

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAND VALUE TAXATION AND FREE TRADE  
WOUDSCHOTEN, HOLLAND SAT., JULY 24 - FRI., JULY 30, 1982

THIS was the 15th International Conference on Land Value Taxation and Free Trade counting from Ronda, Spain in 1913. And it was one of the most spirited, with over 100 persons from the U.S.A., Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Denmark, West Germany, South Africa and Australia. The Woudschoten Conference Center, an attractive venue in a bosky setting, enhanced the enjoyment; and two extra-curricular occasions enhanced the interest: 1982 is a Year of the Floriade (a floral celebration every 10 years), and it marks the 200th anniversary of Dutch-U.S. relations.

Concerning the Georgist Movement

The Conference opened Saturday evening with an informal session chaired by R.J. Rennie (Scotland). Siebe Sevenster welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Dutch Georgists. A number of persons gave brief reports on activities in their areas. Lancaster M. Greene told of the work of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, of which he is President. Johan Kristensen (Denmark) said that the Danish Henry George Society is growing a little every year and currently has about 500 members. Knud Tholstrup told of the Denmark's Justice Party and its need for a practical program in order to succeed. Steven Cord reported on recent victories in Pennsylvania cities which have shifted some of the tax from buildings to land. Tim Fielding of Toronto told of plans in Ontario to correct property assessments which are too low. William O. Ranky (Chicago) told of model land tax legislation which was introduced in Budapest in 1917 and which is still on the books but has never been implemented due to political upheavals. George Collins reported on research in Philadelphia to show benefits from land value taxation. Earl A. Hanson, Secretary of the Utahns for Tax Reform, said his organization is asking for a state mill levy on land values only.

On Sunday morning, Robert Clancy, President of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, gave an address on "Fifty Years in the Georgist Movement." He was introduced to the Henry George philosophy in 1932 via Oscar Geiger who was founding the Henry George School, and he has been convinced ever since that the movement needs a continuing vigorous program of education, whatever else may be done; in this way, we are preparing for future campaigns. (V.H. Blundell, chairman.)

Graham Hart (Western Australia) presented a paper on "A United Movement" in which he proposed that Georgists resolve internal differences and develop together a coherent policy to present to the world. In particular, Mr. Hart urged that our reform be presented as the collection of site rent for public revenue rather than the taxation of land values. (Harry Pollard, chairman.)

The balance of Sunday was free time, and a large group got together for sessions on Georgist educational work. The interest in this subject was strong enough for sessions to be held throughout the afternoon and evening. Representatives of schools and organizations in various countries devoted to Georgist education discussed organizational work, publicity, course materials, teaching and maintaining graduate interest.

A Look at Land Reforms

On Monday morning (Richard Clarke, chairman) Fred Harrison, editor of Land and Liberty, offered a look at Belize (formerly British Honduras) in Central America. This country, he said, provides a microcosm of the world where we can prove our hypothesis. There is a maldistribution of land and efforts are being made to solve

the land problem. Belize is an appropriate country for a study and recommendation of land value taxation.

Richard Noyes of New Hampshire (Mitchell Chanelis, chairman) titled his paper "What's Taking So Long?" referring to the Georgist philosophy. A model social unit based on rent for revenue would be a good spokesman for our side. How to get it? We must find the right way to talk to the world and have faith in our philosophy.

A presentation on "Neo-Georgism" was made by Robert V. Andelson, author of Critics of Henry George (Fred Harrison chairing). There is no quarrel with principle, he said, but land value taxation need not be put forth as a single tax where it does not meet social and national needs. In the discussion that followed, most maintained that the rent of land would provide enough revenue for all legitimate social needs.

Arch Woodruff of the Lincoln Institute (with Jessica Baker chairing) told of Georgist influence in China. The teachings of Adolf Damaschke, leader of the German Bodenreform movement, led to the adoption of LVT in the German colony of Kiaochiau in China before World War I. When Chiang Kai-shek set up the Republic of China in Taiwan, he brought in the ideas of Sun Yat-sen, who was influenced by Henry George. The current "land to the tiller" program has worked well. In the discussion, many felt that a straight LVT program would have worked better.

J. L. Geddes of Scotland offered "A New Approach." We should, said Mr. Geddes, demand the immediate collection of the full economic rent. To lessen difficulties, a refund to landowners might be made by progressively smaller amounts year by year until the full rent is retained by the community. (James Walker, chairman.)

