

sources should be secured, and that men should be permitted to exchange freely the products of their labour.

Was it appalling ignorance and economic "naivety," or something more sinister, that prompted *The Observer's* contributor to write as though Henry George's ideas and those of the Communist Party were similar? We do not pretend to know. Often, however, such misrepresentation is the stock-in-trade of those who do not care to let pass unnoticed the campaign for land-value taxation and who are unable to refute our arguments.

THE THAMES AT CHARING CROSS

BY A CURIOUS COINCIDENCE, *The Observer* published elsewhere in its issue dated December 9 an article which, if we may borrow the word, was astonishingly "naive" in one respect. Under the title, "Winning Back the River for London," Messrs. R. Furneaux Jordan and Gordon Cullen discussed the desirability of building a new road bridge across the Thames at Charing Cross. To the mere layman the plan was wholly admirable, and the case made for such development was very convincing. It would involve the demolition of the hideous iron rail and footbridge spanning the river at that point, and of Charing Cross Station and hotel and some other buildings. "But," wrote the authors, "let there be no mistake: this proposal or anything remotely resembling it, would be fought to the death by the Southern Region of British Railways, with the full backing of their season ticket holders."

No doubt that is true, but that is a minor consideration. The real nigger in the woodpile is the fantastic cost of land in that neighbourhood. On that matter the authors were silent.

Perhaps we may recall two earlier proposals for bridging the Thames at this point? One was embodied in a Parliamentary Bill in 1930, and was abandoned on the recommendation of the Select Committee to which it was submitted. It was estimated that the whole scheme would have cost £16,865,000, and in evidence before the Select Committee given by engineers of the London County Council it was revealed that no less than £11,126,000 was the cost of land purchase, easement and permanent rights. The actual cost of the bridge, as a bridge, with its approaches, the demolition and rebuilding, and of all works including the total wage bill would have been £5,739,000.

A more ambitious scheme was later recommended by the London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee. This involved the building of a combined road and rail bridge, and consequential street widenings extending to the Elephant and Castle on the south and to the Euston-Marylebone road on the north. A report submitted to the London County Council in February, 1937, estimated the cost at £29,500,000, of which £25,000,000 would have been for property and trade compensation, and £4,500,000 for works. Further supplementary works would have

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been needed to make the scheme really satisfactory, bringing the total cost to £32,500,000, of which about £28,000,000 would have been compensation to property owners. The L.C.C. wisely declined to accept the proposal.

WHY FARMERS ARE SUBSIDISED

A BLISTERING BROADSIDE against protectionist farming policy was fired by Commander Sir Stephen King-Hall writing recently in his *National News-Letter* about the proposed European free trade zone. Sir Stephen wrote:—

"Agriculture is such a sacred cow in an almost impenetrable hide of nationalist self-interest that even inside the Common Market of the six it is likely to be an exception to the general rule of Free Trade, at least for many years. An enormous amount of humbug and tommy-rot is poured out in almost every country in the world in order to prove that agriculture is an activity of so holy and mystical and moral and strategically vital a character that it is blasphemy to link it with such brutal facts as world market prices or economic efficiency. It must, therefore, be subsidised and protected (in each country) lest the farmers of another land, for one reason or another, should be able to provide consumers with cheap food. I have just harvested with some difficulty and sold twenty tons of so-called millable wheat, for which I have been paid £22 10s. a ton. I shall be painfully surprised if I do not receive from the tax-payer a further sum of approximately £130, perhaps more. I hope you do not think there is a wheat shortage in the world; there is a glut. I forgot to mention in my catalogue of agricultural virtues that in many lands the most important of all agricultural products is VOTES. This crop is in fact of no importance in the U.K. (in contrast to the U.S.A., France and Canada, etc.), but for some astonishing reason, successive British Governments have believed there is a 'farming' vote.

"I am for the complete abolition of all subsidies to British agriculture over the next five years. These subsidies are not needed by efficient farmers operating with adequate capital on a sufficiently large scale and I can see no reason why uneconomic small farmers should be kept in business unless they claim to be public pets."

Well said. Elsewhere in the same article, and declaring himself a zealot for free trade, Sir Stephen lends his influential support to the proposed formation of a Common Market and to British associate membership of the supplementary free trade zone. He believes that vested interests will bitterly oppose British participation, but if they can be beaten down by an informed public opinion "a new and splendid chapter of our national story" will have been opened.

We believe that the vested interests in favour of British association are likely to prove more powerful than the vested interests in opposition, and that the scheme will go through, subject of course to the prior formation of a Common Market.