

Henry George and Catholics

ATHER DAWSON'S RECENT LETTER, AND INCIDENTS OF THE EDINBURGH CONFERENCE

HERE were many unusual and humanly interesting incidents at the recent Edinburgh Conference of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Trade which brought together the followers of Henry George from many parts of the world. One of the most impressive of these incidents was the reading to the Conference by President Hennessy of a letter handed to him by Mrs. Anna George deMille which she had received from Thomas Dawson, a devout and beloved Catholic of Ireland. Father Dawson was an intimate friend of Henry George and his name figures in a notable chapter of the Life of the great philosopher, written by Henry George, Jr. In the chapter referred to there is a letter to Father Dawson, written under the seal of confidence and privacy, in which Henry George touchingly revealed his inner religious feelings. After his death the letter found its way into the hands of the biographer who did not previously know of its existence. There is no more beautiful nor revealing incident of the life of Henry George than this.

Thomas Dawson, retired from active pastoral service, now in his 80th year, is living in Dublin. In response to a letter from Mrs. deMille he travelled to London to appear before the Edinburgh Conference. She urged him to attend the Conference, but he demurred on account of physical infirmities, and also because, as he explained in a letter:

"A priest cannot take part in the duties of the lay politician and the Finance Ministers unless he is so badly advised that the Bishops authorize him to go forward and lead. And it must be remembered that some very able Catholic men, having great influence, are landlords, but 'good landlords', though the landlord system is manifestly and essentially unjust, *contra bonum publicum*. I have always been willing to be known as having learned from your father in the early 1880's, and as one who has seen the truth of his doctrine more and more clearly in the lapse of time. I would always willingly write and explain and defend—even in print—your father's teachings.

T. DAWSON, O. M. I."

An incident in harmony with the foregoing was the adoption by the Conference of a resolution, giving praise and thanks to J. O'Donnell Derrick, an active Catholic of Glasgow, who has for years been the Scottish correspondent of the *Irish Weekly* and *Ulster Examiner* and who has been indefatigable in his work through this and other newspaper mediums in spreading the teachings of the Henry George movement in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Mr. Derrick, in a letter to President Hennessy after the Conference, wrote: "Father Dawson

has been a tower of strength to me in my Georgian activities. Were I dying, my last words would be—'God bless Henry George's disciples everywhere and may God give the people Grace to realize the truth which Henry George sought to make clear.'"

Land Question Up In New York Campaign

ADDRESSING the two candidates for the mayoralty, Norman Thomas said: "Assuming that both of you are committed, in theory, to the system of more efficient and honest assessment of land values than we now have, how do you expect to recover for the people the land values which society creates? How can you carry through any of your elaborate programs for the city if the landlord is to be the chief beneficiary of every public improvement?"

Under a Socialist administration Mr. Thomas pointed out the cost of public improvements would be paid for largely by special assessments or excess condemnation, or by a mixture of the two, working toward the establishment of the right of the people to the whole economic rent of land. "This rent can be taken by a tax which cannot be shifted by the landlord to his tenants," he added.

"Mr. LaGuardia's list may or may not be wholly correct, but the under-assessment of land, partly as a result of favoritism, unquestionably exists and is necessarily made up for by the over-assessment or over-taxation of other property," Mr. Thomas said.

He declared that, under the present system of taxation and assessment, every improvement to the city helped the landlord, but saddled more taxes on the people.

"The problem in itself is easily solved," the Socialist candidate explained. "Society creates land values. Society should take them by a tax. No injustice would be done by imposing such a tax if the readjustments were made over a period of years. The landlord always takes all the traffic will bear. The tax simply substitutes society for the private landlords as the recipient for ground rents."

—N. Y. *Herald-Tribune*, Oct. 2, 1929.

WE all know that property in the suburbs has frequently been increased in value 500 per cent. or more through such improvements, but our City Administrations have been so short-sighted and so fearful of the political consequences of placing this burden where it should fall, that the land speculators have reaped the benefit that belongs to the car-riders.

—SAMUEL UNTERMYER.

RING out, O bells of Liberty!
Teach men God's Truth that makes men free!
"The Earth is Mine," thus spake the Lord.
Sojourners ye by my accord.

—E YANCEY COHEN.