

IN THE INTERNATIONAL FIELD

DATE OF NEXT CONFERENCE

On representations made by the responsible organisers in Denmark, which is named for the next Conference, it has been decided to postpone the date from 1951 to 1952 (late July or early August) so that three instead of two years, as originally contemplated, will elapse since the holding of the previous Conference. It will be held under the joint auspices of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade and the Danish Henry George Union, which has appointed a Working Committee, with Mrs. Caroline Björner as convener, to take charge of local arrangements. The decision was arrived at after consulting the members of the International Union's Executive Committee resident in all the countries represented on the Union, who have fully agreed with views expressed by Mrs. Björner on behalf of the Danish Committee that this postponement is desirable having regard to the circumstances of the day and the advantage of having longer time to organise—both from headquarters in London and from the centre in Copenhagen—a more influential gathering than possibly could be assembled in the short interval between now and the summer of 1951. Moreover, as particularly affecting Danish co-workers, the immediate developments on their own "home front" are so absorbing and impelling and so likely to have propitious results that they see the importance of concentrating all possible effort on that campaign. When the General Election (due in 1951 but may well come earlier) is over, hopefully with many more "spokesmen for Henry George" in the Parliament, they will be so much freer to engage upon preparations for the next International Conference to be held in their country.

As for the work of the International Union, including the considerable correspondence conducted from 4 Great Smith Street, London, S.W.1 (and from 1920 Lake Street, San Francisco, the address of the President, Mr. Rupert Mason), it grows in intensity. For the Union itself and its members in so many countries, there is ever so much to do, and surely also financial support is incumbent, in the matter of following up the deliberations and resolutions of the 1949 Swanwick Conference—much to effect, by circulating its informing literature, especially the Declaration of Principle and Policy, our "Charter of Human Rights," in English and translated texts. No more useful work could be done by our correspondents who wish to bring the printed word before others, and in that we earnestly invite their assistance.

NEWS FROM SPAIN

Mr. Louis Hirschfeld, Vice-President in Tangier of the International Union, writing after a recent visit to Spain, gives an encouraging picture of the activities of Georgeists in that country. Despite the handicaps entailed by an authoritarian form of government he found that interest is maintained and information is disseminated by tactful exploitation of the available means. After all, the introduction of justice in land tenure does not necessarily involve changing any form of government, and it is a stabilising element in any society. Responsible periodicals were often available for articles by those distinguished members of the International Union who write in the Spanish language, and opportunities for personal approach are by no means closed. "Altogether," Mr. Hirschfeld says, "the impression I retain, and which

strikes me, is the vitality of the Georgeist movement in Spain. I rather expected to find a few dreamy idealists whispering among themselves. In fact, it is quite otherwise. They go boldly into action. Apart from the prominent reviews I have mentioned, in which they can and do make their voices heard, there are other papers into which from time to time they succeed in slipping some little article. In addition, there is the project of issuing a new, complete edition of Henry George's works."

Still more intimate news of Spanish colleagues and their activities and with personal greetings from them has been conveyed by Mrs. Kirsten Andersen, resident in Valencia, most welcome visitor to the office during her recent short stay in London. Mrs. Andersen's late husband was Norwegian consul in Valencia. She is daughter of Mr. Ole Wang, a Vice-President in Norway of the International Union. Most fortunately, she was able to attend the meetings of the United Committee and of the Executive of the Union which were being held during her stay and she gave a most enlightening talk in captivating manner of life and work and social conditions in Spain, as well as of the hopes and aspirations of the Henry Georgeists who are amongst the most noble citizens of that country. Her own participation in helping to make opinion through these associations was the more undeniable because so modestly mentioned. Spain and Norway, the countries she knows so well, served to show what contrasts there can be in the governance of human affairs.

