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HENRY GEORGE

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COMMEMORATION DINNER

TUESDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 1935

Readers in and around London and all who can get to London on the date are cordially invited to the Henry George Commemoration Dinner being held in St. Ermin's Restaurant, Caxton Street, Westminster, on Tuesday, 17th September, at 7 for 7.30 o'clock. The Dinner is organized by the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, 94 Petty France, S.W.1, Mr Charles E. Crompton, Chairman of the Executive of the Union, presiding.

A large and representative gathering is anticipated. The guests of the evening include Mr F. Folke, President of the Danish Henry George League, Capt A. R. MacDougal of Blythe, Lauder, Councillor H. Kolthek of Holland, Miss A. Lambrick of Melbourne, and Mr Alexander Greene of Chicago. The toasts include "The Memory of Henry George" and "Our Guests," in charge respectively of the Chairman and Mr B. A. Levinson, B.A., LL.B.

Application for tickets (price 5s. each) should be made to the International Union to reach the office not later than Saturday, 14th September.

From the Commemoration and in the name of the Henry George movement in Great Britain, Denmark and many parts of the world Mr F. Folke and Mr Madsen (who are sailing next day) will carry a tribute to the life and work of Henry George and convey greeting to the Henry George Congress which meets in New York 26th to 28th September. In connection with this, a ceremony will take place at the graveside at Greenwood where the remains of Tom L. Johnson also rest.

The Outcry Over High Rents

Almost every day we receive cuttings from newspapers all over the country complaining of high rents. Typical quotations are: "Rents are so terribly high that people cannot pay them with any sort of comfort unless they get in lodgers to help them" (Jedburgh). "Sometimes we don't have enough to eat because of the high rent" (London). "Old folk are having to pay 6s. to 10s. a week on rent" (Preston). "In city tenements 75 per cent of the relief granted is being paid in rent" (Dublin). "Rents of 8s. to 12s. 6d. and upwards are obtained for two rooms with insufficient accommodation for the occupants" (Llanely).

Similar statements could be multiplied indefinitely. They are usually accompanied by a plea for some form of administrative action or legislation for the purpose of restricting rent raising. Only occasionally are the real factors of scarcity and low wages referred to. Still more rarely is it pointed out that high land values have anything to do with the height of house rents, or that houses are made dearer and scarcer by the rates imposed

upon them. Yet how can an effective remedy be found without regard to the real causes of the evil.

This outcry from every quarter of the land points to what is actually concerning the people. There is a great opportunity before the political party which is prepared to place before them a simple and consistent solution of this vital problem. It ought to be a dominant issue of the next general election.

Land Settlement Held Up

The Commissioners for the Depressed Areas, Mr Lloyd George and others have pointed to land settlement as a means of absorbing some of the unemployed in useful work. The *News Chronicle* (21st August) reports a discussion at a committee of the Glamorgan County Council at which Councillor Caradoc Jones said the committee had had considerable difficulty in acquiring suitable land for small holdings. Landowners in some cases were asking up to £400 an acre. While the Ministry were urging them to do something for the unemployed, the landowners, it seemed, were determined to take advantage of the occasion to get rid of property at a big price just because the ratepayers would have to pay for it.

Thus we have one more illustration that it is not low prices of produce but high prices of land that is the real handicap to agriculture. The attempts of the Government to raise the prices of farm products are simply aggravating the evil.

German Lutherans and Social Justice

A sidelight on the conflict between the National Socialist State in Germany and the Protestant Church is given in the *Manchester Guardian* (16th August), which reproduces part of a manifesto issued by the Protestant clergy of Altona on 11th January, 1933, before the Nazis had actually attained power. Those who seek the Church as an ally in the political struggle or who would make the Church subordinate to a political power are denounced in strong language.

In addition to rejecting every deification of the State the manifesto says:—

"We definitely reject the dream of the coming temporal realm of justice, peace, and general well-being in all its varieties. We see in the utterances of the different political parties that this dream has not yet been dreamt to an end. Whether it be a coming temporal realm of peace and security for all nations, or a classless society without hunger, tribulation, and suffering, or a future national state of perfect justice and racial purity—*whoever believes in such dreams thereby denies the limits fixed by God, falsifies political action, and teaches that salvation through Christ be but lightly esteemed.*

"We believe, teach, and confess that because of our sins there will never be a State in which work and wages really correspond, in which there will be no war of any kind, and in which justice will be essentially just."

This pessimistic Calvinism almost makes one sympathize with the Nazi dictatorship, and it certainly indicates a reason why the Nazi movement achieved power if it had to face such opponents.

The sentiments in this manifesto are a cynical denial of the prayer which is common to all Christendom: "Give us this day our daily bread. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Bitter complaints are made that religion is losing its hold upon the people, but such doctrines contradict every aspiration of mankind for truth, freedom and justice. It is said that Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple. What would He do to some of His professed followers if He came to earth to-day?

