will always be gratefully remembered by Single Taxers for his Local Government Act, in which the Georgian principle

of taxation was embodied for the first time. If I remember rightly, Mr. Foxall had just come from delivering a lecture at Lithgow, a mining town where the late John Farrell, the Australian poet, was at that time editing the local paper as the accredited organ of the movement for Land Nationalization, a name which was afterward changed to Single Tax. Farrell flooded the paper with abstruse articles on the subject which were far too deep for the simple-minded locals to understand. He thereby ruined the paper, which was subsequently bought by Mr. James Ryan, a thorough Single Taxer (now a member of the Legislative Council), who knew the value of local news and under whose management the paper became a great financial success.

He was and is a good speaker, a born journalist, whose lucid editorials were always a pleasure to read. On leaving the *Bathurst Times* I subsequently went to Sydney with an article on "Municipal Rating" in my pocket which I read before the "Nationalization League" and was in due course elected its first paid secretary, the name of the League being shortly afterward changed to Single Tax, with the result that we got rid of a whole lot of Socialists, Protectionists and Land Nationalists, weakening our numbers but strengthening our morale. From that time to this we have always presented a united front and advocated land value taxation, or rather appropriation and free trade, without a single dissident in our ranks.

A LADY PRESIDES

Mr. Huie's second country tour commenced on February 12, when he went to Orange. Happening to stay near a college, it was suggested that he should give the boys an address, a procedure which has been carried out in the United States by Single Taxers with marked success. Backed up by the Mayor, the principal of the college made no objection, and the senior boys assembled in the library, where they received what the secretary had to say very well, and the principal bought a "Progress and Poverty." Mr. Huie then addressed an open-air meeting, at which for the first time a lady took the chair.

THE PRIMARY PRODUCERS AND THE TARIFF

During his stay in Orange the Primary Producers had a big meeting, attended by delegates from all parts of the district. The principal speaker was Mr. Abbott, an ex-M.P., who mentioned some of the disabilities of the mer on the land, but omitted to mention the tariff, whereupon Mr. Huie, during the five minutes he was allowed for the discussion, tackled Mr. Abbott for neglecting to deal with the tariff, although he had promised to do so, and said he could not understand why the Primary Producers were not all howling free traders. "They had to sell in the world's market and take what they could get, while they had to buy in a highly protected market and pay twice as much as their requirements were worth. Their interests had been sacrificed for the benefit of the protected manufacturers."

What I had to say, observed the secretary, "met with general approval."

Mr. Huie next visited several places round about. "The wheat country," he writes, "is feeling the full weight of the low prices now ruling for the staple product of so many farmers, who were deceived into planting additional land by Mr. Scullin. Russia," he adds, "is naturally a wheat-growing country and was a large producer before the war. Latterly she has again become an exporter. As other countries had increased their production, the price is now low, and the Protectionists complain about Britain getting cheap wheat. If Russia by dumping chooses to pay part of the bread bills of the Britishers there is no logical reason why they should complain. Those who get dumped Australian sugar do not complain about getting cheap sugar."

"Australian farmers must realize that they cannot pay £10 and £12 an acre for land, support protected monopolists in cities by paying them twice as much as machinery and supplies are worth plus excessive railway freights, and expect to sell wheat at a profit. Wheat will pay if the growers are given a chance. No country has such natural advantages for growing it as Australia. But the land must be cheap, the machinery and supplies must be the best that the world can afford at free trade prices. And railway freights must be drastically reduced. That is the only way to make the industry pay under normal conditions."

And what the secretary says with regard to Australia applies just as much to the United States.

IN THE WHEAT BELT

Forbes and Parkes are rival towns, both of which got their start through the discovery of gold. Parkes has the advantage of not being landlocked like Forbes. "Forbes has always been friendly to our cause," writes the secretary. "It was there that the first organized attempt was made to further George's principles in New South Wales. Of the early pioneers John Cashman and J. J. Patterson remain." The next step was to Trundle, where the secretary had not spoken previously. "It is a small centre in good wheat country," he writes. "It is almost painful to be touring at the present time. Everywhere men are out of work, business is bad, and the instability of political conditions aggravates the position." Condobolin, the next place visited, is "friendly to our cause and always gives me a good meeting. It is a landlocked town. It has the river and the railway. It is well situated to be a big centre—when the land within a reasonable distance is put to its best use."

