

Our Canadian Letter

THE Conference of Dominion-Provincial premiers, convened in Ottawa last January to consider the report of the Rowell-Sirois Commission, split on the second day of its deliberations. Three provinces—Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia—would not enter into discussions on the basis of the plans of constitutional changes proposed in the Commission's report, so Prime Minister Mackenzie King terminated the proceedings forthwith. While official consideration of the report is shelved for the duration, it will be discussed on the hustings, for the Manitoba legislature has been dissolved, and a provincial election called for April 22nd. The Manitoba premier was the most ardent proponent for carrying the Sirois proposals into immediate effect. It is a moot question whether the findings of the Commission arose out of its report, which provides a great deal of ammunition that Georgeists can use to advantage against the present fiscal system. It is to be hoped that much of the Commission's work can be salvaged.

CANADA AND THE LEASE-LEND BILL—Parliament has resumed and is considering the war budget as this letter is written. Some opponents of the Lease-Lend Bill (now happily adopted by Congress) claimed that the United States were being asked to do more than Canada, who, it was inferred, was not nearly so altruistic towards Britain. The answer to that, of course, is that Canada has been all out in the war from the start. The government is asking Parliament for \$1,300,000,000 for war purposes alone. We do not number more than 12 million people as compared with 130 million in the United States. President Roosevelt has asked Congress for \$7,000,000,000 to implement the Lease-Lend Bill, so Canada's war effort is fairly commensurate. In addition, the normal cost of government, estimated at about \$500,000,000, must be provided for, and there are other commitments arising out of the war. Altogether the federal financing is likely to run to \$2,500,000,000 this coming fiscal year, a considerable part of which will be raised by borrowings, or through taking advantage of the provisions of the Lease-Lend Bill.

Unfortunately for Canada, our taxation system makes the load in a time of stress all the greater. A suggestion of the Henry George Society to the Finance Minister that the federal authority should levy a land value tax after the fashion of Australia and New Zealand has elicited an official reply, firstly to the effect that the government regards land value taxation as the preserve of the municipalities, and, secondly, that the Rowell-Sirois report does not recommend such taxation. If, however, that Report is to be the criterion, then the Finance Minister should abolish all consumption taxes.

THE ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY—Negotiations regarding this huge power development project are nearing the stage

where a treaty will be signed between the United States and Canada. There is a suggestion that the Dominion government may adopt it as a war measure. Land values in the affected areas will increase, but neither the federal authority nor the provincial will get the benefit of these values under the present set-up—they will continue to be privately appropriated. The province of Ontario will have to rebuild a considerable mileage of highway due to the flooding along certain portions of the river, and several towns will have to change their sites for the same reason. Stiffening of land values is already reported in the areas to be affected.

RENTAL CONTROL—The Ontario Property Owners Association passed a resolution of protest against the "continued refusal of the Wartime Prices Board of the right of owners of residential properties to a moderate, basic return on their investments," and the Dominion Mortgage & Investments Association wants the basis of rental control to be changed and a "fair return to landlords" principle adopted. The fair return is to be based on the investment, but the questionable part of the investment may be the speculative cost of the land in some boom period. It is amazing how much urban real estate in Canada is administered by trust companies, hence the interposition of the Mortgage & Investment Association.

The Property Owners Association further deplores the "continuance of the policy . . . of encouraging war profiteering by tenants at the expense of property owners." Now that there is a boom in rooming space, the landlords inject a sour note because the tenants have a chance to make a little money, for which incidentally they furnish service, which the land speculator does not. A disgruntled landlord wrote a letter to the *Ottawa Citizen* and some of his remarks are worth perpetuating for museum purposes. "Rental control," he says, "was not invented for property owners . . . Rental control was created for a superior race, the tenant. Tenants are, in many cases, tenants that they may travel unhampered by property from place to place, taking advantage of the highest salaries." Sour grapes! —HERBERT T. OWENS.

The Antioch Review

THE first issue (Spring, 1941) of the new quarterly, *The Antioch Review*, has come to us. This excellent work is edited by a group of men at Antioch College, though it is not an official publication of that institution. The *Review* is frankly dedicated to the struggle of democracy in the present-day world and to the quest for a sane and democratic post-war reconstruction. The editorial board includes our good friend, Dr. George R. Geiger, Professor of Philosophy at Antioch. Dr. Geiger's contribution to the Spring *Review* is an article, "Philosophy and Social Change," in which he eloquently reiterates his plea that philosophy choose the course of realistic effort in making this world a better place to live in.