

## VIGGO STARCKE

*Det Danske Selskab—the Danish Society in Copenhagen (8 Niels Hemmingsensgade) has added to its many informing English publications the new book "Contemporary Danish Politicians" which includes biographies of 45 leading members of various political parties. Among them is Dr. Viggo Starcke, and with due acknowledgments we are pleased to print the Chapter which makes him still better known to our readers. What enhances this tribute is that the author of it, Mr. Poul Hansen, is a keen Social Democrat and in an opposing political camp. The excellent translation is made by Reginald Spink.*



Dr. Viggo Starcke, chairman of the parliamentary group of the Danish Single-Tax Party, published in 1946 *Danmark i Verdenshistorie* ("Denmark in World History"). Foreign influence on Denmark has often been discussed. In this book Viggo Starcke sets out to show Danish influence on other countries—Great Britain, Germany, France. "I discovered that the subject had not been treated before," he says; but regrets that the book covers only the period between the Stone Age and A.D. 1000. This sense of

the unusual is typical of the man Viggo Starcke. He finds what is unusual; and he does the unusual.

It is also typical of the parliamentarian Viggo Starcke. He turns up in the *Folketing* unconventionally and practically dressed as not even the most revolutionary Communist would dare to appear. He speaks in an unusual manner, levelling sharp criticism in a soft voice, making surprising quotations, shaping amusing paradoxes, employing shock metaphors, giving examples from daily life in the drollest manner and in a style often disjointed but frequently stimulating. His form of negotiating and his actions can also be unusual. He stated in committee, as his party's representative, that he could not support Denmark's adherence to the Atlantic Pact—and then voted for it!

Viggo Starcke gets his political interest from his home. His father, Professor C. N. Starcke, was an educational and political pioneer, co-founder of the Danish party which bases itself on the ideas of Henry George. The essence of these is that the land belongs to the community as a whole, and that the user of it should pay a land tax. If to this land tax—the single tax—is added absolute freedom of trade and industry, the State interfering in as little as possible (in this respect the Single-Tax Party is the most thoroughgoing Liberalist party), the harmonious society will arise. Expressed in a nutshell by Viggo Starcke: "What you produce is yours, what I produce is mine; but what neither of us produces (the land) we must all have the same right to."

He has agitated for this idea from his earliest youth—in articles and books and at hundreds of meetings. His first speech was made as long ago as 1913, when he was asked to respond to a speech made to new undergraduates by Georg Brandes. The reason for his late entry into

active politics, at the age of 50, was his career as a doctor. After completing his training he was head doctor, from 1926 to 1946, at a sanatorium, running a private practice in addition. He could not possibly have found time to be a member of Parliament as well. But he wrote extensively, on medicine, social philosophy, history, and especially biographical subjects. His interests are catholic, his knowledge extensive.

In Parliament Viggo Starcke is amiable, willing to compromise, and accommodating in committee and negotiations, and the tone of his speeches is always friendly. But his chief work, as it must be in the case of any leader of a small party, lies rather in debates and in public meetings than on the executive plane, though he can take the credit—thanks to his tactical manoeuvrability—of having brought several of his ideas nearer realisation than they have ever been before. Politically, he is an uncompromising democrat and he has reiterated his sympathies with the Western democracy. But he is not uncritical of that democracy. It has neglected to solve the social problem, because it has neglected to solve the land problem. But half a democracy is better than no democracy, he says. He is the most zealous opponent in the Danish Parliament of government intervention of any kind, and of "red tape." Bureaucracy he regards as the very pestilence. "We have forgotten the difference between government by the people and government by the department," he says. In a period of post-war and post-occupational restrictions and controls, which world conditions so far have allowed to be removed only slowly, such views have no difficulty in finding popular favour. The same applies to Viggo Starcke's very talented attacks on taxation.

In defence and foreign policy he takes an independent line in his parliamentary group, owing to the fact that many pacifists have joined the party because of its opposition to conscription. Viggo Starcke is pro-defence, and a supporter of Danish co-operation in defence with the Western world. He is well versed and deeply interested in international affairs in general.

He has an idealist outlook on social problems; and his lively intellect turns it on the event of daily life and feeds it with the intellectual nourishment given by the great spirits of all times. If Parliament is beginning to tire of listening to his speeches, crowds flock to his public meetings, and he believes in a great future for his party.