

THE CONFERENCE IN DERBYSHIRE

The Week-end Georgeist Conference at Matlock Bath, May 21st-23rd proved a gratifying success. Cromford Court, the ideally situated hostel of the Friendship Holiday Association, was filled to overflowing, some members having to be accommodated at an adjoining hotel. The Conference was given an international character by the attendance of Mr. Bue Björner, member of the Danish Parliament; Mrs. Caroline Björner (they having come by air specially for the occasion); Miss I. M. Kristensen, deputising for her father, Mr. K. J. Kristensen, chief of the Danish Valuation Department; Mr. Ole Wang, of Norway, and Mr. and Mrs. N. E. Dangoor, of Baghdad. Mr. Björner is a past President and now Executive member of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, and Mr. Wang is one of its Vice-Presidents. Mrs. Björner is the guiding spirit of the flourishing Ecotechnical High School, where Henry George's social philosophy is taught. Mr. Dangoor, member of the International Union, stated his adhesion in a striking letter about conditions in Irak, published in *LAND & LIBERTY*, January, 1947.

At the preliminary meeting on the Friday evening there was discussion on general topics, the revised programme was approved and the sessional chairmen were appointed. Mr. Björner spoke feelingly of the loss to the movement by the death on May 14th of Mr. F. Folke, and a telegraphed message of condolence was sent to Mrs. Folke and the family.

The Conference was formally opened by the President, Mr. Austin H. Peake (Cambridge). He and the sessional Chairman, Mr. George Musson (Derbyshire), bade welcome to all and expressed special pleasure that they were favoured with the presence of the friends from overseas. For the able manner in which the arrangements had been carried through they were deeply indebted to Mrs. D. Duplock. More than 80 were in attendance; London and the South, Manchester, Liverpool, Huddersfield and the Birmingham area being particularly well represented. Other members had come from Carlisle (Mrs. Charles E. Crompton), Caernarvon (Mr. E. M. Ginders), Lincoln (Miss C. Wells), Norfolk (Dr. S. Vere Pearson) and Staffordshire (Mrs. B. Harris). A happy feature was the large contingent of young men and women. But they missed those many friends who, sending their goodwill messages, had too far to travel, or who, like Mr. and Mrs. George Miller, of Liverpool, had regrettably to cancel at the last moment. Especially did they miss Mr. Wilfrid Harrison (on his travels abroad) who had the work of the Conference so wholly at heart. Those respects to him were warmly applauded and at a later stage were cordially repeated when response was made to the honours he had organised, before his departure, for bestowal on others.

The first session was devoted to the subject, "Recent Legislation and Future Prospects," led by Mr. A. W. Madsen, who outlined the Acts of the British Government dealing with public finance, local government, town and country planning, and agriculture. Year by year the Budgets had reimposed the taxes repressive of industry, and protectionist tariffs had been rigidly maintained. Socialist and Tory doctrines went hand in hand. The Hill Farming Act and the Agriculture Act, with their doles and subsidies were flagrantly landlord measures, coupled, however, in the latter case with a terrifying regimen of Socialist control of the farmer's business.

The Local Government Act merely caused the Exchequer to use its awkward and damaging instruments of taxation to supply subventions to the local authorities and nothing could be more preposterous than to claim that as a rating reform. The Town and Country Planning Act came under severe condemnation. They had to look back upon a period of black reaction and as to future prospects they had to go all out on their propaganda and in a large sense "begin again."

A lively discussion followed, turning at points into a debate on anyone's justification in belonging to or supporting the Labour Party, or, for that matter, the official Liberal Party, both having played such treacherous parts in these latter days. Mr. Bue Björner recited the Danish political history. At first people were opposed to the Henry George idea; then they would "look into it"; then it became "a good idea," and finally they said they were "always in favour of it." He spoke of the Commission now sitting to frame a report upon the full application of the land value policy and of the influence the Justice Party had there, both in causing it to be formed and in its constituent membership. He questioned the advisability of going out on a lone campaign and thought that the establishment of the Justice League as a separate party had been a mistake at that time 30 years ago. It had put the movement back. They stood up to be counted and were found to be but a handful of people whom the politicians need not worry about. Later, much later—it had been a great struggle—they had made themselves a force. But up to 30 years ago they had worked through the political parties and had attained the first practical results, the separate valuation of land apart from improvements. That meant a lot in the shaping of opinion. It was the turning point and had been the cause of the whole progress for Georgeism in the last couple of decades. He saw no cause for pessimism. If he might venture a word, the separate valuation was one of the things Georgeists in Britain should work for especially—"even more necessary than striving to repeal the bad laws which would fall to pieces in any case." The discussion was continued by Ashley Mitchell, A. N. Batty, W. Cadman, W. E. Fox, Mrs. Catterall, Mrs. Willott, Miss Levy, R. Turner, S. G. Seal, F. Dupuis and J. Garner.

