

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The Fourth International Conference to Promote the Taxation of Land Values and Free Trade will be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in July-August, 1929. The Conference will be convened by the International Union, which invites membership from all who accept and approve its objects—the promotion of Land Value Taxation and Free Trade as taught by Henry George. Membership subscription to the Union is voluntary and application for enrolment form may be made to the offices of the International Union : 11 Tothill Street, London S.W.1.

## AUSTRALIA

## The Benefits of Land Value Taxation

(Leading Article in *PROGRESS*, Melbourne, 1st February)

On Thursday, 12th January, at the Henry George Club, Melbourne, the following motion was carried:—

“That this meeting of the Free Trade and Land Values League repudiates the implication in the articles which appeared in *Progress* for September and October last, to the effect that the Land Values Taxation at present in existence in Australia has failed to mitigate the evils of Land Monopoly.”

We wish to make it clear to readers that the articles in question were written by one of our members, a very old and valued member, but one who has not been in such active touch with the movement as he was some years ago.

Advocates of Land Values Taxation in Australia do not consider that the Rating and Taxing of Land Values such as we have in Australia is an economic panacea. All they claim is that it implies a recognition of these values as community values, that the diverting of some of these values from the pocket of the private holder to the public owner accomplishes something, for it lessens the burden of taxes on industry, it tends towards the throwing of land into use, and it is a factor in increasing prosperity. To assert that the great efforts made by Georgeists in Australia, which have resulted in more than £20,000,000 per annum being abstracted from landlords, have had no effect and no result is simply absurd and quite untrue. Even to have the right to take portion of the community created values asserted by legislative bodies is an enormous advance.

The present status of Canberra and the Federal Capital Territory, where there is no alienation of land and consequently no landlordism, and where practically the whole economic rent is taken by the Federal Capital Commission, is due largely, if not wholly, to the efforts of Georgeists, both inside and outside Parliament. Likewise the fact that the greater part of the huge State of Queensland is inalienable land is the work of those who believe in the Single Tax and who are wise enough to seize any position that makes for an advance towards the ideal. Surely it is false to state we have accomplished nothing.

The Taxation of Land Values has two tendencies: one to cheapen land, and another to enhance the value of land through the increasing prosperity which follows the untaxing of industry. The Rating and Taxing of Land Values in Australia has undoubtedly been one of the causes of its great prosperity.

We do not assert, of course, that high land values are a good thing; we merely assert that general prosperity helps to bring about high land values, and we Georgeists in Australia are perfectly certain that if it were not for the Taxation and Rating of Land Values the price of land might be much higher, even though prosperity would not have been so great.

There is unemployment here we acknowledge, and we are aware of the only remedy; but it is quite easily shown by anyone conversant with the facts that unemployment in Australia is mostly due to a tariff wall and other restrictive legislation which is strangling industry, in spite of the stimulating effect which the Rating and Taxation of Land Values has had. It is only because

Australia has potential wealth in great amount and vast areas of free and cheap land and Taxation and Rating of Land Values that it has been able to stand the strain of the greatest economic fraud in our times.

The comparison of Queensland and New South Wales, where there are no rates on industry and only on land values, with Victoria, where there is practically universal rating on industry, is sufficient to show that 2d. to 6d. in the £ has a very appreciable effect. The progress made in housing, health, etc., in Queensland and New South Wales as compared to Victoria is very striking indeed.

The mere fact that the present Tory Government of Australia reduced its land tax by 10 per cent shows that Land Values Taxation has an effect. The landlords are constantly pressing for its abolition, and it was the intention of the present Government to abolish its land tax; but such intention was abandoned as they were aware of the strong opposition that Labour and other Parties would make.

Every campaign for Rating of Land Values in Australia is fought by landlords with great bitterness and lavish expenditure.

It is a matter of statistics that there is more progress in housing, etc., in Queensland and New South Wales, where rates are all on Land Values, than in Victoria where rates are mainly on improvements.

There is a greater general and proportionate increase in the number of houses; the houses tend to be larger, a greater proportion are built of brick in the two great States rating on Land Values as compared with Victoria. The population has increased since 1910:—

Queensland by 47 per cent; New South Wales by 43 per cent; Victoria by 31 per cent.

The population of New South Wales increased a quarter of a million more than Victoria's in the first ten years of Rating on Land Values. The rural population has since 1910 increased in Queensland by 21,499; New South Wales by 2,958; but in Victoria a decrease of 36,848 has taken place.

The cities are more evenly spread out and there is less congestion where there is rating only on Land Values. As a result of these factors the health of New South Wales and Queensland is better.

General death rate is lower; Infantile death rate is lower; Tuberculosis rate is lower.

Surely all these facts show that the Rating of Land Values has a very appreciable effect. There is no other factor present in Queensland and New South Wales not present in Victoria to explain them—all other factors are the same. Even in Melbourne, where several local bodies have rated on Land Values for the last few years, we are beginning to see the same effects—there is a general uplift in the whole development of such places.

The *British Australasian* of 2nd February reported that during 1927 in the city and suburbs of Sydney, N.S.W., 10,885 buildings were erected at a cost of £14,226,990. Buildings in the city cost £11,431,713, and in the suburbs £2,795,277. Although the value of the buildings for the year was less than that for 1924, which created a record with a total of £14,346,671, it shows an increase of £1,098,268 on the value of buildings erected in 1926.