

PALESTINE

IN AN article contributed to *The Freeman* (New York), March, 1943, Judge Bernard A. Rosenblatt, President of the Palestine Foundation Fund (Keren Hayesod) of the U.S.A. utters a grave warning against the growth of land speculation in Palestine. In parentheses he says that the latest information from Palestine seems to indicate that land values have already risen substantially since Rommel's defeat in Libya. But with the increasing immigration after the war, which can certainly be premised, the limited area of Palestine must necessarily increase immensely in price. The present landlords both Arab and Jewish will reap a harvest which must operate as an increasing tax upon every newcomer in the country. The Jewish National Fund is vitally affected for it would be unable to purchase land at an increasing tempo to meet the demands of the new immigration while land values continue to forge upwards with every shipload of immigrants; the Fund may in fact be forced into the awkward position of becoming virtually a collecting agency for Palestine landlords.

It is well that a leading authority like Judge Rosenblatt teaches this lesson and that he so fully appreciates how the question of land values dominates in all that relates to land settlement. But does not this realisation come rather late in the day? The land-buying operations of the Jewish Fund have long ago boosted land prices

sky-high and the wicked trail of land speculation lies across the whole scene. That the Fund becomes a collecting agency for Palestine landlords speaks not of the future merely but of what has happened as well. Judge Rosenblatt offers as a specific that which will not avail as a remedy—a tax to appropriate all increment in land values arising from and after 1st September, 1939, which incidentally would require the almost impossible task of ascertaining what was the value of each piece of land at that date, and if that could be accomplished the proposed tax would take only the increased values since that date. It would leave the already swollen land values, enhanced to the limit before 1st September, 1939, in the hands of private interests whereby labour is deprived of its just earnings and the community loses its natural revenue. The situation requires in Palestine, as in all countries, the straightforward and uniform levy of taxation on the value of all land whether used or not with the corresponding remission of taxes on trade and industry, making no such discrimination as would depend upon the value of land having risen more in one spot since a given date than in another spot. And the general tax on land values falling as it would also on the value of unused land would break up the speculation in land prices which has always brought frustration and distress in its train.

JOHN ANDERSON OF MONTREAL

IT WAS sad tidings to hear of the passing on 4th April of John Anderson, of Montreal, the leader of our movement in that city. He was of the finest type of the followers of Henry George, never yielding in his faith, always helping others to follow his example of doing something for the cause. The help and encouragement he gave to the formation of classes in Montreal must have spread the light to hundreds of young Canadians. In his last letter to me some months ago he said, "Customs' tariffs, quotas, etc., are the damndest racket ever invented to keep the masses in subjection." No one thought of John as old, I was surprised to know he was over 80. His lovable serene character kept him always young; it is a privilege to have had his friendship.

ASHLEY MITCHELL.

ESSAY COMPETITION

Pressure of other work and interruptions due to war-time conditions have prevented the adjudicators from completing their examination in time for announcing their awards in this month's issue of *Land & Liberty*. They regret the postponement, which has been unavoidable. The results will be reported next month and it is expected that during the month each competitor will be acquainted with the results by post.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE LAND QUESTION

A CONDITION IS possible in which there would be a fair distribution of wealth, where there would be no undeserved poverty, where employment would be steady and remunerative with the menace of recurrent industrial depressions removed and "insecurity" without fault no longer to be feared. Among the causes that prevent such a condition from obtaining is a false and wrong land tenure which enables landlords to monopolize the value of land, they taking in rent wealth that others produce; and to them a price has to be paid for access to raw materials and to the standing ground without which none could live or gain his sustenance. We are foolish enough to permit some people to regard the rent of land as their private property, surrendering to them a public revenue that belongs to all of us in common since it is we, the people, who by our congregation create it. When the payment demanded in rent or price for land is more than the would-be users can afford to pay if their undertaking is to succeed, the land lies idle; its excessive price is a barrier against use, stopping the production of what could be produced there, causing scarcity and disemployment just in that measure. We suffer that to take place and deliberately aggravate the evil by erecting further barriers in the form of taxes imposed on houses and other buildings, on the results of any work done, on transport and commerce and on enterprise wherever it appears. By these our own stupid laws operating everywhere, the social injury done reaches gigantic proportions. It is not from actions in the past, but from our own act day by day in the present that we have this most unnatural and inexcusable poverty and unemployment in our midst. To indulge in talk about "landlord rapacity" or in denunciation of other demagogues is to forget that in our legislation as a democratic State we are ourselves responsible for a situation that could be remedied here and now and made good for the future.