At the Saturday afternoon session, with Dr. S. Vere Pearson in the chair, Mr. F. Dupuis spoke on "Economic Ignorance the Road to Social Suicide." The subject evoked an interesting debate (B. Björner, G. Edwards, J. W. Foley, Miss McGovern, Ole Wang, and several others taking part) on Mr. Dupuis' theme, which was the menace to Western civilisation and its ideals by the ignoring of economic knowledge, or indifference to its need, on the part of the average citizen. It was significant that the great advances in economic science had been made by amateurs not professionals. The ultimate arbiter in all social questions was the average man and woman. On the average level of his or her economic knowledge depended the salvation of society. Great cleverness was not necessary for knowledge of economic law, only a capacity to think objectively. That was a moral as much as an intellectual obligation.

On Saturday evening a dinner was given in honour of ASHLEY MITCHELL, ARTHUR MADSEN and CHARLES MORLEY.

The President, Mr. Austin Peake, spoke in gracious terms of the recognition they were giving to the long and

devoted services rendered to the movement by their honoured guests. It was his pleasant duty to give them a testimony of appreciation, with which many friends at home and abroad were associated by their letters. It was a duty which Mr. Wilfrid Harrison would have gladly performed had he been with them, since it was he who had conceived the good idea, and had, with Mrs. Duplock as his coadjutor, enabled them to offer this deserved tribute. In their responses, expressing their deep sense of the compliments that had been paid, the three guests recited some of their interesting experiences back over the past 40 years. Mr. Morley told of his coming to the United Committee's offices in 1910, was submitted to a test by the late John Paul (and the name of John Paul was sympathetically applauded); was told "you'll do," and he had been there ever since.

The rest of the evening was spent in an Open Discussion (Miss N. McGovern in the chair) on "Our Opportunities and Responsibilities" in the advancement of the Henry George cause. At this session Mr. Madsen spoke of the prospects for the next International Conference. Arrangements had already been made for engaging the whole accommodation at the well-known place, "The Hayes," in Swanwick, Derbyshire, which was well-famed as a seat for large conferences. The date would be the week from August 14th-21st, 1949, and the International Union had guaranteed a minimum attendance of 200. The announcement was received with enthusiasm and all present pledged their enrolment. With those and others both at home and abroad who have intimated their decision to join, they could, they hoped, look forward to implementing if not exceeding that guaranteed minimum. Discussion on "Our Opportunities and Responsibilities" was continued in the succeeding sessions, especially with regard to the promotion of the study classes.

At the Sunday morning session, Mr. A. H. Weller, J.P., took the chair. Mr. V. H. Blundell and Mrs. Caroline Björner, speaking on "Economic Study—A Fascinating Pursuit," reported the progress of the Henry George School of Social Science in Great Britain and of the Ecotechnical High School in Denmark. Mr. Blundell said that after joining the staff of the United Committee in the latter part of 1946 it had been his pleasant duty to re-organise the class work at the office. They had achieved considerable success, and since January, 1947, numerous classes had been held. They were now running courses on *Progress and Poverty*, on *Protection or Free Trade*, and *Social Problems*, and an advanced class on the *Science of Political Economy*. In the evenings no fewer than three rooms at the offices were thus fully engaged. On Sundays, also, when the weather was good, they had held demonstration classes in Hyde Park which had brought an interesting crowd of the public as lookers-on. Out of these classes there had grown the new "London Georgeists' Discussion Club," which had organised a number of extremely interesting meetings on special topics, and they had an excellent syllabus in front of them. They had also branched out successfully in Manchester and they were engaged in new developments in Liverpool. It was a special delight, he said, to see so many at this Conference taking part in these discussions, who had been brought into the movement through the study classes.

