

Land and Liberty's 100th

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The first British journal dedicated to the philosophy of Henry George was published in June 1894. One hundred years later *Land and Liberty* is still publishing and values its large international readership. Centenary celebrations took place on July 2 and 3 in London. Fred Harrison welcomed some 60 delegates and told them that despite 100 years of persuasion towards an equitable tax system in the UK, the philosophy was virtually dead. *Land and Liberty* continues to be published but while there were many highlights and some successes, these failed to reverse the trend. Nobody was listening. Economists believed the Georgist philosophy was dangerous!

Health and Wealth

But if a body is "dead," how do you bring it back to life? You whack it on the heart! Today, Fred Harrison told his audience, there was hope, following work that had taken six years to complete. He introduced the first speaker, Dr. George Miller of the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine, who said he had been working on diseases of the heart at the Medical College of St. Bartholomew's in London. He chose as his subject "The Health and Wealth of the Nation. "

Dr. Miller described his work and outlined the history of the welfare state in UK which had its beginnings in the late 19th century during the time of Gladstone. David Lloyd George's Old Age Pensions Act in 1908 and the National Insurance Act of 1911 laid the foundations for social welfare. Since 1874 figures had been kept to show deaths by social class. It could be seen that the survival rate of children born to "peerage families" compared favorably to children in general; poor children died 29 1/2 times earlier. Work had been done on the classification of people into five social classes, looking at ages and causes of death, the big killer was heart attack. Taken over four generations the death rate was three times higher for early deaths in the lower grades than in the top grades.

Dr. Miller presented much interesting data to prove that chronic sickness was more evident in Class V because of conditions of poverty, stress levels, financial worries and poor housing.

Since 1921 the gap between the health of the rich and the poor had been getting successively wider. Why had the Welfare State not been able to close this gap? Dr. Miller thought that Capitalism had "gone up the wrong road." The Welfare State had failed in its expectations and inequalities between social classes were today getting worse. It was, he said, not simply a British problem.

Future Prospects

The next speaker, author James Robertson, called his talk "Welfare, Environment and Development: the New Political Relevance of the 'Rental Principle'." He pointed out that for many years Land Value Taxation had not been treated with the respect it deserved. Politicians were prisoners of the system they knew and would not listen to other ideas or broaden their vision. Mr. Robertson had been educated as an historian and economist, and had spent 20 years in Whitehall. He spoke of the great benefit that could come from a shift of tax off incomes and profits, and on to land value. He was in favor of a tax on energy - a Carbon Tax - in a bid to reduce pollution, and pointed out that there was growing interest in sustainable development. The European Commission, he said, had no idea what to do about extensive unemployment, about the widening gap between rich and poor, or about the growth of social stress and crime. He highlighted the work being done by the New Economics Foundation which had prepared a major Discussion Paper on the way forward and made it clear that the Paper recognized the package of measures it was recommending should be introduced internationally. Georgists were advised to shake off the impression that their ideas were marginal; they were not!

On July 3, Ron Banks, who had recently returned from Moscow, said that his team had found the experience there had influenced their approach to the world-wide movement. He and his colleagues had visited top people including city administrators, mayors and architects. The question they all asked was: "How do we put LVT into practice?"

Mr. Banks explained that the Russians had so much land that they were not interested in it - but they would like to get rid of taxation. The team therefore spoke about "collection of land rent." After their experiences in Russia he felt it was necessary and timely to put the full case for the collection of land rent to the top people in Britain.

Dr. Michael Hudson of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, delivered an address entitled: "Clean Slate Proclamations: from Bronze Age to Post-Capitalist Economics." He spoke of how the United States and other countries were running up massive debts and how economic overheads had become top heavy. He compared the situation with the superior mathematics of the Bronze Age. Public investment at that time was out of the rent of land. Things started to go wrong when taxation was introduced.

Ranging widely over the Sumerians, Greeks, Romans, Ephesians, Egyptians and life in Mesopotamia, and leading up to the economic miracle of 1947 which enabled Germany to undersell other countries, he illustrated how Germany was able to recover from the war after a "clean slate." No country in history, he said, had ever paid off its debt. "Let's change the state of society so that we do not build up these terrible national debts."

After a weekend of solid discussions, the L&L celebration ended with a banquet at the Grosvenor Hotel, arranged by Jose Mernane and her husband, providing an opportunity for the meeting of minds and the renewal of friendships.

FRED HARRISON, ON BEHALF OF CIT (Centre for Incentive Taxation) has initiated a UK Fund. The purpose is to publish a trilogy of books " that will expose the conartistry of the neoclassical economists" who are opposing efforts to establish the reform of land rent for public revenue. Contributions may be made to the International Union and sent to their office.