

Tariff Barriers Limit Freedom



ASHLEY MITCHELL of Yorkshire, England, and his daughter, Rhoda, were guests at dinner on June 17th at the Henry George School in New York. Mr. Mitchell is for many of us the closest link to the British Henry George movement, and his visits and messages are always important. It was pleasant to see Miss Mitchell again, and not surprising to hear that she is soon to be married.

Mr. Mitchell referred to the Henry George work in Britain and said that several young men were about to stand for Parliament in the next election on the Liberal ticket. He felt the Liberal party was having a revival after years of slumbering, because people are tired of the other two parties. "True, the Liberal party is not all that we would like," he said, "but it does stand for the philosophy of freedom, and it is possible that this framework offers the only possible place where Henry George's ideas could eventually be introduced.

Mr. Mitchell, who is secretary of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, said that Joseph Fels, an American, left a legacy to Britain with the proviso that the international side of the work would never be neglected. As a result an international conference is now held regularly every three years. A formal constitution was drawn up in Copenhagen and adopted at the conference in Edinburgh. Germany was selected as the site for the 1959 con-

ference because of the importance of "spreading the light."

He said Germany was a striking example of a country which had "benefited from adopting even a little freedom," and has rebuilt itself in an astonishing fashion, mainly due to the fact that Dr. Erhard, economics minister, saw a gleam of light which has helped to carry them forward on the road to real freedom.

No one knows better than this amiable wool merchant the curious inequities practised at the customs borders, and few can speak more objectively of "these stupid barriers we erect against each other."

He reminded us that Henry George was not out for land value taxation but for liberty, "land value taxation and free trade are only the methods." We are in a better position than Henry George because "he would never have dreamed of any boastfulness, but we can boast for him, because we didn't invent it. He will be called the finest inventor of the 19th century because he established the distinction between the law of rent and the law of wages," the speaker said. "We should establish a world so much better than communism that the Communist would want nothing better. We should not be timid in declaring a truth that will defeat all tyrannies and insure freedom."

Mr. Mitchell, who has been speaking for the cause of freedom for half a century, says he is still at it and hopes to be "troubling the enemy"

for another decade or two. The course of his business enables him to knock about the world and meet fellow Georgists, and having recently visited Jamaica, he was able to answer a number of questions.

Asked how this island happened to be so fortunate as to adopt the land value taxation system, he replied that "there were a few friends and politicians of a higher standard than in some other places." They sent a request to the economics section of the UN and an expert who studied their situation advocated removing taxation from improvements and putting them on the value of the land. As a result legislative steps were taken and a bill put through Congress. All the rest has followed from that. The system is not perfect, Mr. Mitchell admits, because "politicians have to dress it up, but nobody can say this thing can't be put into operation or that it won't work."

Asked about the new free trade movement in Europe, the Britisher warned, "don't be carried away by something that sounds all right." This is merely an attempt to establish a larger area (corresponding to the U.S.) with customs duties but with no internal barriers. It sounds good superficially, but it means that Germany, for instance, is saddled with the protectionist sentiment of France. Also, it allows for cartels to operate

over several countries instead of just one. Now still other countries are working to establish one of these dangerous areas. "It is limiting freedom," the spokesman said, "and is something we should oppose."

Mr. Mitchell extended to all a cordial invitation to the forthcoming conference in Hanover, Germany on July 25th. Robert Clancy, school director, and Miss V. G. Peterson, executive secretary of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, both of New York, will be among the speakers. Also on the program, from the West Coast, will be Glen E. Hoover of Oakland, professor emeritus of Mills College.

Representing other countries will be: Dr. Sven Rydenfelt of Sweden; Philip Knab of Austria; Dr. Martin Pfannschmidt and Erich Zincke of Germany; Dr. D. B. Ascher of Israel; Dr. Viggo Starcke and Agnar Christiansen of Denmark; and Ashley Mitchell, V. G. Saldji, John Kemp, Miss Shirley-Anne Sanderson and A. Haviland-Nye of England. There will be messages from two former presidents of the International Union: J. Rupert Mason of San Francisco and the Honorable F. A. W. Lucas of Johannesburg. Among special features of this delightful conference will be the introduction of a new edition of *Progress and Poverty* in German.

THE LABOR QUESTION, 47 pages.....25 cents

This is an abridgment of *The Condition of Labor* by Henry George, skilfully made by Harry Llewelyn Davis of Scotland. The new, attractive reprinting by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, of George's famous treatise of 1891, deals with the relationship of employer and employee, the proper wage scale, and just returns for capital and labor. Prompted by Leo XIII's encyclical on labor, Henry George sought a fundamental remedy that would remove the tensions which then as now troubled labor and capital. This booklet presents a clear picture of his proposed partnership which would be fair to both. Order from The Henry George News, 50 East 69th Street, New York 21, N.Y.