Land Value Taxation and Free Trade provides the remedy, obtaining for the community the rent of land which is of right the

property of the community, making possible the remission of taxation and production and exchange, encouraging the best use of land and ensuring "full employment" in the real sense because accompanied by "full wages" and the just distribution of wealth.

We who are convinced that this policy has all ethical and economic argument behind it, that it is fundamental, urgent, practical and efficacious can have little confidence in policies however well intentioned which can do no more than alleviate misfortune and which quite obviously accept the inevitability of poverty in the structure of human society. In criticizing or rejecting them we can take the risk of being called obdurate. These policies are not remedies; they are only palliatives. Their outlook seems to be that the present dead-level of wages cannot be raised and that the only way to lift above it those who are below "bare subsistence level" is to subsidize wages or give help in kind at the general expense. It is the "money for social reform" school of thought, apparently closed to the idea that there is any land question at all or that rent and taxation have any bearing whatever on the problem. State or municipal expenditure serving a needful purpose is all sufficient; how the revenue is obtained and with what repercussions seems to be of little or no consequence.

An example of this trend of social and political thought is the hope entertained in the Beveridge Report on Social Insurance and the Allied Services that by such means want may be abolished, the commendable hope and what we are all working for. But again, means and methods are to be questioned. Little is to be expected from attempts to mitigate poverty or give help in distress by the use of tax revenue obtained in a way which by its restrictive, obstructive and penalizing effects, is an actual cause of unemployment. Those who are calling for the "implementation" of the plan have to realize what the "implementation" involves. The necessary revenue has to be got before the benefits can be dis-

pensed; it means the imposition of greatly increased taxation right away and in one swoop—not only an increase in general taxation but also the additional and extended contributions which in the Report itself are rightly called poll taxes, implicitly if not explicitly admitted to be at the limit of what many can easily pay.

The plan is first and foremost a tax plan involving in the contributions alone an extra sum of £179,000,000 a year. True, these include the contributions of employers; but the advocates of the proposals are now as busy as any giving testimony that the charge will not rest there. The greater probability is that it will be passed on to consumers in higher prices becoming in fact an indirect tax, so that in that way besides by their personal contributions the beneficiaries will be paying for the benefits.

Worse still and perhaps more sinister is the hint in the Report that working people will become reconciled to the income tax on wages when they realise that such payment is returned to them in the "social security" it would help to provide. But presently this attempt to earmark revenue for a given purpose will be lost sight of, just as happened with the allocation of the motor vehicle duty and petrol tax to the Road Fund. The Chancellor of the Exchequer would have one more net to spread for any and every purpose and the whole fiscal machinery would be set for a grand shift of taxation on wages, trade and industry. So much for the suggestions in the Report on how to "widen the basis of taxation."

It is an unacceptable idea that the proposals will achieve a "redistribution of the national income." It is clear that the main purpose is a redivision of wages among wage-earners themselves, or it will work out largely that way. The fact is that wages in the bulk are already reduced by the twin exaction of rent and taxes; and wages in the bulk as well as the general level of wages cannot be raised unless we tackle and deal with the primary wrong that the rent of land is now being privately appropriated and access to land is at a premium.

Apart from these considerations, there is the political factor of the six million or more persons who are not at present within the Insurance Acts, such as the Class II of the Report, the gainfully employed other than as employees; the Class IV of other persons of working age not gainfully occupied; and the "employees" either in occupations not yet State-insured or whose wages or salaries are more than £420 a year. This large constituency would find themselves suddenly roped in for the compulsory insurance and the card stamping tax, a section of the people not at present the most politically alive and whom it may be a job to convince that they have the prospect of compensating benefits. The government or the party responsible for this part also of the "implementation" will have to be prepared with good argument to keep at the pitch the popular enthusiasm for the plan which is alleged.

In fine, we should get back at once to the fundamental "assumption" without which the Report itself says the plan could not hope to succeed—the avoidance of mass unemployment. Let us devote our attention to that, for if we solve the unemployment problem, if we succeed in preventing the artificial withholding of opportunities for trade and industry, if every facility is afforded for the production of all we need, free from monopoly tolls and restrictive taxation, we shall have a world of plenty with just distribution the enduring guarantor of our social and individual security.

