

Aneurin Bevan indicates a revolution in thought among those members of the Labour Party frank enough to admit to themselves that nationalisation has proved a failure. If Labour supporters are prepared to study the problem of property distribution objectively, without jumping to Socialist conclusions, valuable results are to be expected. They may be led eventually to see the essential difference between property which is the work of men's hands, and property resting only in the legal

power of extracting tribute from the producers. Examples of the latter form of property are myriad, and they have been multiplied, not reduced, under Labour Government; but the most flagrant and far-reaching is the legal power at present possessed by private persons of claiming part of the earth's surface as their exclusive property, and, in consequence, exacting a toll from those who desire, and are in effect compelled, to use it.

F. D. P.

HENRY GEORGE AND HIS SIMPLE REFORM—By F. R. Jones

English Version of Esperanto Radio Speech, Radio Roma, 22nd August, 1951

In my last radio speech, entitled "The Prophet of San Francisco," I gave a short sketch of the life and writings of the famous American thinker, Henry George. I propose now to demonstrate more fully the greatness of this man and to explain his simple reform and its effects. I can do this best by presenting some outstanding quotations.

At Henry George's funeral JOHN SHERWIN CROSBY well said:—

"Henry George believed in the Declaration of Independence; accepted the self-evident truth of its sublime preamble that every man has, by the very nature of his being, certain inalienable rights; rights derived not from governments; rights, of his absolute, indefeasible title to which no government or established order can deprive him; rights, chief among which is the right to a place on earth. He saw that one man has as much and the same right on earth as another, and that if one man has as much right as another, no man can have more right than another.

"This man was no dreamer. He had no plan for remodelling the state or reconstructing society. Plato in his *Republic*, More in *Utopia*, Bacon and Bellamy have given us visions of society arbitrarily moulded according to man's finite conception of what it ought to be. They proposed to deal with results rather than causes—giving little thought as to the feasibility or justice of means by which their dreams were to be realised. Henry George, on the other hand, in his great book *Progress and Poverty*, began with fundamental principles and proceeded by logical deductions to inevitable conclusions. And no man yet has ever answered him."

The most logical of thinkers, Henry George nevertheless profoundly loved his fellow-men.

As also at the funeral the REVEREND LYMAN ABBOTT, D.D., explained:—

"Industrial injustice he did not look upon as an irremediable wrong. He did not study economic questions in the quietude of a library; he plunged himself into life. He identified himself with those whose wrongs he suffered as though they were his own. He interpreted those wrongs through his own strong feelings. He loved truth, but he loved truth most because truth served mankind. He loved his fellow-men, and loved to identify himself with his fellow-men. He served his fellow-men with a consecration worthy of more than our praise; worthy of our imitation.

"With his brilliant talents, with his mastery of the English language, with his knowledge of economic principles, with his rare power of expression, with his genius for arousing enthusiasm, Henry George might have attained almost any position he chose in political life, or in journalism, or in social life, had he been

willing to yield one iota of his convictions, or even to make such compromises as most of us deem it quite proper to make. But he was inflexible when he believed he was right. He never considered the effect upon himself of anything he said or did . . . It would be difficult to find a public teacher who considered less the immediate effect of his utterances, or the effect immediate or ultimate on himself, than did Henry George."

HENRY GEORGE, JR., the worthy son of the great father, wrote:—

"Henry George . . . believed, with all his soul believed, that he had found the way and the only way to rid civilisation of its cancer—its extremes of wealth and want, that lead some to the madness and destruction of vanity, and multitudes into the suffering and brutishness of poverty. He believed the remedy lay in making all men equal before nature by the simple process of letting any who would, hold land, but compelling him to pay its entire rental value in the form of a tax into the public treasury. Each paying the full value of all the land he held, there would be no object in holding land not at once to be used, or in not using land to its highest capacity. On the contrary, all land, used or unused, being compelled to yield to the state its full annual value, the man who held valuable land idle would find that he had to pay as heavily on it as if the land were put to its highest use, since the value of the land itself, not its produce, would be the thing taxed.

"The land value tax would discourage—would kill—land monopoly. Enormous quantities of valuable land, in cities, towns and villages, in agricultural, timber, mining and grazing regions would be thrown open to users. That is, land—good, accessible, valuable land—now held out of use in the expectation that increasing population will be compelled to pay a large advance for it, would become cheaper and easier to get.

"And since all men are land users in some form, this would be a common benefit. Land being at the base of all production, all production would be wonderfully stimulated; and doubly stimulated when, the revenue received from ground rents being sufficient to satisfy the normal needs of government, all other taxes could be remitted. This would remove a mountain of taxation from the shoulders of labour. It would concentrate the revenue burden in a single tax resting upon land values. It would, in effect, give to the producer the full measure of that which he produced, while he that would not work, neither should he eat.

"There then would be no spectacle of some men rioting in superabundance and other men, willing and anxious to work, unable to find opportunity to work. Then some would not be landlords and others landless. Then all would be equal before nature; all would have

the same right to land. Present titles could remain, but the value would be shared by all. Such as possessed land having any advantage would pay the equivalent of that advantage in the shape of a tax into the common coffer.

