

*Morning Session—15th August*

CHAIRMAN: MR. W. R. LESTER, M.A.

## HENRY GEORGEISM IN DENMARK: EXPERIENCES AND RESULTS

ADDRESS BY MR. ABEL BRINK

Mr. W. R. LESTER, introducing the speakers who were to address the Conference, referred to his recent visit to Denmark, where he had been much impressed especially by the evidence of prosperity on the countryside. It was generally true that the smaller countries had better conditions; and at the same time these smaller countries were free from all the vast expenditure on military adventures. In his journey he passed through Bremen and was happy to learn that in that city a law had just been enacted for valuing all land separately from improvements with a view to obtaining some part of the municipal revenue by the Taxation of Land Values. This first real step in Germany in the direction of their reform was due to the work and influence of Dr. J. J. Pilder, who was present as a member of the Conference. He said that Mr. Abel Brink was the Secretary of the Danish Henry George Union and a member of the staff at the Danish Land Valuation Department. He would be followed by Mrs. Signe Bjørner, to whom the movement in Denmark was indebted for many great services especially for her able literary work as (late) editor of *DET FRIE BLAD* and other papers.

Mr. BRINK said:—

It was with most profound regret he learnt that Mr. Jakob E. Lange and Mrs. Lange had been prevented from attending the Conference, the cause being the sorrowful circumstances of a railway accident in which teachers at the school in Odense had been seriously injured. Mr. Lange was a pioneer of the movement in Denmark, and the progress they had made was so largely due to his untiring activity that he (Mr. Brink) as a much younger man felt it difficult to take his place and speak instead of him on the subject now about to be discussed.

Looking through pages of history, one must acknowledge that land in Denmark always has been treated in a special way. It was not to be dealt with as ordinary merchandize. In one of our most progressive times, from 1157 to 1241, the public burdens, especially national defence, were borne by the landlords in proportion to the extent of their holdings. Later, some of the biggest landlords got exemption from taxation, but they were still under the obligation to defend the country and to go on foreign service, when the king called. At that time, about 1231, King Waldemar Sejv gave us our first land valuation (domesday book), of course not anything like our present valuation with exact measures of area and value, but still assessing in

downwards, especially out in the country, where the trade unions are weak, are now slowly again going up. Still the high taxes upon industry together with land monopoly are to a great extent keeping men out of work. It is therefore of the greatest importance to continue our reform work.

The next issue in Danish politics is the Taxation of Land Values for local purposes. The late Radical Government framed a Bill permitting the townships and the counties to take up to 2 per cent of land value in local taxation, and to abolish all taxation of improvements. The Bill was not proceeded with; but if it had been carried into law, it would have given the Single Tax movement great possibilities, even enabling the local governing authorities also to sweep away the local taxes on income, which are now a great burden upon the hard-working man and woman.

The present Moderate government has promised to introduce a Bill for the Local Taxation of Land Values, but the Bill has not yet come before Parliament. A draft of the measure has been sent to the Town Councils and the Township Boards for their opinion and advice. In general it may be said that these authorities show some interest in the question. Several of the Town Councils, including those of the biggest towns, such as Copenhagen, Randers, Kolding and Holbaek, have declared that they wish to see legislation to give effect to land value taxation in place of other local taxes.

The work of agitation and education is now so far progressed that the work of realization can begin. We who are younger in the movement are thankful for the great work the elder workers have done. I will not mention names, the list would be too long if it were to comprise all who have been and are faithful to our cause. We wish to emulate them and to work on until our ideal is reached—the publicly created land values to the community and the abolition of all taxes.