

DANISH LOCAL ELECTIONS

Striking Gains of the Justice Party

In the Danish local elections which took place on March 14, Retsforbundet (the Justice Union) scored successes which have not only surprised and gratified its adherents, but have astonished the other parties and the press as well.

First as to the Borough elections. In the Metropolis and in the 38 Provincial Towns, where candidates were put up, 50 seats were captured, being a net gain of 49. These seats include 6 in the Copenhagen City Council, and the rest were spread over 23 other boroughs. In 47 of the 85 provincial towns, the Justice Union did not stand.

County and Parish Councils. Twenty of the 25 Counties were contested and 12 seats were secured—net gain, 10 seats. Members of the Party stood also in 60 of the small and very numerous Parishes and on these councils some 80 seats were secured—that is, so far as count can be made from the reports given in Retsforbundet's journal *Vejen Frem*.

By the increase in the number of votes cast, which are given for the boroughs and counties, the growth of public support for the Justice Union's policy is particularly striking. At the 1950 municipal elections, the Party put up candidates in 41 of the Boroughs and 20 of the Counties and achieved a total vote of 133,800. In the same constituencies, at the Parliamentary election in 1947, its vote was 85,400, a more than 50 per cent. increase in three years. Significant also is the comparison between the 1946 and the 1950 municipal elections. In 1946, the Party stood in 16 Boroughs and 7 Counties and its vote then and there was 9,190. In the 1950 elections, its vote in these constituencies rose to 50,490.

The standing of the Justice Union *vis-a-vis* the other parties is shown in the following total vote given in the 1950 elections:—

Socialists	...	...	697,800
Moderate Liberals	...	...	404,800
Conservatives	...	...	374,900
Radical Liberals	...	...	144,800
Justice Union	133,800
Communists	75,800
Various other parties and lists			51,100
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			1,883,000

The Conservatives had a considerably increased vote, regaining positions that were lost on the previous occasion. The Socialists only just held their ground. The Moderate Liberals (the "country party") and the Radical Liberals fell back somewhat. The Communists suffered a severe loss. In the 55-member Copenhagen City Council, for example, their representation fell from 11 to 6 and their vote declined from 62,800 to 39,100; in the Provincial Towns they had a net loss of 27 seats and are now represented in only five of those Councils as compared with 23 before the election.

The real "victor," generally acclaimed as such because of the great *proportionate* increase in its vote, was the Justice Union. Its capture of the six seats on the Copenhagen City Council, and with 42,100 votes where it had not stood before, caused a sensation. The newspapers have made much of it, although not without partisan comments that this may be just a "passing fancy" in

which voters have indulged, only to swing away on the next occasion—but something must be allowed for party-political envy and the superior attitude of the sceptics who smile upon those they deem Utopian.

A great rally of the Justice Union victors was held at Parliament House on March 26, where more than 100 Councillors attended and spent some seven hours upon discussion of municipal problems. Typical was the publicity given to this by the *Billed Blad*, the Danish counterpart of illustrated papers like *Picture Post* and *Illustrated* in Great Britain, wherein were three pages of photographs and much interesting descriptive matter of the Party which sprung such a surprise. And from the Copenhagen daily paper "*B.T.*" we give the following extracts from a contribution of one of its own correspondents:—

"The Justice Union has so stolen the limelight that many are asking what exactly is this party and by what spell has it captured the popular imagination? If you talk with an adherent for barely a minute—no matter on what subject—before the minute is over he has pronounced that word, the magic word, *Grundskyld* (the Ground-due, Land Value Taxation). The leader of the Party, Dr. Viggo Starcke, maintains that its fundamental idea goes far back in Danish history, for in his opinion Denmark is the country which has most often solved the land question. In the time of Canute the Great and Valdemar the Great, Denmark was in that regard a Just State. The Party claims Reventlow, the liberator of the peasants in 1787, as a party member, but what was done to abolish the bondage to the soil was as nothing compared with the changes in land tenure which Reventlow brought about by means of the "Land Due," the later "Hartkorn" assessment, now translated and transformed into the magic word *Grundskyld*, a definition of which is given in the recently published book 'The Political Parties' by the writer Knud Geddes:—

"Everyone who disposes over land shall pay its naturally and socially created value fully to the community. In that way the advantage the landholder has over the landless will disappear and all citizens will enjoy equality in economic condition. Further, it is said that . . . the revenues the land value taxation will produce shall be used to abolish the present taxation system. The Justice Union's final aim is the complete removal of all taxes on income, accumulated wealth, consumption and exchange."

"The watch-words of the Justice Union are Land Value Taxation, Free Trade and Democratic Franchise.

"The Party began as a club. About the beginning of the century, the Henry George Union was founded by, among others, J. L. Björner, Jakob E. Lange (who knew Henry George personally), and Sophus Berthelsen. Henry George was the American economist who upheld the people's right to its land, and his book *Progress and Poverty* can be genuinely regarded as the Bible of the Justice Union. But from the founding of the Henry George Union to the coming of this new Party is a long jump. There were many developments in the interval. In 1902 the Housemen had demanded the full taxation of land values and the remission of taxes on buildings, work and consumption. The 'Koge Resolution,' as the programme of the Housemen (the crofter-proprietors) was named, has, however, not yet been carried through.