Monday evening was devoted to the movement in Holland (Mary Rawson, chairman). W. Costerus discussed "rent" and its meanings. Quesnay saw it as an accrual to land after all other expenses are paid. Ricardo saw it as a differential over marginal land. George said rent arises from value. The word "rent" does not exist in the Dutch language, making it necessary to use a different approach. Mr. Costerus suggested "rentality."

J. J. Post said there is not much of a Georgist movement in Holland. The Stichting Grondvest (Land Charter Foundation) was started to try a new approach. The term "Grondrecht" (land dues) is being tried. Although progress is slow, the councillors of Holland know about Grondvest and its proposals.

In S. Sevenster's paper, "Land Values Part of Wages for Labour," he indicated that labour gives rise to the value of land and it would be returned to them via the community collection of rent.

Discussion focussed on the difficulties presented by language and different social systems; for instance, in Holland the Roman law on land ownership prevails, which is not the case in English-speaking countries. Johan Kristensen approved of "Grondrecht", noting its similarity to the Danish term "Grundskyld." In Denmark, the basic concept is that the land belongs to the people, and Mr. Pot agreed that Roman law should be modified to accommodate this concept.

### International Business

On Tuesday morning, a business meeting of the International Union was held with Mr. Rennie as chairman. V. H. Blundell was nominated to be President of the International Union, succeeding Robert Clancy, and was elected accordingly. Richard Noyes was elected Deputy President, succeeding Dan Bjorner. Barbara Sobrielo becomes Sec-

retary of the IU, with Jose Mernane as Assistant Treasurer. The other officers and Vice-Presidents of the IU in various countries were re-elected.

The "Declaration of Human Rights Based on Equal Freedom," first adopted at the 1949 International Conference, was read by Mr. Clancy for confirmation at this Conference. Most of it was found acceptable, but there was controversy over the presentation of our proposal as "an annual tax on the value of land." Several felt that this did not express the true nature of our ideas. A vote was taken: 25 voted for the adoption of the proposal as is, and 19 against (with several abstaining). The Declaration was accordingly adopted, but the close margin suggests that the wording deserves rethinking. (See editorial comment, p. 1.)

A discussion ensued on the possibility of International Union activities in the Third World. Several thought the term "third world" was too indefinite. It was felt that the IU could not directly be active in this area, but that its best role would be to gather and disseminate information assisting those who are working in various areas to promote our ideas.

There was also discussion on the role of Georgist literature and magazines. Land and Liberty is seeking to develop more public interest via content and increased circulation. Philip Finkelstein (New York) reported on current steps to increase support and circulation for this magazine in the U.S., and he proposed an international editorial board. Other periodicals were mentioned. Steven Cord told of Incentive Taxation, used to influence non-Georgist politicians. Ole Lefman mentioned the Danish publication Grundskyld, and Graham Hart told of the Australian magazines, Progress and Good Government.

At a meeting of the IU Executive Committee, the following decisions were made: IU dues will be increased from £2 to £5 (US \$10). The next International Conference will be held in Cambridge, England in 1984; and in 1986 the venue will be Vancouver, Canada. This two-year sequence is more frequent than in years past, and the feeling was that the rate of developments in the movement warrant it.

#### The Dutch in Africa, America - and Holland

On Wednesday morning, the speaker was G. R. A. Dunkley of Johannesburg (V. G. Saldji, chairman), who told of the history of South Africa whose first European settlers were the Dutch (the Boers) who paid a duty on land. The English taxed improvements but there was a movement, spurred by Judge F.A.W. Lucas, to return to site value rating. There are now 79 towns on this system and growth is greatest in these towns.

In the discussion, the matter of racial discrimination in South Africa was raised. Mr. Dunkley agreed in deploring it, said that some progress has been made and more progress must be made - and that a correct application of Georgist reforms would work a tremendous improvement in this area.

There was also a discussion on the Dutch in America, via a paper by Stanley Rubenstein, "The Dutch, the Patroons and the New World" (chairman, Robert Clancy). The Dutch set up the semi-feudal patroon system in their settlements in America, but this failed because there was so much land, which was eventually opened up. He said that lessons on the land question can be brought out by historical reference, and he is in the course of developing such lessons for high school students.