One of the best public meetings the secretary had during his tour was at West Wyalong, where there are several Single Taxers. The secretary was there shortly after the discovery of gold about thirty-seven years ago. Today wheat and not gold is its mainstay. At the public meeting referred to was "an irrepressible Protectionist—the first I have struck on this tour. This man is a farmer, yet he

refuses to see that farmers are victimized by the tariff in the interests of city manufacturers. He asked many long-winded questions. My answers appeared to give satisfaction. Nobody seems to take him very seriously. Facts were all against his pretensions. For thirty years we have had an ever-rising tariff, which is highway robbery by the Government, and today we have a record number of unemployed. So far as farming machinery is concerned Protection is primarily for the benefit of one firm.

"According to the Tariff Board, under 5,000 workers are engaged in making agricultural implements and about 230,000 using them. When the late H. V. McKay passed out he left £1,437,000. 'What,' I asked, 'did the average farmer leave?' 'Debts,' someone replied. Moreover, when the cost of production was low the H. V. McKay firm was able to make and export agricultural machinery to the Argentine. With the increased cost of the tariff and the cost of production they lost all their Argentine trade. What did they do? They took some of the money they had looted out of the farmers of Australia and went to Canada to set up a factory to employ Canadians so that they could supply cheap machinery to foreigners."

VITAL NECESSITIES

While the secretary was at Temora a great demonstration was held at Wagga in favor of seceding and forming a Riverina State. Talk like that, writes the secretary, is only hot air. Even if it were practicable it would not lessen the cost of production and transport, which are the vital necessities of the farmers today. Why don't the promoters of these gatherings go straight for what they require instead of playing into the hands of their political enemies? If new States were set up it would not lessen the cost of government and the real curses of the Primary Producers—the tariff and land speculation—would remain in full force."

THE CURSE OF THE DOLE

Mr. Huie's third country tour commenced on March 12, when he first went to Cootamundra. In the course of his visit he touched on the dole. "According to the Assistant Minister for Labor and Industry, Mr. Ely," writes the secretary, "the dole is costing the State over £3,000,000 a year. This gives the taxpayer no return, as well as having a permanently demoralizing effect. Surely there is a way of providing some honest work for an expenditure of £3,000,000! This huge waste is proof of the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of present-day politicians. There is plenty of work waiting to be done. There are bad stretches of road between good portions. Towns need water and sewerage. Trees must be planted in suitable places. Noxious weeds could be dealt with, and so on. Every man getting food should work for it. Most men would prefer to do so. According to the Minister 25 per cent of the dole goes to persons not entitled to it." (This aspect of the question has been thoroughly gone into of

late, and a large number of persons have been found guilty of misappropriation in connection with the dole.) "Work would weed out those who are merely loafing upon the Government's efforts to prevent people starving. The expenditure upon the dole if used upon the roads would make an appreciable and welcome improvement."

JUNEE AND THE MONOPOLIST

"Junee is one of the most striking examples in the country of the evils of land monopoly," writes Mr. Huie in *The Standard* for April. "Originally the site of the town was a 640-acre selection taken up at £1 per acre. When it was decided to extend the railway westward it was necessary to keep well away from the Murrumbidgee. So Junee was selected as the most suitable place to make the junction for the line to Narrandera and Hay. Then the man who had the land demanded his pound of flesh. That family has been a heavy burden upon the place ever since. The landlord's tribute and the ill-shapen town have afflicted Junee for more than fifty years. This town supplies one of the most notable examples of the beneficial effects of rating on unimproved values. When the new system came in early in 1908 the land monopolist got it in the neck for the first time. He richly deserved it. The effects were at once apparent. Land that home seekers formerly could not buy was soon made available on easy terms. The land owner was looking for people to take the land and use it. Local Government rates, however, only take part of the economic ground rent, so there is still a good deal for the monopolist."

