

LAND-VALUE TAXATION AND ESPERANTO

By PAVLOS GIANNELIAS (Lyon, France).

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The Federal President of Austria, Dr. Joseph Jonas, inaugurated in August 1970 the 55th Universal Congress of Esperanto by a discourse in Esperanto. He said therein: "Esperanto is not only a proposal for daily living, but it is eternally tied with high ideals, with the joint responsibility of nations, with the progress of humanity, with the peace of the world."

And the President of the Universal Esperanto Association, Dr. Ivo Lapenna, said at this Congress: We Esperantists are much more experienced than others on the discord between the great successes of science and technology on the one hand, and the failure of the co-existence of humanity on the other. We should therefore support the most sincere and honest tendencies, regardless from which side they come, aiming at the betterment of relations between every camp."

This once more encouraged me to attract, verbally and by writing, the attention of Esperantists to the best method of taxation as proposed by Henry George in the short phrase: "Abolish all taxation save that upon land value." This remedy is founded on the strict distinction between the three factors of production, land, labour and capital.

On the program of the Congress was a discussion on the theme, "Is the conflict between generations a reality or a pretext?" On this occasion I said that this conflict is one of the numerous pretexts which are always used - either by unwitting heedlessness or by self-interested parties - to escape from answering the problem as to the basic cause of the poverty of the major part of mankind. In all discussions on the subject, the distinction between land as the gift of nature and wealth, the produce of labour, is nearly always concealed by cleverly confusing the terms.

During the Congress I referred to the similarity in the aims of Henry George's land-value taxation and of Zamenhof's Esperanto. I mentioned how Leo Tolstoy enthused over his reading of Progress and Poverty and wrote to his wife: "This is the happiest day of my life. I didn't stop until I finished reading it through." Not only did Tolstoy translate many of George's works, write pamphlets and articles but he also sought to apply George's principles on his own estate by having peasants cultivate the land for their own use, paying a rent to a common fund.

It is interesting that Victor LeBrun, once secretary to Tolstoy and ardent follower of Henry George, is also an Esperantist. Tolstoy himself praised Esperanto for its simplicity and ease.

But Esperanto meets the same difficulties and obstructions that Tolstoy experienced in trying to disseminate George's idea. It is important, in order to bridge the "generation gap" for young people to learn a common language - the logical language of Political Economy as outlined by Henry George as well as the common language of Esperanto.