"This order of things would bring forth a race of free, independent, self-respecting, generous, high-spirited men, who would advance to new and undreamed-of heights of civilisation. With greater and greater ease they would satisfy the animal wants, and give more and more play to the development of the mental and moral natures.

"This was the great idea that filled the soul of Henry George. It was the redemption of the world from involuntary poverty and from its grim daughters, suffering and sin. He had, he believed, pointed the way of salvation, and he was confident that the world would sooner or later come to believe with him."

To quote finally from JOHN SHERWIN CROSBY:—

"As Paul stood on Mars Hill and proclaimed to the Athenians the Unknown God whom they ignorantly worshipped, so this man for the last quarter of a century has stood aloft proclaiming democracy to democrats. I speak not of any party, but of all men who, with Jefferson and Lincoln, still ask: 'If we cannot trust the people to govern themselves, whom can we trust to govern them?'

"Speaking to such men, Henry George has been saying: 'Jeffersonian democracy, which you ignorantly worship, that I declare unto you.' The political party, be it called Democratic or Republican, or by any other name,

that does not recognise the equal right of every man to a place on earth—the government that fails to secure that right—must eventually go down, as parties, governments and civilisations have gone down in the past.

"Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation was not more essential to an understanding of physical phenomena than is the theory of Henry George to an intelligent comprehension of the principles of political economy and civil government. The single tax, or 'natural taxation,' is in reality not a tax burden, not a taking of private revenue, but simply an appropriation by the public of a revenue which, in its very source and nature, is essentially public, and therefore belongs to the public.

"Long ago in the book of Ecclesiastes was it written: 'The profit of the earth is for all'; long ago in the book of Proverbs: 'In all labour there is profit'; and the problem of all the centuries since has been how to effect a just distribution of these two kinds of profit. It was the mission of Henry George to solve that problem—the problem of poverty, the labour problem, the problem that underlies all other social problems.

"And he has solved it. He has pointed out the way, the only way, in which the profit of the earth may be shared by all, the only way in which the profit of labour can be secured to the labourer."

That way—the remedy of Henry George—is the application as quickly as possible of a full tax on land values, instead of the present many bad taxes which thwart production and impoverish the people.

WHAT AVAILS THE WEST INDIES CUSTOMS UNION?

For the millionaire who spends his days sailing, or lazing on the golden beaches of the fabulous Bahamas, the income-tax-free Mecca of the world's rich, the Caribbean is studded with a cluster of emerald jewels glittering beneath the tropical skies. In vivid contrast is the condition of the less fortunate who toil under a blazing sun in the tobacco and sugar plantations, and at the asphalt lakes, for beggarly wages scarcely sufficient to keep them alive. The homes of these workers are in miserable, over-crowded slum hovels. Illiteracy and malnutrition stalk through the Islands hand in hand with a high mortality and a high birth rate. Periodically there are riots. Not for the ordinary West Indian those benefits from co-operation which might be expected to be found in the most densely populated corner of the world. Unable to take freely a piece of land which would provide them with their needs, they are forced to compete one with the other, thus forcing wages down to a bare subsistence level. Many leave their families to seek work in Britain or in the United States. In such circumstances every new child born threatens their already low standards, and adds fuel to the arguments of those who speak of "over-population."

Against this background, the Conference on the Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies, held in Jamaica, September, 1947, recommended to the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Creech Jones, that steps be taken to examine the possibility of establishing a British Caribbean Customs Union. While the Conference failed to recognise the primary cause of poverty and unemployment in the Islands, it rightly emphasised that "the present position in which, for customs purposes, each colony treats the others as entirely separate territories, seriously restricts British West Indian inter-colonial trade as a whole and injuriously affects both

the export trade in particular and the standard of living in general" of the whole area. Accordingly, a Commission consisting of officials and under the chairmanship of Mr. J. McLagen was appointed. After two years' thorough investigation of this highly technical and complicated matter the Commission published in February this year its Report on the establishment of a Customs Union in the British Caribbean Area.

This Report on a Caribbean Customs Union (H.M.S.O. Colonial No. 268, price 7s. 6d.) is an orderly and imposing document of more than 300 pages, including many detailed appendices. It testifies to the diligence and efficiency with which the members of the Commission discharged their duty. We criticise not the work of the Commission but the terms of reference within which they were obliged to conduct their enquiry. These were "to examine, in consultation with the governments of the British Caribbean area the question of the establishment of a Customs Union and to make recommendations with special regard to ensuring uniformity in administration and customs practise; the selection and training of the necessary staff; the preparation of a suitable tariff, having regard to the fiscal problems of the governments whose revenue would be affected by the introduction of a Customs Union; and the special needs of the British Virgin Islands."

Appointed by a Protectionist minister of the Protection-minded Imperial Government, it was the Commissioner's task to show how internal barriers to trade might be demolished without in any way imperilling the ring fence around the whole area. The definition of "Customs Union" given in the Havana Charter, was accepted, namely: "... the substitution of a single customs territory for two or more customs territories so that (i) duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce ... are eliminated with respect to substantially all the trade