(From notes of speeches made at meetings in Manchester, Stockport, Liverpool and Clitheroe as mentioned below. The *Clitheroe Advertiser* carried a full column report, briefer reports appearing in the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Stockport Advertiser*.)

THE UNITED COMMITTEE FOR THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES LTD.:
4 Great Smith Street, London, S.W.1.
Hon. Treasurer, W. R. Lester; Secretary, A. W. Madsen; Assistant Secretary, F. C. R. Douglas. (Telephone: Abbey 6665.)

It is gratifying to be able to report the arrival, after a long wait, of the paper for the new edition of *Progress and Poverty* published by the Henry George Foundation. It is hoped that supplies will be available during this month. The price will be 2s 6d. net per copy or 2s. 9d. by post. In connection with this and all our publications, we have to announce that in view of increased costs it is necessary to vary the discounts allowed to the trade. The requisite information will be given on application or before orders for supplies in quantity are booked.

The front page article in last month's *Land & Liberty* on "Housing Policy—A Labour Party Statement," was lifted and printed as a leaflet and a special circulation has been given to it. A limited supply is available for further distribution.

As reported elsewhere, it has unfortunately not been possible to complete the examination of the Essays submitted for the Henry George Foundation Essay Competition so that the results could be announced this month, as promised. The results will be reported in our July issue.

Last month we printed the text of the new Prospectus of the Henry George School of Social Science which has been printed as a four-page octavo leaflet, and can be suitably folded and addressed for postage without need of an envelope. We renew our invitation to readers to arm themselves with copies of this Prospectus for such useful distribution as they can make of it.

The *Retail Chemist* has given generous space to correspondence following the publication in its March issue of Mr Madsen's article "Disquieting Features of the Beveridge Plan" (since reprinted as a leaflet). Two letters appeared in the April issue to which a reply was appended. Mr T. Linstead, M.P., took up the controversy in the May issue and an answer is

being given in the June issue. It has been an opportunity to explain the policy of Land Value taxation and the freedom of trade and industry as the solvent of the poverty problem and the true road to social welfare, an opportunity the more welcome because of the interest evoked among a professional class it would otherwise have been difficult to reach.

ENGLISH LEAGUE: Frederick Verinder, General Secretary, 4 Great Smith Street, London, S.W.1. (Telephone: Abbey 6665.)

The attendance at the Annual Meeting of the League, on 25th May, was, owing to war conditions, smaller than at any of its 59 predecessors, but the members present were cheerfully looking forward to better times. Mr F. C. R. Douglas, M.A., L.C.C., M.P., moved, from the Chair, the adoption of the Annual Report for 1942-43, reviewed the work of the past year and discussed future opportunities. The Report was adopted. Mr H. G. Chancellor, Hon. Treasurer, warmly welcomed on his recovery from serious illness, presented the Audited Accounts of the League for the past year, which were received and adopted. A vote of thanks to the Hon. Auditor, Mr Ralph Young, C.A., A.C.I.S., A.C.W.A., was moved from the Chair, and carried unanimously. The General Secretary announced that the Officers and Executive Committee had been re-elected, as no new nominations had been made.

A Resolution was unanimously adopted in the following terms:—"That post-war reconstruction necessitates a greater production and a fairer distribution of wealth; that the monopoly of land which obstructs production and the tariffs and other restrictions which obstruct exchange must be abolished; that an essential means of securing this is to do away with the taxes which fall upon enterprise and labour and their products, and to obtain public revenue from the value of land which is due to the presence and activities of the whole community."

The members stood awhile in silence in memory of Frederick Crilly and other members who had recently passed away, and the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman.

*** It is hoped that members of the League will be able to move the above resolution, or one on the same lines, at meetings to consider proposals for post-war reconstruction.

MANCHESTER LEAGUE: Arthur H. Weller, J.P., Secretary, Pytchley, Bean Leach Road, Offerton, Stockport.

