

By ROBERT CLANCY

As 1949 draws to its close we are reminded that it has marked the centenary of the Danish Constitution.

We Georgists like to think of Denmark as "our" country, and the year 1849 played its part in the progress made there toward our goal. It was then that democratic institutions replaced the old aristocratic regime in Denmark. It is true that the constitution was an imperfect instrument and that, as has been observed, it is still in need of revision. But it helped create the right atmosphere toward the achievement of economic democracy.

A political instrument has meaning only so long as it is accepted as a guide by the people themselves. And even when so accepted, a political instrument that seeks the ideal of freedom and equality must be implemented by measures that bring the ideal to reality — otherwise it is "the sound of clashing cymbals."

The Danish Constitution, is in a measure, an expression of the age-old Scandinavian love of freedom. It has helped toward the penetration of responsibility in affairs of state to all strata of society — and thus has tended to close up the gap between "classes."

Land-value taxation fitted naturally into the picture. In the first place, the idea has long been rooted in Danish history. As far back as the days of the Vikings it was known and applied. The influence of Henry George gave further impetus to the movement, and through a process of education the Danish people with their new democratic responsibilities were given to see the justice of the reform.

At the present time there is a national land-value tax, local land taxes, periodic land valuations, and a strong movement to increase the tax so that it will embrace the full rent of land.

Denmark has a long way to go. She is still saddled with the restriction and "social welfare" legislation that burden practically every country in the world today. But with land-value taxation she has taken the first steps toward a reign of freedom and justice. The inspired work of our fellow Georgists in Denmark (who have become a force to reckon with), promises further steps.

And so, in this year of commemoration, we tip our hats to Denmark — the laboratory of land reform and liberty.