

## THE PRIMITIVE VIEW OF PROPERTY

The most highly civilized races to-day make no distinction between private property in what the individual produces and what is provided by nature. It is assumed that land has always been treated as private property, but the contrary is the case. The primitive instinct of mankind has always been to look upon land as the common heritage. In this connection it is interesting to quote J. H. Driberg, in *The Savage as He Really Is*, published by George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., at 6d. Mr Driberg writes:—

"Only that which a man makes or produces by his own undivided efforts is really his in the sense that he is free to give it away, to barter it or bequeath it. . . . Land, for instance, is the common property of the clan, or of the tribe if the organization is sufficiently centralized. The land may be vested in a chief who distributes it among households as required, and except in very rare cases no man can be dispossessed of land once held by him. The chief, however, is not the owner of the land, but the trustee. . . . 'The land owns the people,' as the popular saying has it, 'people do not own the land.'

"A clear distinction is made between the soil and its products. The former is the possession of the clan or of the tribe: the latter belongs to the individual farming the land. Ownership gives no rights of property in the soil, only the use of the soil can be transmitted to an heir. The same principle holds good among pastoral tribes; for though they do not cultivate the soil the tribal lands are divided into clan pasturages, the grazing rights of which are strictly preserved.

"In no case can land be sold or alienated by gift, exchange or any other form of transfer. There is no one entitled to dispose of it in this way, no one can answer for the whole clan. Even when land can be leased or mortgaged to others than clansmen, neither the lease nor the mortgage gives any title to the land itself, but only to the products of the land."

What has this eternal land question to do with the aggressive industrial depression? The answer is that the land question at bottom is the labour question, as Henry George has so well explained in his *Progress and Poverty*, new popular edition, price 1s.

In the 15th century the hours of the farm labourer were eight; his wages earned in 15 weeks sufficient to maintain a family of five persons a whole year. (See Thorold Roger's *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*.) Increase of population, improvement in technique of production, etc., has not increased wages or profit, but it has increased the capital value of agricultural land from 8s. freehold to £120 per acre, and urban land from 20s. to £5,000,000 per acre. All industries have their marginal level, and rent becomes the perfect equalizer of inequalities in natural resources.—A. MUNSIE in the *Scottish Farmer*.

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## DAAN DE CLERCQ



With deep regret we announce the passing of Daan de Clercq, President of the Dutch League for the Reform of Property in Land and an esteemed member of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. He was leaving his house, 5th December, when he was over-run by a motor car and expired an hour after without regaining consciousness. His passing is a severe loss to the Dutch Land Values movement and to a number of humanitarian movements in which he took a leading part. He was carried away thus suddenly, a man of remarkable

vigour and in the pride of health and strength despite his 77 years.

He was one of the first in Holland to insist upon the enormous importance of the land question and stood with Jan Stoffel in the early days when the only Dutch organization was the League for Land Nationalization, but as time passed he became more and more attached to the teachings of Henry George. When the International Conference was convened in Copenhagen in 1926 he was chosen by his Dutch co-workers to represent them. His fellow Georgeists from all the other countries assembled in Denmark found in him an outstanding character, a worthy comrade in the fight for social justice and withal a most attractive personality. Then came the Edinburgh Conference in 1926, where de Clercq renewed these acquaintances and entered into all its proceedings with undiminished spirit and vivacity. One of the well-remembered incidents of that great gathering was the reading of his Conference paper, "The Reclamation of the Zuyder Zee—the Opportunity for Land Settlement in Holland on Georgeist Principles," the lecture being illustrated with lantern slides. No doubt was felt in the minds of the audience that it was the manifest duty of the Dutch Government so to settle this new territory that the whole of the land value created would go to the community and land speculation be utterly barred.

D. de Clercq was a member of the Executive of the International Union. He paid occasional visits to London and never failed to call at our offices to have as many hours as he could spare for interesting and informing conversations. In him we have lost a dear friend and a national leader in the cause. We convey to the bereaved relatives and to our co-workers in Holland our heartfelt sympathy in their loss.

A. W. M.

The Ingram Institute of Social Science, San Diego, California, has launched a new monthly journal entitled *The Paradox*, which made its first appearance on the 15th December. It is the outgrowth of the monthly bulletin *The Ingram Institute News*, which has been issued for several years. Writing to us two months ago, Mr F. F. Ingram announced the new enterprise, saying that in this way he and his co-directors aimed to interest a wider public in the philosophy of Henry George. On the front of the journal these questions are asked: "A surplus of grain, a shortage of bread; a surplus of wool, a shortage of clothes; a surplus of labour, a shortage of work; why these paradoxes?" The answer is given in well-written articles. Congratulations to Mr F. F. Ingram and all his co-workers.

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"I always enjoy your well-written and newsy paper, and would be very much disappointed if deprived of its welcome information concerning our great Reform."—E. G. F. (New South Wales).