

JAKOB E. LANGE

HOW COMPLETE is the severance of ourselves from friends only a few hundred miles away, so that the North Sea has between its shores a vast and uncharted ocean, is instanced by the news that only reaches us now of the death on 27th December, 1941, of Jakob E. Lange of Denmark. It was conveyed by Mr Pavlos Giannelia writing from France to *Land and Freedom* of New York, Mr Giannelia paying his tribute to Lange's memory in the March-April issue of that journal. The funeral was attended by 500 followers of Henry George and smallholders. At his last public utterance when he spoke at the Henry George Congress in Copenhagen on 28th September, 1941, Lange courageously defended the views of liberalism in its fullness, not merely political but economic as well, and stressed the eminent role of free land in a free society. While the world has admired the valiant resistance of Greece and other small countries more highly than the passiveness of Denmark, he explained the role of his country. "Denmark," he said, "has advanced further than any other country of Europe. Even if we had doubled and tripled our expenses for military armament, we would have been overrun. The mission of the Danes is to construct a new House of Freedom. Our work in this direction will decide our capacity to live as a nation and the value of our national life."

The wonderful extension of the Henry George movement in Denmark, which has set its mark on legislation and carried the idea so far into practice that the Danish example is a lesson to the rest of the world, began with the meeting of three or four persons in a country spot in Jutland and of these Jakob E. Lange was the leader. As a student of botany (and for his contributions to that science and his book on the fungi published by the Carlsberg Foundation, he has won renown) he was spending some time at Kew Gardens in England. The contact which afterwards dominated Lange's life was a pure accident; merely the advertisement of a meeting which George who was making a tour of this country on one of his speaking campaigns was about to address. Lange went there in curiosity. How many of us have not a similar story to tell of the coincidence or the good luck which has placed us in the way of ideas that have been a strength and a guide to us for all the future. To none, indeed, more than Lange did Bolton Hall's address at Oxford in 1923 "I am Only One Man" apply. It is that having appreciated what is true, there is no need to despair because others do not yet realize it or think that "one man" can do nothing; but that a duty is incumbent to see that it flourishes in other men's minds. So, hearing Henry George and learning and being convinced, Lange called that little meeting in Vestbirk and he lived to see his constituency multiplied by the thousand and the hundred thousand fold. It is true that *Progress and Poverty* had already in 1886, when that meeting was held, been translated by Ullman, but it was in that sort of mixed language then called Dano-Norwegian and the book had not had much vogue. A new trans-

lation, in Danish, and slightly abridged, was made by Lange, and it so leapt into circulation that five editions have appeared, the latest in 1938 and in a particularly handsome format. Lange also translated *The Condition of Labour* by Henry George, and his own original contributions to the literature of the movement in books, pamphlets and articles in newspapers and journals all over the land flowed in a continuous stream down the years; and he was rich, very rich, in the co-workers in the same field. One of the first to join him was Sophus Berthelsen, the orator so gladly heard as Lange was by smallholders who as owners of agricultural land were they who brought the question into politics and by whose insistent demand that measure of the principle was carried into law which is embodied in the Land Value Tax Act of 1922 and the Rating of Land Values Act of 1926, together with the remarkably sound system for universal and periodic valuation of the land that so well lays the foundation for future progress. Proud he must have been to see such a harvest from such a small seed, or at any rate the fields ripe for the harvest; but sad, too, that the garnering has been interrupted by this frightful world catastrophe. Yet only interrupted, as the optimism of that last speech of his revealed.

In any notice of Lange's services, mention must be made of his *Life, Work and Philosophy of Henry George*, published in 1937; of the informing papers he provided for the various International Conferences; and of his book on *Social Economy* which is a standard now in many schools and colleges. He was a leader, too, in the Danish People's High Schools, first stationed at the Dalum Agricultural School, famous for having been founded by Kristen Kold; and later and for many years as Principal of the Housemen's School in Odense. There the most open-hearted hospitality was ever ready for the visitor to Denmark, and the percentage of visitors to Denmark who were interested in anything related to agricultural questions and in Danish co-operation who saw and spoke with Jakob Lange must be very high. His memory is enshrined in the minds not only of his countrymen, but in those of the hosts of his co-citizens of the world who had the privilege of enjoying his company and gaining the knowledge as well as the inspiration he had to impart.

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AGRICULTURAL RENTS AND EVICTIONS

IN A letter to *Time and Tide* of 16th May Mr A. R. McDougal writes:—

"It is not generally known that Rent is not liable for Excess Profits Tax. The official explanation is that rent being assessed under Schedule A, is not a profit. This, of course, is pure quibbling. The result of this is that in districts where farmers are prospering and paying E.P.T. landlords are encouraged to demand huge rent increases, which they are doing and getting.

"The tenants who normally would resist at risk of eviction say, 'Well, I must pay away my excess profits of say £500 or £1,000 in tax, so why risk losing my farm by arguing. I will just agree to pay more rent.' So the rent goes up say £400. This £400 is lost to the State as E.P.T. and goes into the private pocket of the landlord untaxed for E.P.T. This increases the value of the land for sale, and if sold for occupation by a new owner the Government will not enforce the recent D.O.R.A. Regulation to forbid a Notice to Quit being served.

"So we have evictions becoming common, and rent raising is rampant. The next step will be demands for higher prices in order to pay these increased rents and prices of land, so the vicious game of land inflation goes on.

"There is now no doubt, after reviewing the Government Agricultural Land Policy, that its main principle is that everything must be done to maintain or increase land values in the interests of the landlord and the mortgage holder. Already this year there are three evictions of good farmers on the Saltoun Estate in East Lothian and one in Berwickshire, of the farm of St John's, Foulden.

"Surely the least the Government can do for the farmer who is doing his best for food production, often upsetting his whole farming system and laying out very large sums on new implements and taking big risks—is to guarantee him against rackrent and eviction. Instead of that they encourage both. It is this sort of thing that makes decent people vote against the Government candidates."

A vivid account of the Mosaic Legislation concerning Economics can be found in *My Neighbour's Landmark*, by Verinder, lately republished by the Henry George Foundation.—William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, in *The Hope of a New World*, p. 59, published by the Student Christian Movement.

My Neighbour's Landmark, short studies in Bible land laws by Fredk. Verinder. Fourth edition. 1s., by post 1s. 3d.

Concluding the debate on the Scottish Estimates, in the House of Commons, 12th May, Mr T. Johnston, the Secretary for Scotland, said that obviously housing must play a most important part in the employment of our population after the war. Everything possible must be done to obliterate the scandal of housing conditions over the major part of Scotland. In one town 73 per cent of the houses had only two rooms, and the average with that accommodation was 46 per cent.