Don Francisco Alvarez, who has a wine business in Constantina, Sevilla, has applied for and has been sent a large number of copies of the Spanish translation of the International Union's "Declaration of Principle and Policy" which he is about to circulate to his clients throughout Spain. Of the Italian translation, more than 1,000 copies have been posted by Robert Major, Rome, *individually* to prominent public men, representative deputies, editors of newspapers, etc., throughout Italy. Similarly, in Germany, 1,000 copies of the German translation are being circulated by Mr. Rudolf Schmidt, of Berlin. French correspondents continue to apply for the French translation, which is in demand also in Canada. The Esperanto, Dutch and Danish translations are being made ready in pamphlet form, first of these to be produced being the Esperanto. Application is invited for copies, not only *and especially* of the English text, but also of the other texts, which will be sent, free, to any of our readers who guarantee to make effective use of them.

OUR FRENCH CONTEMPORARY

The journal *Terre et Liberté* now re-launched in printed form and in newspaper style has begun its new series with its published July, August, September quarterly number. It presents an attractive appearance and in its contents it sets a high standard. Contributors include Max Toubeau, P. Lhoste-Lacaume, G. Lunel, P. Giannelias, Daudé-Bancel and T. Gracques. Quoted material is taken from the writings of Sam Meyer, Henri Sellier, V. Précý, Charles Gide and Henry George, all calculated to clarify principles for the new reader. M. Lhoste-Lacaume's article deals with the internal decay of Liberalism, and his recent book *Rehabilitation due Libéralisme* is reviewed. *Terre et Liberté* resumes the form it had before the war. In recent years it was

restarted as a bulletin and was kept going, irregularly, by use of duplicator. Now that it has been revived as a printed journal, with financial support from a group of French friends and some assistance from the International Union, we wish for it an assured future and an ever-growing circulation. The minimum subscription outside France is 80 francs annually, which may be sent to M. Daudé-Bancel (the Editor), 3B, Rue Pasteur, Mesnil-Esnard, Seine Inférieure, on whose behalf we address to our interested readers an appeal for helpful donations since anything so given is support also for the French Ligue pour la Réforme Foncière.

BRAZIL

With his subscriptions for LAND & LIBERTY and the International Union, Senor O. Alves de Lima, of Sao Paulo, acknowledges the Portuguese typescript translation of the Swanwick Conference declarations and sends us a copy of the 24-page pamphlet *Georgismo e Comunismo* (Editora Brasiliense, Sao Paulo), written in 1948 by Monteiro Lobato, the writer being a very distinguished Brazilian author who, unfortunately, died two years ago. The pamphlet is given high praise as one of the best works on the subject, written in simple and convincing style. We hope to find space for extensive citations from it. Senor de Lima has himself been most helpful in the publication of the second Portuguese edition (1946: Grafica Editora Aurora, Rio de Janeiro) of *Progress and Poverty*, translated by Americo Werneck, junior. To LAND & LIBERTY he passes this kindly compliment: "As to its printing and distribution I frankly consider it an excellent and indispensable way of maintaining, under the same ideal, the numerous members of the Georgeist family scattered throughout the world."

ARGENTINA

A correspondent in Argentina writes: "All our friends here are discouraged. Our work had to stop. We are under a totalitarian regime. The administration presumes to have established social justice by buying out the railways and other public services and then by decree raising the wages of railwaymen. I cannot describe to you the daily increase of taxation and the purposeful destruction of any opposition to the new doctrine of blending capitalism and communism. The persecution of the press is comparable only with Russian and Nazi methods. The aim is to get rid of any one who does not swear allegiance to what is officially called the Revolutionary System. Our paper money is every day worth less and less and we cannot send a single dollar out of the republic. Our 'peso,' which the English call the Argentine dollar, is now about 1/12th the value of the American dollar. That is one of the reasons I cannot send you any subscriptions, but you have my warrant for my faith in our movement."

BELGIUM

There are good prospects of establishing a Henry George School in Antwerp. Mr. Marcel Cortvriend reports that a start will be made in October under the auspices of the body of chartered accountants called "Gradua." The President, Mr. Faubelets, and the Secretary, Mr. Wijn, are much interested, the latter having already begun to recruit students and is busy preparing by the re-reading of *Progress and Poverty* as well as George's book (exposing Herbert Spencer) which

is entitled *A Perplexed Philosopher*. Other interested accountants are E. de Munch, J. Verbeke, A. Looveren and G. Brenders so that already a substantial nucleus for the School is in the making.

