

lots in the country. "Even discounting that figure by half, there would be nearly a five-year supply of vacant house sites available to builders" if land speculators would sell these lots at reasonable prices instead of holding them for further rises.

What can be done to discourage such speculation and make land available at prices home-builders can pay? "Higher land taxes," the panel decided, "are just about the best way to hold down land prices."

Turning to the related problems of slum clearance, the report warns: "Don't buy slum property for redevelopment without deflating its bootleg value."

Uncle Sam is subsidising redevelopment projects in cities, and much of this subsidy money goes to buy off slum landlords, the report of the conservative magazine points out. Then it says:

"There is no more excuse for asking Federal taxpayers to buy up slums at prices based on the outrageous profits from overcrowding, undermaintenance, filth and misery than for asking them to buy up a red-light district at a price reflecting the profits of prostitution."

"One big reason why slums are so profitable and slum land prices so high," the report continues, "is that slum lords pay such small taxes. Their buildings are so nearly worthless that they carry a very low appraisal," and their land is taxed at far less than its value.

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The way to turn slums into areas of decent homes, without huge Federal subsidies, the report says, is to "increase the tax load on land and lighten the tax load on improvements." This, the report declares, would do two beneficial things "at one stroke":

First, "help deflate the bootleg value of slum land, by making the slum lords pay more taxes and so make less profits." Second, "help harness the profit motive to slum improvement, by giving partial tax exemption to money spent rebuilding the slums."

"Alone among America's big cities," the report points out, Pittsburgh has partially applied the principle of taxing land at higher rates than improvements. "Says Pittsburgh's Mayor Lawrence: 'the graded taxlaw has been a good thing for Pittsburgh. It has discouraged the holding of vacant land for speculation, and provides an incentive for building improvements.'"

In conclusion, the report warns: "Don't try to build low-rent housing on high-priced land," because it can't be done. The thing that can and should be done is to reduce the price of land by putting heavier taxes on it.

That's what was proposed by such great economists as John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer and Henry George, the report recalls. LABOR, which has often told its readers about this same proposed remedy for land speculation, slums and the high cost of housing, congratulates the conservative publication for "seeing the light."

REMINDER TO READERS

Those who would like to see "Land & Liberty" grow are invited to send names and addresses of any who may be prospective readers. Sample copies will be sent without charge.

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San Diego

14th Annual Conference of the (American) Henry George School of Social Science

THE conference met from July 9 to 13 in the Hotel Lafayette in San Diego, California, a naval base and centre of the aircraft industry, near the Mexican border. The programme included a tour around the port. Perhaps only Georgeists could view a submarine and an aircraft carrier and spend the whole time discussing slum clearance!

Most of the official sessions were round-table discussions covering such subjects as "Promoting the School," "Teaching the Fundamentals" and "School Finances," favourite topics of every conference. Special sessions covered the work of Georgeist organisations, various political activities and graduate activities.

It was particularly gratifying to delegates to hear that the Economics Department of the University of California, under a grant from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, were studying Henry George with special emphasis on increasing use of his analyses in undergraduate work.

The closing banquet was attended by some 260 people, who listened to three excellent speeches. J. Bracken Lee, former Governor of Utah, spoke on "Abolish the Income Tax," a subject which has gained him considerable notoriety over the past year. The veteran Joseph S. Thompson of San Francisco brought down the house when discussing the possibilities of leaving a bequest to the School. Waxing ever more enthusiastic over the prospect, he declared: "Why, I can hardly wait until I can travel along to the next stage of my journey so that the movement may benefit from the money I have set aside for its use. (The conference felt that Mr. Thompson could not well be spared for some time.)"

Dr. Rolland O'Regan, the third speaker, heads the Georgeist movement in New Zealand. Through the week his opinions were much in demand by newspapers, radio and television. At times it seemed that the only programme on radio or television was "Dr. Rolland O'Regan Speaks." He provided the people of San Diego with a wealth of fact on the practical application of Georgeist principles in the Antipodes. Not only are they working, he said, but they are spreading rapidly as the only sane and sensible basis of revenue collection.

Our visitor from New Zealand was without doubt the hit of the Conference. It was no surprise to learn that his next assignment was to take part in a radio show in Los Angeles. No ordinary show this, but one to run all night.—HARRY E. POLLARD in *The Square Deal* (August), quarterly magazine of the Canadian Henry George Society.

An Englishman Abroad

Report by Mr. Ashley Mitchell

A SHORT business trip with my daughter, to North America, in June, gave me a chance to see a great many of our colleagues in the Movement, still hard at work. In New York I had the pleasure of meeting

Land & Liberty