Steven Cord also spoke at this session on the matter of rights, maintaining that "rights exist from reason rather than from nature." It is socially reasonable that one's rights should be limited by the equal rights of others. In the discussion, several contended that there is a natural basis for rights and that disregarding natural and moreal law brings its own consequences.

Wednesday afternoon was free time, but many opted to go on an organized bus tour of a large section of agricultural land, a "polder" named Flevoland reclaimed from the Zuider Zee (now called IJsselmeer). Messrs. Pot and Sevenster were guides. The Development Authority retains the land for five years and is responsible for the farming. The saying is that "God made the world but the Dutch made Holland."

### Economic Questions

Thursday morning, V. H. Blundell presented a paper on "The Legacy of Inflation and Land Monopoly in Great Britain" (Lyn Nichols chairing). Mr. Blundell defined inflation as "the abnormal increase of the currency", rather than an increase in the general rise of prices. Keynesianism encouraged inflation but recently there has been a reversal. Conservatives have sought to bring down the inflation rate but have not solved the economic problems. Land Monopoly has been neglected and the problems will not be solved while land is left out. In the discussion, several expressed the view that inflation is not an isolated monetary phenomenon but is linked to other factors in the economy, notably land speculation which leads to depression which leads to inflation. Mr. Dunkley said, "Taking out of the economy without putting back in is inflation."

A session on Canada followed, chaired by Ben Sevak (Montreal). Mary Rawson (Vancouver) spoke on resource revenues. Most Canadian population is at the southern border. They are region-conscious and react to disparities in resources. The question of revenue from natural resources has become an issue. Academic and political interest has been aroused and should be encouraged.

Mr. Sevak presented a paper of John Ferguson (Ottawa) who could not be present, on the canons of taxation. Mr. Ferguson argued that other taxes besides that on land values may be needed, but should be subjected to the Georgist canons of taxation.

Harry Pollard (Dorothy Edwards, chairman) told of his efforts in Southern California toward a "Reconstruction of Henry George's Teaching." A comprehensive presentation integrates the various aspects of Georgist teachings, not only as expounded in Progress and Poverty but also his other works including The Science of Political Economy. This is linked to classical economic analysis, to the end that students who go forth may be well prepared in all phases of the teaching.

Another excursion was provided Thursday afternoon, to the nearby town of Zeitz, where the group visited the well-appointed Slot, or Palace, which once served as princely headquarters and has since become the City Hall as well as an interesting place to visit.

### Europe and Elsewhere

The first speaker on Friday, the last day of the Conference, was Raymond Crotty whose paper was on "Taxing Land and Economic Development in Ireland" (R.J. Rennie, chairman). Now teaching at Sussex University, Mr. Crotty plans to go to Dublin on an assignment to study pastoral land. He said Ireland has the same problems as Third World countries - an indigenous culture superimposed with an alien culture, and increasing poverty. This poverty is caused by a misuse of land resources, and the first requirement is property tax reform.

Next, C. Gandil of Denmark presented a paper on "The Rise and Fall of the Welfare State" (chairman, Dan Bjoerner). He quoted Bastiat that the welfare state is a fiction. It started as an assistance program but has evolved into an enormous transfer system. People have tired of it and are going more conservative in recent elections.

Next was Gustav Bohnsack, Surveying Director of Hanover (Ole Lefman, chairman). He presented slides showing building construction in various cities. He pointed out that rentals on lands rented out by the community are too low; also that assessed values are too low, therefore the tax is low. He spoke of the proposal to introduce a program of self-assessment (property owners assessing their own property) but with controls.

The final paper, fittingly on a broad topic, was "Who Owns the Earth?" presented by Philip Finkelstein (chairman, George Collins). This question, said Mr. Finkelstein, should be tackled on a regional rather than a general basis. We should know who owns the earth and how much it is worth. This will greatly assist the movement for the public capture of land values.

The Conference Banquet took place Friday evening, and this was followed by an informal finale. Appreciation was expressed for those who planned the Conference, notably V. H. Blundell, Barbara Sobrielo, Jose Mernane and Lyn Nichols. There was also commendation for our Dutch hosts and delegates from non-English speaking countries who patiently participated in a Conference in a language not their own. Joe Kulsdom, the genial volunteer chauffeur, was thanked; also George Lachner, who generously treated to the wine served at the Banquet. Robert Clancy turned over the Presidency of the IU to V. H. Blundell. Finally, spontaneous remarks by several of the conferees ended the Conference on a high and happy note.