Mrs. Caroline Björner said that the Ecotechnical High School in Denmark was initiated immediately after the 1936 International Conference in London. Hearing about the successful Henry George Schools in America, they

got busy at once changing the text books, teachers' manuals and the lesson sheets into Danish and had so much success in their work that now they had a panel of some 200 teachers ready to take a class anywhere. Last winter they had 60 classes in operation. So great was the demand for their books, pamphlets and papers that they had repeatedly run out of stock. Lately, they republished Jakob E. Lange's *Social Economy* (their standard text-book); their fourth edition of the *Protection of Free Trade*, and now they were producing the sixth Danish edition of *Progress and Poverty*, of which altogether they had circulated 12,000 copies—by contrast the one edition of Karl Marx's "Das Kapital" in Danish consisted of only 400 copies. Mrs. Björner spoke of the contacts they were making with the organisation known as "One World or None," and what Georgeists could do by exerting their influence in that field. Her story of how Mr. Björner carried on the work of the School from within a concentration camp during the war delighted her audience.

Mr. C. S. Craig, B.A., welcomed the presence of Mr. E. J. McManus at the Conference and paid tribute to the work Mr. McManus had done in building up the classes on the Merseyside and explained how he himself had benefited and what he was doing as a teacher of economics. The Conference accorded him a special meed of applause.

Mr. N. E. Dangoor expressed his delight that the Conference had coincided with his visit to this country and spoke of how he came into the Movement. Here we wish to reprint the letter he wrote to LAND & LIBERTY, January, 1947:—

"I arrived at the justice of land value taxation and freedom of trade many years before I got to know of the writings of Henry George a few months ago. Land values, bonds, paper money, and the like, do not represent real wealth; they represent the total indebtedness of a community to some of its members. The injustice of such indebtedness can be realised when a new generation is born. Instead of inheriting the land and the improvements made upon it by previous generations, a child is born in a civilised country with a large debt on its hand increasing as the country in question is more advanced. In Iraq I estimate roughly that a child is born with a £2,000 debt, which represents the capitalised rent of the whole of Iraq per capita. The full application of land value taxation may prove to be a turning point in the history of mankind. In the Middle East, in particular, where the danger of Communism is most apparent, it is possible that the Land Values Taxation policy would win over the masses and thereby save the Middle East for civilisation. For this reason Land Value Taxation is an urgent job in the Middle East, and its far-reaching effects should be realised by all concerned. I have taken preliminary steps for the translation of *Progress and Poverty* into Arabic and shall keep you informed of further developments. Regarding the International Union, I shall be very glad to become a member, and shall thank you to inform me of the steps to be taken for joining. When is the next Conference taking place, and where?"

This session was eminently a "students' and teachers' " session, in the course of which there took part Fred Grace, H. Boothman, Mrs. J. O'Leary, W. E. Fox, Miss Grady, W. Cadman, George Musson, Mrs. Catterall, and others. The vote of thanks to Mr. Weller was coupled with warm recognition of his many years' leadership of the Manchester League, reference being made in particular to the stimulus he gave the municipal movement when he was a member of the City Council.

At the Sunday afternoon session, with Mrs. F. G. Sumner in the chair, Mr. Ashley Mitchell delivered an

eloquent address on "International Trade and World Problems." He dealt with the many fallacies of the protectionists, sketched world conditions to-day, which are the result of restrictive policies, and showed that peace and prosperity could only return if these barriers were removed. Miss Stridgen (Huddersfield) said she had been born in the home of Cobden and had been brought up in the free trade cause by Mr. Mitchell—that is, in the true freedom of trade which could only obtain if they also had the freedom of production as Henry George explained how that could be brought about. Mr. Björner recalled the International Conference in New York when Mr. F. C. R. Douglas (now Governor of Malta) introduced Ashley Mitchell to Mayor La Guardia: "This is Mr. Mitchell who has run five times for Parliament"—to that the Lord Mayor replied, "Then he can be regarded almost as England's William Jennings Bryan, the so-called silver-tongued orator who in America also stood five times." Mr. Björner acclaimed Ashley Mitchell as the "silver-tongued" Georgeist and moved a vote of thanks for the excellent address they had just heard.

Before this session concluded it was a happiness to the Conference to send, at the instance of Mr. J. W. Foley

and Mr. W. Cadman, fraternal greetings to two great veterans of the Movement, Mr. Frederick Verinder, now in his 90th year, and to Mr. James H. McGuigan, also advanced in years and now residing in Northern Ireland.

