

## Direct Action Proposal By Australian Georgians

AT THE Fourteenth Annual Conference and Summer School held by the Australian School of Social Science the first week in February at Newport Beach, N.S.W., near Sydney, a Memorandum on Land Tenure was prepared.

It was pointed out that the land of Australia, in theory, belongs to the King alone; however no provision was made in the early days for the Crown to receive any of the future rent of the land granted out. In 1831 the Free Grants system was discontinued. In 1861 the N.S.W. Parliament, faced with agitation for land, owing to land monopoly and unemployment, passed an act known as "Selection Before Survey." After 22 years the condition was found to be worse than before, since the large estates had grown even larger.

In 1891 another attempt at legislation designed to promote closer settlement was attempted, but this also served to provide a grant to land-monopolists and a burden to producers.

Since after all these efforts there is still "in Australia a property-less proletariat, working on the basic wage, without any security of employment and the easy victims of depression and poverty," the Australian School of Social Science made the following recommendations, based on a study of scientific principles:

It is no use to give land away.

It is no use to take it back.

It is no use buying it back to give it away again. What then is the wise policy? To give it away conditionally, the only condition being that the full ground rental be reserved to the Crown.

Great benefits will accrue to the people if this policy is adopted by introducing the following land tenure laws:

All landowners to be left in possession of their holdings without interference or direction.

All landowners to be required to pay to the government the rent properly payable for their lands, excluding all improvements. The rent to be calculated by reference to the rent being paid to the owners by the tenants for those lands or for similar lands, and to be apportioned amongst any local governing bodies in lieu of taxation which is to be reduced to the vanishing point as soon as possible.

The rent to be re-appraised periodically.

Taxation to be reduced as far as the amount of rent collected and all the circumstances permit. It will be found possible, under the changed circumstances, to reduce it to the vanishing point.

THE SAME LAND-REVENUE SYSTEM TO BE USED FOR ALL GOVERNMENT, BOTH NATIONAL AND LOCAL.

The advantages of such laws could scarcely be over-emphasized. They could be summarized as follows:

1. Land-rent is not a burden on production, while taxes are essentially a burden. Production is discouraged, and sometimes stopped altogether by taxation.

2. An adequate revenue for the government is provided without hindering production or producing friction or discontent.

3. Land-rent is more easily and cheaply collected than taxes. It cannot be evaded or passed on.

4. The payment of land-rent bears equitably and justly on the whole population.

5. It will not be profitable to hold land out of use.

6. The orgy of land-speculation and consequential depression is avoided.

7. The justice of the laws is obvious to all who analyze them, and justice is the most important consideration of all.

These proposals have been endorsed by many eminent authorities, and are worthy of the most careful and urgent attention.