

not efficiency as is now the case and rates would be lower for many properties because the burden would be properly shared. Employment throughout industrial Wales would be stimulated as a result of falling land prices when speculatively-held land was put on the market.

One would imagine that these advantages would in themselves be sufficient to recommend site value rating to Welsh legislators.

CONTRACTION OF WELSH CITIES

For good measure, here is another advantage even closer than the others to their hearts. As a result of this system, the larger cities in Wales would actually contract in size.

Those harassed men, the townplanners, would not have to fight continuing rearguard actions on our hedgerows and in our ditches to save tracts of agricultural land. No one would want to encroach on it, because land would be available within the city itself.

Density ratios have greatly increased in Australia and New Zealand towns where site value rating has been introduced. Quite apart from the advantages accruing to Welsh industry and the population at large from site value rating, it may well also prove to be a way of preserving what is left of the greener parts of the Principality.

French Traders on "Georgeism"

The official Minutes of a meeting held on November 16, 1960 by the Sète Chamber of Commerce contain a remarkable entry here translated and condensed. Sète lies roughly 70 miles west of Marseilles on the Gulf of Lions.

THE TAX ON THE VALUE OF LAND

IN its concern to promote a fiscal system capable of bringing about a veritable economic revolution, favourable to the spirit of enterprise, the Chamber of Commerce of Sète registers its cognizance of the principle of Georgeism.

Almost all taxes, in France and most other countries, are collected by methods injurious to production, both agricultural and industrial, to building and to commerce, thus lowering the consumers' standard of life; methods which lend themselves to many frauds often incapable of detection and so frustrate the collection of resources answering to the requirements of the nation.

As taxation represents the legitimate share of each citizen to the general expenses of the nation, or the payment by each for the services rendered to him by the community, it follows that taxation should be distributed equitably.

Henry George (1839-1897) the American sociologist, and in France A. M. Toubeau (1836-1890) of the "Metric Tax", recognised that man's relation to land is the primary social consideration; land, they asserted, being the basis for all effort either for work or leisure. Starting from this consideration they conclude that all existing taxes should be replaced by rent assessed on the value of land only, periodically revalued in town and country.

The governing principle of their contention is that "justice is the basis of taxation". Land, the indispensable support of all men, whatever their activities, is limited in surface while the population of the globe grows unceasingly. It is imperative to prevent some persons monop-

olising too much land, leaving others to die of hunger or exist in poverty owing to lack of the surface they need. The obligation on each occupier of a site, to pay its value, as assessed, to society would make land monopoly — practised today even to the extent of leaving it, for speculative purposes, out of use — impossible. The principle is to tax the socially created value of bare land and relieve from taxation all value produced by the owner of each estate.

It is thus important to determine this social value of land. The social or economic value is the value of land itself, taking no account of buildings or other improvements on the particular site, but considering the needs of society as a whole.

The denser the population in any district, so the situation becomes more valuable to individuals and families. This situation potential, or social value, grows continually, independently of the interests of individuals alone or in voluntary combination, and it offers fiscal opportunities of which the State must make use in moderation but with full understanding of the cause which provides them. The State, according to its needs and current necessities, has the right and duty to appreciate the importance of this situation potential and to collect it annually by means of a tax. An assessment must be made in each district to fix the basis on which the tax is to be imposed. (The unit of surface in towns could be the square metre and in rural areas the hectare.)

This tax formula is entirely different from that kind of "land tax" which taxes the income received from land and buildings, and as it applies only to the area occupied by the taxpayer the rate will rise with the impetus given by the abolition of other taxes.

The owners of large estates under-developed or unused will certainly pay more, likewise the owners of town land; but in the great majority of cases the reform will

undoubtedly be an advantage; for example the improvement of existing homes would not entail an increase in the value of the situation, neither would the erection of new buildings of several storeys. On farms a tax based on the surface occupied, instead of on the income, would become a stimulus to agricultural production.

This tax, falling with less weight than present taxes upon production, and on a much extended production, would not entail an increase in the cost of living. Among other appreciable advantages the collection of revenue would become so simple that the cost would be reduced and the impossibility of concealment would eliminate fraud.

An important objection to this system can be raised by asking how those who are not owners of land will make their contribution to the revenue. But these by all their activities, for housing, food, etc., will continue to pay the possessors of land and will thus participate indirectly in the taxes paid by the latter. For these reasons, and in view of the fact that several countries, notably Denmark, have successfully applied the land value tax to both urban and rural land, the Chamber of Commerce of Sète expresses the hope that among the proposals to be examined by public authorities the Georgeist system will not be overlooked but studied with the closest attention.

E. ORSETTI, *Chairman.*

TRADE UNIONS — Continued from page 61.

branch of the Electrical Trade Union. Copies have been sent to the local Town Council, the Conservative M.P. for Eastbourne, Sir Charles Taylor, and the T.U.C.

Two or three swallows do not make a summer, but, changing the metaphor, this could be the thin end of a hefty wedge. Active trades unionists, other than those deluded by Marxist propaganda, ought to be in the van of the campaigns to remove homes and working places, goods and earned incomes out of the tax gatherers' reach.

ATTACK ON PLANNING AUTHORITY

At a Brains Trust meeting held by Littlehampton Conservatives (*Chichester Observer* report, March 3), the deputy chairman of Chichester division of the West Sussex Magistrates attacked the West Sussex C.C. planning authority. An architect by profession, Mr. Stanley Roth said he had once served for three years on the Planning Committee and had never been so appalled in all his life. "For 99 per cent. of the time

the Committee said 'Yes' to everything the officials suggested. Something a little democratic is needed."

Mr. John Chapman, a county councillor, described the County Planning Committee as "nothing but a West Sussex Country club set aside for landowners". He said that even county councillors found it hard to find out what exactly was going on at County Planning meetings. "There is a sub-committee with executive powers," he said, "and despite our appeals they have refused to allow other county councillors to listen in on matters concerning the areas they represent."

Mr. Roth said he thought the Town and Country Planning Act should be abolished. "It was introduced by the Socialists and will lead to Communism," he said. Mr. Chapman indicated his support for any move to amend the Act.

RATING RETURN FOR 1960-61

A RETURN of rates and rateable values published on February 15 by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, shows that the average rate levied in England and Wales for 1960-61 was 19s. 10d. compared with 19s. in 1959-60.

The rateable value of all property at April 1, 1960 was £702,373,000 compared with £687,618,000 at April 1, 1959, an increase of 2.1 per cent. Receipts of local authorities from rates in 1960-61 are provisionally estimated at £675,000,000 compared with £648,000,000 in 1959-1961.

The estimated product of a 1d. general rate for 1960-1961 was £2,842,200 compared with £2,764,300 in the previous rating year. The amount of rates estimated to be collected per head of population was £14 17s as against £14 1s. in 1959-1960, an increase of 5.7 per cent.

There were rate increases in 1,120 areas, no change in 203 and decreases in 145. 538 of the increases and 119 of the decreases were less than five per cent.

Detailed figures from each local authority area show that the two highest annual rate poundages for urban authorities during the year under review were Blaenavon and Rhymney, Monmouthshire, each with a rate of 29s 8d; but Nantyglo and Blaina, also in Monmouthshire, had a rate of 15s 3d for the first half year.

Bournemouth with a rate of 13s. 6d. (no change from 1959-60) was again the lowest rated borough in England and Wales. The lowest rated urban districts were Wickham, Durham, and Yiewsley and West Drayton, Middlesex, each with a rate of 16s 4d. Their rates in 1959-1960 were 16s 8d and 15s 6d respectively.