

## HOLLAND

During the debate in the Groningen City Council on 21st January on the estimates for 1935, Mr Kolthek moved a motion in favour of taxation of land values. The principle of this tax not yet being incorporated into the Dutch legislation at all, the motion had to take the form of a demand that the government should introduce it.

In his explanatory speech Mr Kolthek provided figures showing the rapid growth of indirect taxes, both for the national expenses and for the municipal ones. Although from 1914 till 1935 the proceeds of national direct taxes increased to more than double the amount of indirect taxes rose from 100 to 346 million guilders. More than 60 per cent of the total revenue of the municipality of Groningen is extorted from the citizens by indirect taxation—principally by extravagant profits from the monopolistic municipality works, supplying water, gas, electricity and radio.

Mr Kolthek showed the fatal consequences of this system, as well for the working class as for the trading middle classes. The purchasing power of wages is greatly diminished by the robbery of indirect taxes and trading must become more and more depressed, as we see it to be.

He also pointed out that the nation could get rid of this system. There is available a rich source of wealth, incorporated in the value of the land and created by the community. That source must be assessed. The provided figures showing the decline of the sale of gas and electricity by the municipal works. Prices have been raised to such a height that a large part of the citizens cannot afford these services, and are using petroleum for lighting and cooking. Prices have to be reduced now, but the Council cannot balance the budget without the present high profits of the works. The proposal to reduce prices at the cost of a diminished writing off for depreciating of the works, was denounced by Mr Kolthek as a bankrupt's policy.

Mr Kolthek proposed to forward the following motion to the government:—

"The City Council of Groningen, considering that the system of indirect taxation, by making extraordinary profits out of the municipal works and such-like cannot be maintained at its present extent, and is besides an unsound foundation for the financial management of the municipality; considering further that taxation for the national expenses should be based on another system, and *inter alia* the Municipal Corporations Act should be revised in such manner, that the town council is authorized to tax the values of the land within its boundaries, irrespective of whether it is used or not, built upon or not; the City Council being of opinion that the development of society, in relation with the evolution of science and technics, contributes largely to the growth of land values, which, therefore, are not the results of personal exertion or spending of capital of the owner of the land—thinks it to be just and expedient that this socially created value be brought to the benefit of the whole society by taxation, by which the existing unjust taxes can be abolished."

This proposal polled only two votes, that of Dr de Waard and Mr Kolthek himself. But none of the members of the council accepted the challenge, except a member of a Christian political party, who asserted that the capital, invested in the ownership of land was not of a parasitic character, because . . . the landlords have to pay a tax of their income.

A vigorous election campaign is being prepared for the Provincial Legislature and the City Council. The

City Council, not being inclined to take any step in the direction of a sound financial management of public affairs, our friends go again to the citizen, spreading their principle and criticizing the present system, in order to win more seats in the City Council. They are gaining ground, slowly but steadily. Some papers begin to show interest and review its publications, saying that the principle of taxation of land values is worth consideration.

## DR FELIX VITALE

Dr Vitale was the first to introduce the ideas of Henry George to South America, and we give the events of that early propaganda as we have had them from his own lips.

Dr Vitale is an Italian, and qualified himself in his own country as a doctor of medicine. In 1898 he settled in the Republic of Uruguay, and soon after made a journey to North America in connection with his profession. In New York he met Antonio M. Molina, from whom he received his first knowledge of George's teaching. This made a great impression on him and he studied it with eagerness in order to make it known in South America and in Spain. In the latter country in 1899 he published, under the pseudonym of "Zoydes," his first book, which was entitled *Pobreza y Descontento* (Poverty and Discontent). It is a very instructive work and well suited for popular reading on account of its very clear and comprehensive statement of the principles. This volume also contained a translation into Spanish of *The Condition of Labour* by Dr Vitale, who had mastered the English language.

As Molina used to say that his best work for Georgism was to have attracted such a disciple as Vitale, so he in his turn can pride himself upon having interested Baldomero Argente in the translation into Spanish of all Henry George's works—a task which is now completed and enables Spanish readers to have a complete set of his works. Formerly the only translation available was that of *Progress and Poverty*, published in Barcelona in 1893, made by an unknown author.

Vitale pursued in Montevideo an enthusiastic propaganda by conversation, speeches and articles in the press. It is indirectly to his action that we owe the publication of the series of articles by Dr Herrera y

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