

Conference Cameos—Views from the Fringe

Peter Middleton, Australia:

Delegates and visitors will recall a variety of impressions of the 1964 conference with its truly international character and liveliness.

Some twenty countries were represented, embracing a strong infusion of non-white people, among whom we shall all remember with admiration and affection handsome George Collins, recently appointed director at the Philadelphia extension; and the ebullient, eager, yet thoroughly well grounded Phillip Wallace, from Jamaica, West Indies.

There was K. B. Sharma, the Indian-born representative of Kenya, with his passionate anxiety to set up a school in Nairobi and to sap the brains of all and sundry for information on how to do it. And who will ever forget the splendid impetuosity of Phil Wallace's response to Sharma's speech by starting an on-the-spot appeal which raised \$200 and several substantial promises. We were thrilled with the story of a lone man's pioneering when the Reverend Archer Torrey told us of his highly significant work in Korea; and fascinated by another such worker, Raymond Crotty, of Eire, who lectures in Agricultural Economics at the University of Wales. He presented a sober view of the agricultural stagnation and population drift in the Irish Republic, despite its governmental policy of subsidized peasant proprietorship. And who will essay a description of the effect on male par-

ticipants, young and old, of the advent of the charming Miss Joke Sevenster. After reading, in excellent English, her father's message from Holland, she artlessly wandered from the mike to the blackboard leaving us with nothing but a strenuous test in lip-reading. Her brief message of farewell, at the dinner in Philadelphia, will be cherished by all who were present.

An event of another kind, not less satisfying in its evocative power, was the arrival of the gay angel Gabriel (Stamper, from Grenoble), in the middle of an impassioned speech by Bernie Donohue. The session was written off for dead from that moment. It will be many a day, I think, before the memory fades of the impact on the conference of its Dinkum Aussie, Bernie Donohue, the cheerful, argumentative iconoclast from Sydney, New South Wales, with his ardor for scientific terminology and his debunking of what to him is an unfounded faith in the success of the popular cult of LVT. The intellectual turmoil created by his intrusion of dissent was fascinating to contemplate. It ranged from shock, through anger and incomprehension to enthusiastic support. The satisfied smile with which he eventually retired from battle conveyed his conviction that it had all been well worth while.

Other highlights were the opening address by the president, in which our genial and well-loved Joe Thompson rocked us with a plan for distributing

Vol. 27, No. 10

October, 1964

The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021, supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

Publication committee: William S. O'Connor, Arnold A. Weinstein and Lancaster M. Greene, chairman. Editor: Alice Elizabeth Davis. Subscriptions \$1 a year; single copies 10c. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.

the surplus rent, when we get it, in the form of a national dividend; the luncheon at which we were given the blessing of the Mayor of New York; the visit to the City of Brotherly Love to view the birthplaces respectively of the United States and Henry George; and the dinner at Temple University where we were treated to a most original address on Henry George's significance as a writer and thinker. Finally there was a closing banquet with stirring speeches by that fine old battling Liberal, Ashley Mitchell; by Perry Prentice of Time, Inc.; and Agnes deMille whose inspiring words lifted us all to the heights. We are all deeply in debt to its two organizers, Bob Clancy and Vic Blundell, and their assistants in London and New York, for an unforgettable international conference.

Dehydrated English Delegate:

It took longer to cross the conference floor than to walk the length of Central Park. One progressed by inches, being button-holed by fellow conferees at every step. Catching the other fellow and dodging the too-enthusiastic became daily more of an art that was not helped by 90 degree heat and humidity. Thank goodness for the ice water, which I had to have explained to me, was for drinking and not for pouring over one's head.

There was one consolation — if you missed an appointment you found your victim, or were found, in McGovern's air-conditioned bar. Here, to be heard you had to raise your voice above the surrounding din. By three o'clock in the morning conditions were better. Those with poor stamina had retired and you could command the floor. Then what you failed to say during the last session could be expressed with remarkable fluency.

The conference was hard on the shy and retiring. Modest people like Harry Pollard had to be dragged to their

feet to say a few words on the single tax. The shyness was a nervous complaint evidenced by their inability, once on their feet, to sit down again. But to be fair, we all had this complaint. There was so much to say—think of it, hundreds of fellow Georgists to be converted to the single tax!

Of course it must be agreed that Americans generally are not yet civilized (except for their remarkable ice water), since tea comes with a sandbag hanging on a string from the cup, and "English muffins" are tea cakes, while milk is "cream" and cream is "custard." The tips plus the tax sometimes seemed larger than the cost of the meal, and two 11-cent stamps set us back 25 cents (from the pecuniary stamp machine). We gave up trying to convert prices from dollars into English money, it was too heart-breaking. But once we learned to think in dollars most things seemed cheap.

Television in one's hotel room was a typical American service. Unfortunately the set in my room worked and it was disappointing to have the advertisements interrupted every few minutes, thus interfering with my cultural indoctrination to American life. The New York taxi drivers are a surly bunch, until you start a conversation, then you get their life story and kindness beams from their faces.

Perhaps the most vivid memory of the U.S. that I shall take back will be of Japan! How come? A visit to the World's Fair included dinner in the Japanese Pavilion. Here was another world. Soft lights, pretty girls and a string quartet. But then this was just the contrast that hit me on a particularly tiring day.

As the events of the last weeks fade there remain the enduring values of firm friendships. Shadowy names so often read in cold print have sprung into life — some larger than life. I find myself thinking of the next conference — it cannot come too soon.