

ALBANY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

ADOPTS LAND VALUE RATING.

Mr. E. F. Halkyard, in an air-letter, May 28th, reports a notable victory for Land Value Rating by its adoption in the town of Albany, Western Australia. Albany has a population of 6,000 and is situated on King George Sound, with a fine deep-water harbour, its industries including butter factories and a woollen mill. The Town Council had been considering the levy of all rates upon land values, with consequent exemption of buildings and improvements, and it came to its decision (by 6 votes to 3) after hearing an address, given a special invitation, by Mr. V. L. Steffanoni, the chief valuer of the combined Federal and State Taxation Department. The address is reported at considerable length in the *West Australian* of April 12th and was remarkable in that the existing system (as it applies in the municipalities of W.A.) of levying rates on the annual value of land and buildings taken together was so roundly condemned by no less an authority than the chief valuer himself. Mr. Steffanoni said it would hardly be possible to devise a system more calculated to check improvements and retard development; it induced slum areas because it caused people to build smaller and poorer quality houses. In emphatic terms he commended the unimproved system of levying the rates on the value of the land alone. He made much use of the study conducted in Footscray (Victoria)* which showed how under unimproved value rating the investment in vacant sites was reduced and diverted to increased investment in buildings, speculation in sites was discouraged and the prices of sites and the costs of buildings were reduced. The method of land value rating was fair and honest.

It is of interest to note that in Western Australia the rural local authorities, the Road Districts, derive by far the larger part of their rate revenue by land-value rating, whereas the urban municipalities have lagged in this progress. Albany, therefore, sets the pace for the reform in the towns.

THE AMERICAN HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL

The School has its large, commodious and well-equipped headquarters at 50 East 69th Street, New York. Its Report for year 1947 comes to us in a handsomely printed booklet. The complete records from all branches had not been received at the time of publication, but it is most enheartening to learn that over 6,000 students enrolled for classes in *Progress and Poverty* throughout the United States and Canada, and over 2,700 completed the course. In addition, over 2,700 enrolled for the correspondence course, of whom, however, only about 10 per cent. complete it. New procedures being instituted, much better results are expected in the present year. Branches of the School are established in Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Boston, Newark, Philadelphia, Montreal, Ohio, and extensions in Houston, Pittsburgh, San Diego and Hartford, Conn. At the New York headquarters, the curriculum includes, besides the "basic course" on *Progress and Poverty* and advanced courses on other books, classes on Public Speaking, American Labour Movement and Monetary Theory. The basic course was completed by 798 students and the advanced course by 514, the "graduates" thus numbering 1,311. Corresponding figures for Chicago are 675; for Los Angeles, 224; for St. Louis, 306; for Boston, 163; for Philadelphia, 145. For other branches the number of enrolments is given, as for example: Newark 419, and Montreal 121. The Report is naturally dissatisfied with the number of "drop-outs"—that is, of those who start but do not follow the course through—but the problem is having serious study and there is only this consolation, that most education institutions are faced with the same situation. Nevertheless, there remains the asset that the "drop-outs" carried on for part of the time and all of them purchased the textbooks, which surely most of them will study at their own leisure. The School has

* The Footscray study, conducted by Mr. A. R. Hutchinson and the Melbourne Land Values Research Group, makes a large book, with many informative tables and comparisons. Copies are available from our offices at 2s. 6d. each.

caused all of Henry George's works to be reprinted during 1947. Its energy is backed by an immense number of loyal and devoted and voluntary helpers who organise and take part in the teaching.

IN OTTAWA

Senator A. W. Roebuck, a lifelong and enthusiastic Georgeist, addressed the Ottawa Society at their closing meeting in May, which was attended by a large gathering of members, graduates and friends, and held at the home of their Director, Mr. H. G. Barber.

Senator Roebuck spoke of many things relevant to Henry George's Philosophy, and dwelled at length on the sad plight in Italy, where the recent election took place. He pointed out that if, and until, the peasantry of that country were given free access to the land, it was probable that Communists were on their way to gaining power in the next election. This power would never become a reality if tax on land values only were instituted. "Give the people the land, and all its related benefits and blessings, and they will be a free and happy people. They would then never have fear of Communistic domination. This world has enough land, therefore, more than sufficient of everything, that want and distress everywhere are totally unnecessary, if God's gifts and the law of land were but administered rightly." The Society has had a term of enlightenment, fine relationships, exchange of ideas, and most importantly, the learning of Henry George and his works. A feeling of sadness pervades a last meeting, but this sensation was quickly obliterated at the prospect of a new term in the autumn.—(Contributed by Miss Marion E. Minaker.)

E. G. HEMMERDE

The death of E. G. Hemmerde, the Recorder of Liverpool since 1909, leaves few remaining of the gallant Parliamentary band who fought the stirring campaign in the days of the "people's budget," when the whole country rang with the song, "God made the Land for the People." He was one of the most eloquent and persuasive adherents of land value taxation and, of those in that company who have gone before him, are the well-remembered P. Wilson Raffan, C. E. Price, H. G. Chancellor, Albert Spicer, Josiah Wedgwood, J. S. Higham, John McCallum and James Scott, and others, not to speak of those outside Parliament who were closely associated with them. Hemmerde entered Parliament in 1906 as a Liberal, representing East Denby. From 1912 to 1918 he sat for North-West Norfolk. He joined the Labour Party in 1920 and won Crewe for it in 1922, holding the seat until 1924. At no time did he depart from his loyalty to the Liberal principles, which he had espoused, of land value taxation and free trade, although after 1924 he seldom appeared on the public platform. He was a constant reader of *LAND & LIBERTY* and a regular contributor to the funds of the United Committee. He attended and spoke at our International Conference in London, 1936, and was heard with the greatest acceptance, explaining how much at home he was among his friends of the Henry George Movement. The latest letter from him expressed his hope of being present at our recent Matlock Bath Conference, but a later letter, shortly before his death, intimated with what regret his illness had prevented him. He lost his only son in 1926 and leaves one surviving daughter, to whom we convey our sincere sympathy in her bereavement.

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