### Special Sessions

The Conference was full enough as planned, but was further enriched by a number of special interest meetings during free time. The education sessions have already been mentioned. In addition there were the following:

A meeting of Danes and others led by Ole Lefman to propose a plan to the Danish Parliament for reducing the income tax via a land value tax. A meeting of Canadians on educational and political matters, organized by Ben Sevac. An outline of research done on Cleveland's property tax, reported by Arth Woodruff. A discussion on rent theory led by Godfrey Dunkley. A meeting of Americans to discuss the 1983 Georgist Conference to be held in California. A workshop on "Targets and Techniques" led by J. Stovin. A meeting of the Council of Georgist Organizations chaired by Mr. Clancy, presenting the proposal to invite participants from countries outside North America - this was well received and will be further explored.

The Conference office attended by Barbara Sobrielo and Jose Mernane was the scene of frequent visits, formal and informal. Much literature was available and an attractive Conference T-shirt was for sale.

Not officially part of the Conference was a literature table manned by Wim Born of Amsterdam which included a thesis by his son Bob. (Wim Born had an article in the Summer 1982 Georgist Journal.)

Many gatherings without a title took place at the end of the sessions in the evening around the bar and on the inviting terrace, sometimes going on far into the night. Paths through the woods invited joggers and cyclists to go for a spin.

On Saturday morning after breakfast conferees scattered promptly since another group was coming to Woudschoten. Some went home directly, some lingered on in Europe for visits and sight-seeing. All departed heuristically inspired for the coming year and looking forward to California in 1983 and/or Cambridge in 1984.

## CONFERENCE HANDBOOK

The foregoing report dwells on the presentations and discussions that took place at the International Conference. A great deal more appears in the written papers, which were circulated prior to the Conference. Conferees were asked to read the papers in advance so that speakers would not duplicate what they had written.

The Conference Handbook, metal bound and paper covered, bears the cover title, 1982 International Conference in Holland - Woudschoten (Utrecht) July 24-30, with a picture of the Conference Center. The Conference Notes are followed by 22 articles contributed by as many authors. There are 238 pages of text.

The Handbook is a monumental work. The articles presented are the result of much study and research; they bring to the reader a great amount of information about past and present conditions and problems, and they present ideas and proposals for future action. The Handbook is truly international in scope; the economic problems of many countries are discussed. It reflects also the variety of occupations and interests of the contributors - lawyers, educators, journalists, businessmen and others.

The Handbook is available for £10 or \$17 from the International Union, 177 Vauxhall Bridge Rd., London SW1V 1EU, England.

- Joseph Jespersen

## PEACE RESOLUTION

At the Pittsburgh Conference, in connection with discussions on war and peace and "The Nuclear Holocaust," a resolution was framed. This was not adopted officially by the Conference, but interested individuals were asked to append their signatures. Several signatures were obtained. The resolution was also introduced at the International Conference and additional signatures were obtained. This is conceived as a beginning effort toward the development of a Georgist presentation, a pamphlet outlining the Georgist position on the causes of war and its prevention. Persons interested in developing this project are invited to write to Mark Sullivan, Council of Georgist Organizations, 5 E. 44th St., New York, NY 10017, USA. The resolution follows:

"We, the undersigned members of the Georgist movement, in accordance with the teachings and social philosophy of Henry George, hereby declare our abhorrence of the arms build-up worldwide and the threat posed thereby to the peoples of the world.

"We declare our opposition to the continued development of all weapons, particularly nuclear weapons, which we recognize as instruments of policy functioning in direct opposition to the Georgist ideals of world peace through prosperity.

"We further declare our wholehearted support for all those efforts of persons and movements aimed at securing world peace through non-violent means - insisting at the same time that peace, to be lasting, must be based on both economic and social justice; and, above all, on free access to the world's natural resources in conjunction with the policies of free trade among the nations of the world. Such economic policies, we believe, will lead to increased production of wealth and a general prosperity shared by all peoples throughout the world."

-----  
"FOR in welcoming Justice, men welcome the handmaid of Love. Peace and Plenty follow in her train, bringing their good gifts, not to some but to all." - Henry George