

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

(Press Service of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, 94 Petty France, London, S.W.1)

DENMARK

The February issue of *Grundskyld* reports the declaration of the Radical Liberal Party in its municipal policy for Copenhagen. The revenues of the City should be raised by means of a just and democratic tax system of direct taxation by the further levy of rates upon land values, which do not burden labour or consumption, but are taken from the evergrowing land values due to increase of population and the provision of public services. It points out that an increase of the land value rate by one-half per cent would make it possible to reduce the local income tax by 10 per cent. The Party protests against the heavy indirect taxation imposed in the form of excess prices for the municipal gas and electricity and the high fares on municipal trams. This kind of tax on the consumer is undemocratic as it is exacted without any respect to the capacity to pay. It is also irrational and injurious to industry. The demand is made that a tram-ticket should be a tram-ticket and an account for electricity an account for electricity—and not at the same time a camouflaged tax bill. The declaration further urges very strongly that in the disposal or alienation of municipal lands the system be adopted of making over the land against payment of the yearly economic rent (as determined periodically by the periodic land value assessment of the whole country) so that the communally created land value goes to the community.

It is gratifying to notice in this issue of *Grundskyld* that our Danish friends have attached such importance to Mr W. R. Lester's *Unemployment and the Land* that it has been translated and published for general circulation. A review of the pamphlet says: "This is a clear and logical statement that the Henry George Publishing Department has issued, a little book that shows very plainly the deep-seated causes of the serious industrial conditions of the day, and in a sound and convincing way it brings us face to face with the solution of the difficult problem of unemployment. For those who are as yet only partly persuaded in regard to the Georgist policy, the pamphlet will be found of special value and it can also be recommended as a present to those people who are foreign to the movement or who are among its opponents." It is a well deserved and at the same time a much appreciated compliment. Mr Lester's *Unemployment and the Land* (1d.) is published by the United Committee and has reached its fifth edition.

Both *Grundskyld* and the Aarhus monthly magazine of *Retsforbundet* (one of the now fairly numerous organs of the Justice League in Denmark) carry a complete translation of the article by the Hon Charles O'C. Hennessy on "Henry George and Henry Ford," appearing in the November-December issue of *Land and Freedom* of New York.

SPAIN

La Ilustracion Moderna (Madrid) is one of the most important Spanish monthlies, specializing in portraits of the leaders of to-day in Business, Finance and Touring. The issue for November, 1934, has an article by our colleague, Baldomero Argente, on the inadequacy of public relief works to remedy unemployment. A very attractive inset portrait has this editorial comment: "This notable essayist and most talented writer is one of the most outstanding and competent personalities in economic and financial matters as is

proved by his very numerous writings on these subjects which are to be seen in almost all our periodicals and reviews. He was Minister of Food Supplies in the course of the Great War, when his most intelligent leadership, efficient and full of initiative and foresight, showed the powers of the writer and politician, and his energy, competence and upright character made a record of brilliant success in the Cabinet." Such are the disciples foreseen by Henry George in all lands who renounce honours for the truth they have seen, and for which if necessary they would die, as they alter the world.

M. J. S.

THE UNITED STATES

The New Deal—for Whose Benefit?

(A correspondent thinks the following deserves recording in "Land & Liberty." It does. It is taken from the "Christian Science Monitor" of 4th October last.)

Real-estate speculators were charged to-day with having virtually sabotaged the nation's efforts to get its slum clearance and rehabilitation programme under way.

This was the allegation of Mr Edward T. Hartman, state consultant on zoning and planning for Massachusetts, at the conference of federal and state housing experts in Brookline.

He charges some real-estate interests with seeking to profit out of the nation's great humanitarian efforts to bring relief to the inhabitants of subnormal residential areas, by demanding fabulous sums from the Government for slum properties.

Mr Hartman also charges that the holding of idle lands is virtually a criminal offence, resulting in building and land inflation that withholds from the ordinary wage earner the privileges of owning a home.

"Until we remove this vicious speculation in land," the state consultant affirmed, "we cannot expect to conduct business or build homes on a sound, economic basis."

For illustration, Mr Hartman cited a case of land speculation in New York. The real-estate owner's land was assessed by the community at \$107,000. The State wanted to buy it for slum clearance. For some reason, not quite clear, a contract was made for the Government to pay \$800,000 for the property. It was signed by federal officials without knowing what was going on.

A dispute arose, the contract was reanalyzed and the amount of \$500,000 ultimately paid for the property. Mr Hartman explained this profitable venture for the land owner as a rebuke to special privileges. It revealed among other things that many owners of idle lands, through political influence, were able to carry property for years under assessments that represented only a portion of the true value.

A solution for such practices would be a state or community housing authority, according to Mr Hartman, whose business it would be to see that proper assessments are fixed on idle property.

"These people take what they can get," he said, "and usually they are places that break down moral stamina and help light the fires of Communism."

Many of the existing evils, the state consultant stated, could be removed by taxing land on its economic value. Pittsburgh, he says, has turned most of its lands to profitable use by this procedure.