In the evening an informal discussion took place on topics that had not been fully explored. Among the votes of thanks to those concerned with the organising of the Conference special tribute was paid to Mrs. D. Duplock for her work in its preparation and the way in which she had looked after the comfort of all in attendance. In token thereof she received a bouquet of flowers, presented by Mrs. Madsen on behalf of all the members.

We append this note on the finances of the Conference: The net expense (apart from office establishment) was £69 3s. Special donations were given of £57 11s., thus leaving a deficiency of £11 12s. It is appropriate to make an appeal to members attending and to any of our interested readers to help make up this deficiency. Such subscriptions, supplemented, if possible, by extra contributions in aid of the work of the United Committee, the International Union and LAND & LIBERTY will be very welcome.

TOWARD LIBERAL PATRIOTISM

Our able contributor, Mr. Frank Dupuis ("F.D.P." to our readers) has written an impressive statement on the meaning and message of Liberal philosophy and policy, remarkable for its interpretation of social justice and economic freedom. It is a monograph in ten pages, put together in a quarto booklet and forms, in fact, an "open letter" to Liberals who have cause for concern over the status and influence of their party. The booklet has been given a special circulation among Liberal candidates and selected individuals. Some copies are still available which the author has placed at our disposal and may be obtained from our offices at 1s. each.

A letter enclosing Mr. Dupuis's monograph and signed by 17 associates has been sent to a representative circle, the signatories writing as follows: "We, the undersigned life-long Liberals, being much concerned at present trends within the Liberal Party, respectfully desire to invite your comments on the attached paper, which we believe represents a view of Liberalism which alone can restore the fortunes of the Party and justify its claim to represent the true alternative to reactionary and obscurantist Toryism and totalitarian Socialism. We are submitting this document to you as we believe you may have some sympathy with the point of view expressed in it and it is in this hope that we trust you would be prepared to use your influence to secure its recognition among Liberals generally, many of whom have either left the Party in despair or contemplate doing so. In any case we feel sure that you will give our case fair consideration, and we are ready, if you will give us your support, to do all in our power to help you in striving to ensure that true Liberalism, which made our Party great, and can make it so again, shall prevail, to the great and lasting benefit of our sorely tried fellow-countrymen of all ranks and classes."

3s. 6d. LAND AND FREEDOM. A comprehensive treatise on Land Value Taxation. By Fredk. Verinder.

3s. 6d. PROGRESS AND POVERTY. An Inquiry into the Causes of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth—the Remedy. By Henry George. Complete edition.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

On Thursday, May 27th, the afternoon mail at LAND & LIBERTY office brought the periodic bundle of Press cuttings. There it was noticed that four one-day Conferences were publicly announced, dealing with the Town and Country Planning Act, held under the auspices of the Town and Country Planning Association and addressed by Mr. W. A. Wood, of the Ministry.

The first of these Conferences was in Manchester on Saturday, May 29th. Here seemed to be an excellent opportunity for propaganda. Half-a-dozen adherents of the land value movement were at once written to and a bundle of the United Committee's leaflet, "*Town Planning—Fulfilment or Frustration?*" was sent, and each was asked that the leaflets be distributed on the spot. Two of these friends, Miss Levy and Mr. Heathcote, were fortunately disengaged and they carried out the work effectively, not without some fluttering in the dove-cotes, although it was afterwards discovered that those who made the potter were not the organisers of the Conference but some rather officious municipal officials.

The following Conference was that at Cardiff on June 5th. Two friends were approached, Mr. Eustace Davies and Mr. Charles Gardner, to undertake a similar distribution. Mr. Davies at once wired that he had posted the leaflet in individual envelope to every solicitor in Cardiff. Mr. Gardner, giving the leaflets on the spot, was accommodated in the vestibule of the lecture theatre, and was shown every courtesy by the Conference organisers, a leader among whom even said that he had every sympathy with the sentiments and the criticisms in the leaflet—but that it would be necessary to explain from the platform that outsiders had been responsible for placing this statement in the hands of the delegates.

The sequel was extraordinarily interesting. Mr. Davies has written that some 600 people were in the Reardon Smith lecture theatre, where the Conference was held. Clearly the audience consisted of municipal officials, lawyers, and recognised among those present were the Town Clerk of Ebbw Vale, the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk, the Deputy Clerk of Glamorgan, and many Councillors.