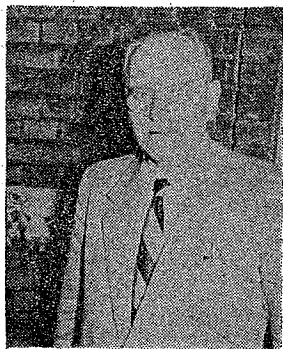


## Free Trade Makes a Blessed Country



Ashley Mitchell visited the Henry George School in New York and was snapped on the terrace outside the director's office. He is standing beside "the British lion," a small decoration in the wall.

ASHLEY MITCHELL of Huddersfield, Yorkshire, was a recent New York visitor, and as always those "in the know" gathered round to hear his words of wisdom and his delightful accent. He commented, after noticing the many accent.

Mr. Mitchell, who is treasurer of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, addressed a group in one of the free trade classes. It was a delightful and unexpected treat for the students. He said he had been on his job for 120 years (promoting free trade). He himself has been at it for nearly 50 years. His father, too, was in the free trade movement in Yorkshire, and *his* father before *him*.

### Freedom Extolled

"Any country that has free trade is a blessed country," Mr. Mitchell told the audience. "It has gotten rid of a nuisance and a primary handicap. If I were ever sent as a representative to speak on behalf of the British government I would say 'You do what you like about the tariff. We are getting rid of ours altogether because free trade is a blessing to the country that has it.' I am a cloth manufacturer. I know if we are a free trade country our costs of production will necessarily be lower than with tariffs. Our production costs, costs of plants, machinery and labor have risen in Britain since we have become a tariff country.

"Free trade is on the ground floor from the manufacturers' point of view," the speaker continued. "Every protectionist country inflates prices when they put tariffs on. Countries with free trade have every advantage over any country that hasn't it. When we had free trade we were described as the 'workshop of the world.' Our manufacturers were on a better and more advantageous basis than the manufacturers of any other country. And so as a manufacturer I would say if other countries are foolish enough to keep tariffs, let them—but I know my own country was better off without them.

### Competition Welcome

"I don't fear competition," Mr. Mitchell affirmed. "You can't put a tariff on to protect yourself in other countries. Free trade in Britain would not only benefit manufacturers but also the mass of people. We had, then as now, the most intense land monopoly, but free trade and open ports raised conditions in Britain from a poverty-stricken people to a country greater than any country in Europe. The people of Britain benefited from free trade because of the increased amount for labor and greater demand for labor, and they couldn't keep wages down. At the same time the cost of living fell so wages bought more. It has been said that con-

ditions of the people of Britain improved four times between 1850 and 1900—wages doubled and the cost of living fell by half—so the benefit was four-fold.

"Now we are a tariff country like all the others of the world," said the Free Trader sadly. "When people were asked to vote on free trade, they always voted for it. In 1901 at a special election the first thing they did was to stop legislation in land values and then in spite of a promise made that this election was not to deal with political issues, they tried to give us general tariff and the people were tricked out of free trade. However, they did vote in favor of it. When the tariff came in 1923 there was a clear majority for free trade. When the war ended in 1945 the first essential was that our ports should be open and there should be free trade. Tariffs were maintained—controls and quotas were put into effect. We have only reduced them slightly."

### A Two-Way Street

Mr. Mitchell believes any country that wants imports also wants exports. "We are told we have to secure as many dollars as possible because they are the very acme of controls," he said. "Then they complain there is a dollar shortage! They make us work under an artificial system of controls. We have seen in the last ten years Socialist ministers and Conservative ministers (who confess to being opposed to Socialism—they are only a branch of Socialism) and each government, whether Socialist or Conservative, tells us exactly the same thing. We are told that we must import less and we must export more and at the same time we must work harder and consume less. That is a nice thing for a spokesman of the government to say to the country!

This shows how the people have been trampled down by controls. If a message like that had come years ago there would have been a general election and the officials would have been kicked out. Statesmen foolish enough to say that would have been laughed out of the country. It reminds me of a story of a man who kept a donkey. Every day he reduced the donkey's rations until he finally got nothing. Then the donkey died!

### Tariffs Protect the Few

"I think I have said enough to you about free trade," concluded the visitor. "Free trade is part of the fight for freedom. This institution (The Henry George School) is not merely here to say the ground values should go to the community. We are not following Henry George merely to have a new form of taxation—we are doing it because of the effects of collecting land values. It's the same way with free trade. We are only here because we are trying to promote human liberty and human freedom."

A tariff can only mean one thing—the Britisher emphasized this—it means that a certain section of people in a country are given power and special privilege by the government to charge their fellow citizens a higher price for products they, themselves, could buy in another section of the world.

"Our tariffs are intended to protect a few at the expense of their fellow citizens," said Mr. Mitchell. "If you never lose sight of that you will never get into any difficulties when arguing with a protectionist."