The Reclamation of Lord Nuffield

No one has been more to the front in demanding protective tariffs than Lord Nuffield. They were good for the motor manufacturer, provided the raw material of his industry could be had tax-free. But protection is a game where everyone wants to play beggar my neighbour until the pocket-picking causes more curses than the spoils it brings. So Lord Nuffield turns free trader. He protests against the advantage the steel producers have taken of the Customs duty to put up the price of steel. "I declare now," he said, speaking at a dinner in London on 16th August, "that it is time the duty was taken off so that we can reduce the price of our cars. The present state of affairs is disgraceful."

It is a first-class revelation of "tariffs in the making." It is an all-round experience; what is raw material to one industry is the finished article of another. Carry the protection far enough, and the presumed benefit to any industry is cancelled out. Lord Nuffield wants to stop that consummation. Let the steel producers retort that tariffs on motors should also be taken off and we are in a fair way to reaching common sense and decency in trading relations within and without, and with the rest of the world.

From Rack Rent to Building Bonds

The extent of the building boom is shown in the latest Year Book of the Building Societies, the amount advanced on mortgage in 1934 having been no less than £124,214,655. The total assets of the Building Societies are now £555,028,811. In the year 1934-35 private enterprise without any State assistance produced a total of 286,050 houses.

But there is another side to the picture. A large portion of the total mortgage sum is the price of the place on which to build the house, the site value that has proved a magnificent "rake off" for the owners of land previously paying nothing in rates. To escape high rents the people are moving into these new houses where the interest and redemption charges on the mortgage are just a little bit less than the rent of the old house.

It is a case of "things seen and things unseen." We see the houses, but we do not see the debt that hangs over them or realize that it is land monopoly which has piled up that figure and keeps it high. It is increased by the rates that fall on the houses. So there is no glamour about it at all. How different would be the circumstances if land value taxation had squeezed out the monopoly price of all that land and houses were freed from a most unjust imposition. Then we would see the houses and know that they really belonged to the inhabitants.

Trade Follows the Flag

An amusing story on this theme is told in a recent issue of the *Manchester Guardian*. Patriotic Japanese were highly incensed to discover "Down with Japan" inscribed on the boxes of a certain brand of matches. They were still more annoyed to find that these were of genuine Japanese manufacture. The explanation is that they were intended for consumption in China, where it was assumed they would be popular. The

Chinese Government, however, in compliance with requests of the Japanese Government to restrain anti-Japanese propaganda, very properly prevented the sale of these matches. The manufacturers went bankrupt and their stock was thrown upon the market in Japan as a job-lot.

Glasgow and the Duke of Montrose

Some time ago it was announced that Glasgow Corporation was to purchase 101 acres of land for housing purposes at Balornock from the Duke of Montrose for £15,152, or £150 an acre. The price was in some quarters regarded as extremely low, and Mr Kevin MacDowall, of the Scottish Nationalist Party, in which the Duke is a leading spirit, issued an open letter congratulating him on his splendid public spirit.

More light is thrown on the matter in an article by Bailie Jean Mann, chairman of the Housing Committee, in an article in *Forward* (17th August). It appears that not all the offered land was suitable for building. In addition to the price of the land there are claims for probable mineral workings, compensation to tenants and unexhausted manures.

In spite of the compliments of his henchman the Duke sent "a letter to the Housing Director repudiating his former agent, and making further claims for compensation to tenants and for unexhausted manures." The Committee suspended negotiations, and after two months the Duke "came down from his pedestal and intimated his willingness to accept the agreed-upon terms."

An obstacle of another kind now arose. The Department of Health for Scotland wrote to the Corporation intimating that the land was not worth £15,152, but in the opinion of the Government valuers only £9,700.

The land is valued for rating at an annual value of £186, but as it is agricultural land the valuation upon which rates are actually paid is reduced to £23.

Thus the price asked by the Duke (apart from the other items of compensation) is 81 years' purchase of the full rateable value and 658 years' purchase of the value on which rates are paid.

Glasgow has had other experiences of dealing with the Duke of Montrose, particularly in respect of its water supply, for the right to obtain which very high prices were paid for land that had very little value for any other purpose.

Mr Roosevelt's Unemployment Scheme

The *Daily Herald*, 17th August, reports: Counting big trees in the Savoya National Park, California, is the latest job evolved to absorb some of the army of the United States unemployed. President Roosevelt (says the British United Press) has just allotted £2,000 out of the £800,000,000 work relief fund to pay the men.

Not long ago Mr Hore-Belisha had 10,000 men on the roads to take a census of the passing traffic. This was hailed in some quarters as a helpful unemployment scheme. Counting trees and counting motor cars. Let us all count our fingers and get inspectors to check up on the data. The politicians would sing with us, little man you've had a busy day, and we could make tea houses of the Labour Exchanges.

Beet Sugar

When the beet sugar subsidy was introduced in 1925 it was believed that after a period of 10 years the infant industry would be full grown and able to look after itself. £50,000,000 in subsidy and rebates of taxation have been spent for this purpose, but the only result has been to create a vested interest nourished by taxation. Despite the devastating criticism of the Greene Committee, the Government has decided to continue the