"In 1905 the Radical Liberal Party (breaking away from the old-established Liberal Party) was founded, and among its founders was the late Professor C. N. Starcke (father of Dr. Viggo Starcke), who later, with others including Mrs. Signe Bjørner, helped to found the Justice Union. That was in 1919. Five years had to pass before the Justice Union broke out as a separate political party, and two years thereafter it succeeded in electing two members to Parliament, namely Dr. Dam and Pastor Willesen. But until after the 30's the general public had little but a smile for the Party. After the liberation, the Justice Union gained some following. At the General Election in 1945, it returned three members to Parliament and at the 1947 General Election its representation was increased to six.

"Opponents dismiss the Party's policy as so much airy talk and characterise its programme as Utopian, but for the true party men it is a religion. Is not every idea, they ask, at first regarded as Utopian? Was not the man who in 1770 spoke for the liberation of the peasants looked upon as a lunatic? Had not the unhappy Dr. Dampé to spend years in a Bornholm prison because in 1830 he wanted to see a free constitution for Denmark?

To-day there are opponents who regard the progress of the party as a victory for the blackest reaction, and others who treat it as a passing whim. Dr. Starcke's word is: 'The old Conservative party could not establish a happy society. Then came Liberalism and it could not make men happy either. After that, Socialism, and will the Socialists make for that happiness? No. We got Communism and is there happiness for mankind in the East? Let us therefore try out the ideas of the Just State.'

"The future of the Justice Union is written in the stars. Will it grow to become a greater party and a really decisive factor? One thing is certain. It has to-day the backing of 130,000 people and it is now for many of these people to discover for themselves just what is meant by this *Grundskyld*. The question whether the Party will further progress or slip back is now one of the lively questions in Danish politics."

Among the elected to the Councils, we notice the names of a number of readers of LAND & LIBERTY. To them and to their successful colleagues we offer our hearty congratulations.

ACTION IN THE INTERNATIONAL FIELD

The translations, in pamphlet form, of the International Conference Declaration of Principle and Policy, into French, Spanish, German and Italian are now available. Already there are requests from the several countries for large quantities for distribution, in the first instance to the Press and to members of legislative bodies. The French is offered to our readers in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Canada; the Spanish not only to readers in Spain (who have already stated their eagerness to use it), but also in Cuba and in Spanish-speaking South America; the German also to readers in Austria and Switzerland. The Italian translation is most timely in view of the action the Government is taking with regard to the land question. The Esperanto translation is being printed, the Universal Esperanto Association undertaking to address some 5,000 envelopes for the sending to members in 70 different countries. Translation into Portuguese has been made by Mr. do Amaral, of Sao Paulo, Brazil; and that, together with the Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Dutch translations completes the immediate programme the International Union has undertaken, following the "request resolution" that was adopted at the Swanwick Conference. There are five other languages into which the translation has been made, namely Chinese (already published in Chinese newspapers on the U.S.A. West Coast), Hebrew, Greek, Hungarian and Catalan; but in the matter of pamphlet-publication the Union has enough, if not more than enough, to be going on with. What is wanted is all possible assistance in the work of distribution and, needless to say, financial aid is earnestly invited to meet the considerable costs involved. The request to help in the distribution of the *Principle and Policy* applies most particularly to the *original* document—the English text—that it carry its message widely over the whole English-speaking world. Copies will be supplied gratis. How many may we mail to you?

The one who has done most in this work—even inspiring the Secretariat at the United Nations in New York to be further supplied with copies for handing to the delegates, and now we have the additional asset in the way of the translations—is Mr. J. Rupert Mason, the

President of the Union. In his campaign he advertises the document in specially printed postal cards, with this exhortation: "The Human Rights Declaration adopted in England by our 7th International Conference goes far beyond the Declaration on Human Rights released by the United Nations General Assembly, December, 1948. Clearly and unequivocally it outlines the economic principles necessary for freedom and equality of opportunity. Finely printed in England, it is suitable to give or mail to influential leaders both here and abroad, with a cogent letter. Will you help by suggesting names or by mailing some yourself?" Copy this in a letter to any of your friends and let us help you immediately in dealing with the responses you receive.

The journal *Ons Erfdeel*—Our Heritage—organ of the Dutch Union for Justice and Freedom, address, "St. Anna Parochie," is publishing in serial form a new translation of Henry George's *The Condition of Labour*, the translation being made by Mr. P. Prins. It has an introduction and various notes and explanations and incorporates most useful sub-heads throughout the text. In the 1890's the book was translated by Mr. Jan Stoffel and published by Van Loog in Amsterdam, who issued a reprint in 1906, but the edition is now unprocurable. We hope in due course to see Mr. Prins's translation out in book form that it may have a wide circulation both in Holland and Flanders, and surely also in South Africa.

In our previous issue mention was made of the publication of the Conference Declaration in the Madrid weekly *Nueva Economia Nacional*. The same journal has given space to informing articles on Georgeist principles written by vice-president of the International Union, Mr. E. Lemos Ortega. For example, in June, 1949, "The Advances of Communism," explaining why, and showing the alternative that must be adopted to deal with the cause of social discontent on which communism thrives; in November, 1949, "Poverty and War," tracing the common origin of both; in December, 1949, "Socialism or Liberalism"; in December and January "The Moral Philosophy of Capitalism." In the last named article,