A PROMISING RECRUIT

While I was transcribing the above a young man called on me in a motor bike on his way to Sydney to help Mr. Huie in his campaign. He was young, enthusiastic, and longing to get some experience as a speaker in our cause. How I envied him! He said his name was Whaling. By a singular coincidence, on continuing my perusal of Mr. Huie's account in the *Standard* of his country trip I found the following extract: "The next stop was Coolamon . . . In the afternoon Mr. Whaling, Jr., from Ashfield (which Mr. Huie has several times contested in a State election), turned up. He was working in the district and got half a day off for the purpose. He considered it was necessary that I should have some questions to answer at the meeting, which was well attended. At last I said to him, 'You had better talk to the people yourself.' And he did. It was his first attempt and he did very well. I feel sure we have a fine young recruit in Mr. Whaling."

A WITTY RETORT

Mr. Huie spent four days at Wagga, a fine town where fifty years ago he went to school, and where he had a good meeting. In moving a vote of thanks Mr. Colquhoun, who is now an enthusiastic supporter, told the meeting that just over five years ago Mr. Huie came into his office

and he (the speaker) gave him 2 shillings to get rid of him. The paper for which that was the subscription came along, and at first it was unopened. Then he thought it was no use paying 2 shillings for a paper without reading it. So he read it and he could see how much there was in Henry George: "It was what the country people really needed." In explaining the evils of land monopoly at Holbrook, showing how idle land meant idle men, the secretary mentioned that in the Sydney district there were 80,000 vacant areas adjoining water mains worth £20,000,000. "And how many of them do you own?" said a man with a grave face. "None," I replied; "mine is in the cemetery, and I am in no hurry to occupy it."

THE TOUR REVIEWED

The fourth and final section of the tour was commenced on April 8, and included such places as Corowa, Deniliquin, Leeton (where the secretary was "moved on" by the police), Griffith, where he addressed a meeting of the Constitutional Association on "The Tariff in Relation to Industry," one of the best meetings of the tour, and finally Lake Cudgellico, where he lived for fifteen years from 1883 to 1898, and where the last meeting of the tour was held. During the tour a lot of Single Tax literature, especially "Progress and Poverty," was sold, old subscribers to *The Standard* renewed their subscriptions and new ones were obtained, but above all, wherever the secretary went the local papers, which are much more democratic than the city ones, published interesting reports of his addresses, and frequent letters on the only way in which the social problem can be satisfactorily solved. Mayors and other leading personages were generally available to preside at the open-air meetings, and many a convert has been won from those who, without understanding our creed, were willing to listen to what was said, and it was no uncommon thing for a chairman at one of these meetings to eventually become an ardent supporter of the gospel according to Henry George.

Culcairn and Lockhart, two places visited by the secretary, had only one thing in common—the well-to-do land owner and the landless laborite. Albury, on the border between Victoria and New South Wales, is one of the most favorable centers in New South Wales to proclaim George's teaching. Among those he met at Albury was the wife of the Methodist minister, who was a daughter of the late Edmund Lonsdale, formerly a member for Armidale and one of the straightest Single Taxers in New South Wales who held up our end of the stick in Parliament as no one has done since, and who could always be depended on to convince the farmers that free trade was the best policy for the man on the land. The secretary pointed out that the farmer is not in difficulties because the land is bad. On the contrary, "it is as good as ever and has superior climatic conditions to those prevailing in competing countries. But the land cannot carry hot-house town industries, a multitude of taxes and excessive railway freights

Our appeal to the people is to wipe out taxes, use land rent as a public revenue, and so put things upon a free and natural basis."

PERCY R. MEGGY.

Thirroul, N. S. W., Australia.

Official News of Canberra

THE following is a letter addressed to our Australian correspondent, P. R. Meggy, by Mr. G. D. Burgess of the City Administration Department of the new Australian capital:

I desire to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of July 22nd, 1931, together with a copy of the May-June, 1931 issue of LAND AND FREEDOM. The interest you have shown in Canberra, by writing the article for a journal of world-wide circulation, is appreciated.