At the League's Annual Meeting in Manchester on April 29th officers for the ensuing year were elected by unanimous votes as follows: President, Dr S. Vere Pearson; Vice-Presidents, Mrs Catterall, Mrs Sumner and Albert Brown; Hon. Treasurer, Douglas J. J. Owen; Chairman of Committee, D. Catterall; Hon. Auditor, J. C. Owen. Messrs Ronald Brown and George Murray accepted an invitation to join the Committee. In a brief survey of the past year's activities, the Secretary said the movement had lost two good friends by the death of Mr William Noble and Mr H. Wiles. The *Porcupine*, now in its 17th year of publication, continued to be placed in 32 public reading-rooms in Manchester, Salford and Stockport. Mr Owen then presented a financial statement, printed copies of which had been posted to all the members.

When the business had been disposed of, Mr A. W. Madsen, Editor of *Land & Liberty*, spoke on "Social Security and the Land Question," Dr Pearson presiding. Councillor S. Needoff occupied the chair at the lunch-hour meeting on 30th April, and at the meetings in Stockport and Clitheroe with the same speaker, Mr Owen and Mrs Sumner, respectively, presided. The substance of these interesting addresses appeared in a full-column report published in the *Clitheroe Advertiser*.

An amendment to a resolution of Social Security which was to come before the recent annual conference of the N.U.D.A.W. in London, was adopted by the Preston branch of the Union and placed on the agenda. The amendment, for which Mr W. Lyon was responsible, proposed "to remove the cause of social insecurity and poverty by means of the abolition of private property in the land and its contents, by implementing the principle of the taxation of land value."

In his weekly "Leaves from a journalist's log-book" in the *Stockport Express* of 13th May, "The Idler" quotes from the current number of the *Porcupine* at some length, and repeats the Secretary's offer to send a copy of *How the English people became landless* to any reader who would forward name and stamp. A number of applications have since been received.

Mr D. J. J. Owen opened an interesting discussion on Land Values Taxation at the International Club in Manchester on 11th May.

A small display advertisement has been placed in the *Stockport Express*: Do you want to know the answers to arguments for or against Fascism, Communism, Beveridgeism, etc.? The Henry George School of Social Science offers you a Free Correspondence Course. Write for Prospectus to A. H. Weller (giving address).

LIVERPOOL LEAGUE: Correspondence Secretary, Miss N. McGovern, 74 Osmaston Road, Prenton, Birkenhead.

At the meeting addressed by Mr A. W. Madsen in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, on 1st May, approximately 50 members attended. The subject was "Social Security and the Land Question," Mr Curzon Newhouse presiding. Questions and discussion aroused much enthusiasm. The urgent need for further study circles was stressed. Since the meeting, typescript copies of Mr Madsen's address have been circulated to several hundred new contacts in the Liverpool area inviting their closer interest.

Other meetings: On 30th May, Mr Curzon Newhouse, Merseyside Young Friends at the Friends' Meeting House, Arundel Avenue, on "Taxation of Land Values"; on 31st May, Mr Newhouse on "The Futility of Pacifism—without Reform," at the Friends' Institute, 97 Islington, under the auspices of the Merseyside Pacifist Group.

Two Study Circles are carrying on well: Blundellsands District, meets each Friday, leader Mr J. W. Foley, 15 Everest Road, Liverpool 23; Liverpool District, meets each Sunday, leader Mr. G. Miller, 31 Corwen Crescent, Liverpool 14.

It has been arranged to display two large posters on Mersey Platform outlining the method of the Henry George School of Social Science with mention of where the Books can be obtained. Members are asked to do their best to encourage these study circles in their own districts. All details can be obtained from the above address or from 4 Great Smith Street, London, S.W.1.

Mr A. S. Munsie addressed on 16th May the Glasgow University Students International Club on "Henry George's Life and Work." The gathering included members from a number of nations and races. The speaker reports an exceptionally interesting discussion and a determination on the part of many to learn more, proved by the demand for the books and pamphlets he had brought with him.

Letters to the Editor received in Press cuttings include those by J.W.B. (2) in the Yorkshire Observer, C. H. Smithson in the Halifax Courier, O. B. Sweeney in Cavalcade, A. S. Munsie in the Glasgow Southern Press, A. J. Mace in the Clydebank Press, Havershill in the Nottingham Journal and G. D. McKellen in the Manchester Guardian. The arguments in favour of Land Value Taxation reach out to a wide constituency when so published. It is field correspondence well worth developing.