A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN VICTORY

Mr. E. J. Craigie reports the handsome victory won in West Torrens City on July 1, on a poll of ratepayers to decide whether the local taxation there should continue to be levied on the annual value of land and buildings taken together or on the value of the land (whether used or not) apart from any buildings and improvements thereon. The voting was: For land value rating, 1,639; against, 410; majority, 1,229. Mr. Craigie addressed meetings in the five city wards and issued printed matter. The Labour Party councillors did good work in organising the voters and two of them, Councillors Sexton and Souter, addressed three meetings during the campaign.

Two years ago there was a poll of ratepayers in West Torrens City on the same subject. In that poll there was a majority of 660 for land value rating, but such are the (unfair) restrictions in the Local Government Act, that poll was void because it was 73 votes short of the three-fifths statutory majority required. (The way this Act loads the dice against the reform is shown in the fact that in any polls to reverse land value rating where it has been in operation, a bare majority against land value rating would suffice to over-rule it.) An interesting feature of the situation in West Torrens City is that the Town Clerk, Mr. Vernon Shephard, is regarded as the strongest opponent of land value rating in South Australia. It will be a severe blow to his influence that, in his own municipality, the ratepayers have so overwhelmingly carried the principle into effect.

Mr. Craigie states it is likely that land-value rating polls will be taken in the Port Augusta Municipality and in the Cleveland District Council in the near future.

The places in South Australia, now in addition to West Torrens City, where land value rating is in operation are the metropolitan corporations of Thebarton, Port Adelaide, Hindmarsh, St. Peter's, Glenelg, Colonel Light Gardens; the municipalities of Moonta, Mount Gambier, Port Pirie, Peterborough and Quorn, Port Lincoln, Murray Bridge, Wyalla, Renmark; and the district council areas of Kimba, Murat Bay, Loxton, Barmera, Karoonda and East Murray.

FORWARD AGAIN IN VANCOUVER

In British Columbia, there are two columns in the valuation rolls for purposes of local taxation. For each landed-property there is shown (a) the assessed selling value of land-site apart from any improvements there may be thereon; and (b) the assessed selling value of the improvements, if any, thereon. In imposing their tax-levies (what we in Great Britain call "the rates"), cities and district municipalities must tax the full value of (a) as assessed and the general rule is that they do not levy their tax on more than half the value of (b) the improvements; they have the *option* of exempting improvements entirely, so that the tax levy falls on the value of the land alone.

Vancouver formerly carried land-value taxation to the point of the total exemption of improvements; but there, as in a number but not all of the places which used to do the same, there has been retrogression.

Vancouver has re-imposed taxation on improvements so that it is now levied against 50 per cent. of improvements-value, although still against 100 per cent. of the (assessed) land value of each property. But if the assessed land-values are not kept up-to-date so as to correspond as they should with the true market value, the land-value tax system becomes undermined. And that is what is happening in Vancouver for the benefit of the mere land-monopolist and to the injury of the genuine land-improver. It is good to see the Vancouver daily *News-Herald* calling attention to these matters in its leading article of June 22 (clipping sent by Mr. John Wilson, of Glasgow, visiting that city during his Canadian business tour). The *News-Herald* writes:—

"PUT MORE PRESSURE ON VACANT LAND"

"Experience in the tax sale lands department at the city hall during recent years, suggests that an upward revision of all land, particularly vacant land, assessments is overdue.

"In 1947, 447 parcels were sold at \$44,070 in excess of assessed value or 122 per cent. of official appraisal. In 1948, 575 parcels were sold at an excess of \$67,031, or 125 per cent. of official appraisal. In 1949, 229 parcels were sold at an excess of \$56,133, or 141.2 per cent. of official appraisal. This year, 265 parcels have been sold at an excess of \$87,587, or 169.4 per cent. of official appraisal.

"There is no reason to suppose that tax sale lands have increased in value at a faster rate than privately owned lands. The causes operating to increase the value of the one have also been operating to increase the value of the other.

