

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

HOLLAND

Mr H. Kolthek, on behalf of the Justice and Freedom Party of Holland, has addressed an Open Letter to the King of Belgium which follows up in its message the letter the King sent to his then Prime Minister, M. van Zeeland, requesting him to study and report upon the economic causes of the world depression. Mr Kolthek's Open Letter has been entitled "Dictatorship or Democracy" and has been published, price 5 Dutch cents, in a well printed pamphlet. We hope to review this important statement more fully in an early issue. Meanwhile, we are glad to know that it is about to reach a wider public by translation into French and the publication of the text in *Terre et Liberté*, our French contemporary. The "Open Letter" was formally presented to the King along with a copy of *Progress and Poverty* and the King wrote to Mr Kolthek acknowledging the letter and the gift. In pamphlet form, the Open Letter has been a great success, thousands of copies have been sold, including a great number in Belgium itself.

INDIA

The Rev Victor J. White, Vice-President of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, gave us in a recent letter the important information that a Commission has been appointed to inquire into the working of the Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenue of Bengal. Mr White has met several officers of Government, European and Indian, and all have shown a great interest in the principle of the taxation of land values. He desired to forward a statement to the Commission and the Union has been able to give ready and valuable help by forwarding a memorandum provided by one of the greatest authorities on the subject, for whose service we are deeply grateful. With this material to guide him, Mr White will be able to present a very convincing case.

The Bengal "Permanent Settlement" is described by Mr F. G. H. Anderson, M.A. and late I.C.S., in his book *Facts and Fallacies about the Bombay Land Revenue System** and in the paper on the Indian Land Revenue System (copies still available) which he presented at our Edinburgh International Conference. The Bengal "settlement" was introduced in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis. It fixed the land-value contribution known as the "land revenue," so that from that date there could be no revaluation and all increases in rental values of land went into private pockets. "The East India Company," as Mr Anderson writes in his Edinburgh Conference paper, "suddenly called upon to levy the land revenue of Bengal, found it in the hands of revenue farmers or 'publicans' who collected all they could and paid 91 per cent to the Government of the Moghal and kept 9 per cent as their own commission. . . . The directors of the Company concluded it would be best to give a contract to the old revenue farmers to pay the same revenue. . . . If they had realized that rent would rapidly rise, we know from their subsequent comments that they would not have sanctioned the perpetual settlement. So long as rentals did not rise there was no more than the 9 per cent commission, spread over all the land held by one publican, to nourish the landlord class. . . . The loss to the public revenues of India by this sacrifice of the whole of the increment in

rental values after 1793 may be conservatively put at £12,000,000 a year (written in 1929)—a large sum in a poor country; and indeed there ought to be on most of the public buildings in Bengal an inscription: 'Contributed by the poorer provinces of India as a gift to the tenants and zemindars of Bengal.'

In his letter, Mr White writes: "Just imagine the zemindars receiving 3 rupees per acre and paying to the Government 2½ annas per acre (there are 16 annas to the rupee). Here is the source of supply for revenue; and revenue which is the people's for they create the value and should get it in public revenue." What the Commission will recommend is of the gravest import to the economic and social welfare of India.

SPAIN

A SPANISH CORRESPONDENT writes:—

With the Arab invasion Spain entered on an era of liberty and justice. Previously our country had been under the rule of the Gothic Kings, descendants of the Aryan race, who destroyed everything good that had existed in Spain since before the Roman domination. In the sixth century every vestige of civilization had disappeared and slavery prevailed—lords and vassals.

The Arabs vested the land in the municipalities and communes, and restored liberty of thought. They were tolerant of the ideas of all and for this reason they were received in triumph in every city they came to.

The Arab rule lasted for six centuries, and never was there a period of greater prosperity. The arts, industry, and agriculture flourished. No class paid any taxes. The community was the only landlord. The old people had a regular income from the community, the young received a dowry on marriage, the children had a right to education, and Spain had magnificent universities, such as those of Cordoba and Seville.

The Jews had beautiful synagogues, the Christians handsome cathedrals, and the Arabs magnificent mosques. Such was the respect given to all kinds of opinion.

In that period the population reached 32 millions. The foundation of the laws was respect for human liberty. The petty kings of Europe sent their sons to study in Spain, and congresses were held at Cordoba to which people came from all parts of the world.

With the Catholic Kings all that came to an end. Then began the inquisition and the negation of religious liberty. The municipalities were despoiled of their property, and the land passed into the hands of a few nobles, favourites of the royal house, and Spain was plunged into poverty. Industry came to a standstill. Protectionism and pillage became the public policy in the belief that the gold of America would pay for everything and that work was needless.

Spain received a death blow, and in two centuries the population was reduced from 32 to six millions.

A hearty welcome is extended to the new monthly journal *The Freeman* which began publication in November. Editorial office is at the address of the Henry George School of Social Science, 211, West 79th Street, New York City; editor Mr Will Lissner, and publisher Mr Frank Chodorov. Annual subscription is 50 cents a year. The articles are contributed by many writers who deal with the economics of the land question and free trade from varied points of view.

* Obtainable from the Director of Land Records, Poona, India, price 2 Rupees.