Your facts appear to me to be right, and the story of Canberra is told in a favorable light. However, there is an error in a paragraph at the bottom of page 74 which may give a wrong impression regarding the site of the City. The highest hill within the Canberra City Area is only 2,762 feet above sea level. This is Mount Ainslie in the northeast corner. Another, Black Mountain, is 2,658 feet above sea level. The average height of the Canberra City Area is about 1,900 feet. Some confusion may have occurred between the height of hills in the City Area and the mountains on the western boundary of the Territory, the highest point of which is Mount Bimberi, 6,264 feet above sea level. The actual height of Mount Srtomlo—not "Stromolo"—is 2,567 feet. The river running through the site of the City is spelt "Molonglo," not "Mononglo."

In the paragraph relating to provisional buildings the impression appears to have been given that a War Memorial Museum has been erected, but this is not so. Although the construction of an Australian War Memorial and Museum has been proposed and a building scheme prepared, it has been deferred for reasons of economy until the present financial depression has lifted. There are, however, several public buildings in Canberra which are worthy of being noted besides the Parliament House, Government House and the Prime Minister's residence. The most notable of these are:

The Australian Institute of Anatomy, which contains a museum housing the collection of unique samples of Australian fauna presented to the Commonwealth by Sir Colin MacKenzie, the first Director of the Institute.

The Entomological Laboratories and Administrative Buildings of the Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research.

The Australian School of Forestry, which was established in the Territory for the training of expert forester; and

The Albert Hall, which serves the purpose of a Town Hall and a Theatre for dramatic and musical entertainments.

THAT we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us—that we should respect the rights of others as scrupulously as we would have our rights respected, is not a mere counsel of perfection to individuals, but it is the law to which we must conform social institutions and national policy if we would secure the blessings and abundance of peace.—HENRY GEORGE.

Report of Lectures and Work of James R. Brown

HERE is an account of our lecture work from the date of the last issue of LAND AND FREEDOM. The report ending July 20 gives a record of 154 lectures up to that date, with auditors numbering by count 15,489.

The unusual heat of the past summer had the effect of lessening the number of meetings and speeches, but we can report thirteen addresses from July 20 to Sept. 8, as per this list:

July 21....	Gladstone, N. J.....	Chamber Commerce
July 26....	New York, N. Y.....	Radio Talk
July 30....	Perth Amboy, N. J.....	Exchange Club
Aug. 2....	New York, N. Y.....	Radio Talk
Aug. 9....	New York, N. Y.....	Radio Talk
Aug. 11....	Tuckahoe, N. Y.....	Lions Club
Aug. 13....	Hackensack, N. J.....	Kiwanis Club
Aug. 16....	New York, N. Y.....	Radio Talk
Aug. 23....	New York, N. Y.....	Radio Talk
Aug. 26....	Asbury Park, N. J.....	Rotary Club
Aug. 30....	New York, N. Y.....	Radio Talk
Sept. 3....	Caldwell, N. J.....	Kiwanis Club
Sept. 8....	Port Washington, N. Y.....	Lions Club

As a result of the radio addresses we have received about 100 letters asking for literature as to the Single Tax, and also some personal visits to the office for literature and further information.

Our newspaper work has gone on in the same satisfactory manner as at the start, and the newspaper treatment of my addresses has been kind in attitude, generous in space. Unsolicited letters of appreciation of our work are regular and constant, and indicate growth of an enlightened opinion as to what the Single Tax really is and what it would do as a solvent of our social troubles.

We have many calls ahead of us to respond to and to tell the wondrous story; and one thing is certain—if we state our case plainly, in language that the hearers use and can understand, and without any tinge of fanaticism, in due time we will have no dearth of believers and advocates, particularly among persons who have the advantage of some degree of education.

This summer we were delighted with a visit by Prof. Herman Thomas, of the University of Richmond's economics department. He was accompanied by his wife and sister-in-law—a trinity of real Virginians. I am from away up north, but I must confess I like Virginians—that good old Saxon strain has a courage and strength in it that counts for progress. Prof. Thomas is a sincere and intelligent Single Taxer. We lecture to his classes on the occasions of our annual visit to the University of Richmond. I am frequently told that the students and faculty enjoy my visits. If so, I rejoice.

Another visitor this summer was Prof. Joseph M. Klamon, of Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. This man, only thirty-four, with a splendid academic training as a background, promises great things for the Single Tax.