"Moreover, public policy requires a shift of taxation from homes and buildings which are servicing the public to vacant lands which are being withheld from public service. The greater the tax pressure on vacant lands, the more available they will become for home building at lower prices; and the less money that has to be spent to acquire building sites, the more money is liberated for actual building operations.

"It is not necessary to go into theoretical discussion about the merits or demerits of land value taxation. There is a shortage of houses, and the houses available are priced out of the popular market. Higher taxation on building sites will tend to reduce their price and force them on to the market. Higher taxation on homes tends to increase their price and force them off the market. In these circumstances, there should be an immediate all-round increase in the appraisal of lands, which will automatically give tax relief to homes and buildings."

[The cities and district municipalities in British Columbia which exempt more than half the value of improvements from taxation are 20 in number; and new Westminster and Prince George continue to exempt improvements entirely, their real-estate taxes being levied on the value of the land alone. Victoria and Fernie are exceptions by exempting less than half the value of improvements, Victoria exempting 35 per cent. and Fernie 45 per cent.

Explanation of the "tax-sale" is that, according to the law, when taxes fall into arrear and the landholder defaults, the land reverts to the public and is auctioned at sale. The proceeds go towards paying the municipality its due taxes, the vendor (*i.e.*, the defaulting taxpayer) receiving only whatever balance may remain. In other words, the tax is a first charge on the land, having priority over all other charges and thereby is rightly recognised the principle that *land values belong to the community.*]

ITALY'S TRAVESTY OF LAND REFORM—By our Rome Correspondent

Despite the opposition of landowners, the hesitation of the Government and its party supporters, and the doubts of their economic advisers, the Italian Land Reform Bill is ready at last. But for the revolutionary disturbances Italy might still be awaiting the promised measure. The future is likely to show how the large proprietors and other conservative forces can still impede its operation.

Official explanation for the delay is that Italian resources have all been required hitherto for repairing the damage and disruption of war, so that only now is it possible to provide the money necessary for land reform. The Georgeist method, which requires no financing by the State, was not considered. But other causes, in addition to finance and the obstruction of landowners, were responsible for the delay.

Liberal feeling is disturbed by the bureaucratic powers set up by this Bill. The Italian Liberal Party is as undecided on economic principles as its British counterpart, but some leading Italian Liberals, including President Einaudi, see that the machinery of this Bill entails arbitrary decisions that could lead to corruption and conflict.

The Bill enacts that where any estate exceeds a given area, or its "net income" exceeds a given annual sum, part of the land shall be taken from the present owner. For the purposes of the Bill, the country is divided into three zones. Zone A comprises the intensively cultivated part of Northern Italy; Zone B, the under-developed lands, or "Mezzogiorno," including the whole of Southern Italy; and Zone C is the remaining territory. In Zone A the owner can escape some part of the expropriation if

he undertakes greater investment on his property. The principal difference between Zone B and Zone C is the larger provision for State investment in the former. In Zones A and C the owners subject to expropriation must, in each province, form themselves into a corporation for the purpose of selling the expropriated parts of their estates, within a period of four years, to the beneficiaries under the Bill. Any such land unsold after that period will be confiscated by the regional authorities. The landowner is to receive a quarter of the compensation in cash, and three-quarters in State bonds; the new owner must pay the purchase price to the State over a period of thirty years.

Each beneficiary must be a landless agricultural labourer ("bracciante"), or owner of a dwarf estate. He cannot alienate his land until after fifteen years, but he can be dispossessed for bad cultivation. The State will help to establish farmers' co-operatives for the new owners.

A sum of £175 millions is to be provided over a period of ten years to finance the reform. It is estimated that 2,500,000 acres, at an average value of £32, are to be expropriated. This totals £80 millions, leaving £95 millions for investment. The present Bill is to be completed by other Bills, such as the "Sila Bill" for Calabria, and another to reform the leasehold system.

PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES

The scope of the Bill is limited. Only some eight thousand owners are affected: 100 with estates over 6,000 acres; 400 with more than 1,200 acres; and