

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW REVEALS HIMSELF

MR. J. RUPERT MASON, San Francisco, has had correspondence with Mr. Bernard Shaw, whose letter in reply, as we now go to press, we have had the permission to print. It bears the date 22nd August, 1948, and is as follows:—

"I have never repudiated Henry George, nor denied my indebtedness to him for making an economist of me.

"The theory of economic rent grew up among the physiocrats of the XVII century in France. Turgot knew rent as a fact.

"The single tax was proposed by the elder Mirabeau to nationalize rent.

"Voltaire smashed him with his tract, *L'HOMME AUX QUARANTE ECUS*.

"Henry George, in his *Progress and Poverty*, repeated Mirabeau's mistake of overlooking the fact that if government confiscated rent and then simply sat on it instead of immediately undertaking and carrying on all the industrial functions discharged by the rentiers, the country would starve.

"The operation is impossible unless private property in rent is replaced by Socialism. I, like Voltaire, pointed this out and went on to Marxism.

"George, being no mathematician, held to the Capitalist theory of value, now obsolete.

"He missed Sidney Webb's demonstration that interest on capital is a form of rent, and Walker's extension of it to rent of ability.

"Taxation of land values is crude nonsense into which Georgeites are apt to blunder. Only cash income can yield anything to taxation. Values are phantoms until their harvest is reaped: and by no magic can the harvest of 1949 (nor of 1959) be reaped in 1947.

"I know nothing of how far George developed from Single Tax to Socialism, as after *Progress and Poverty* I dropped him and developed in my own Fabian way.

"G. BERNARD SHAW."

Mr. Shaw's views are certainly highly entertaining and original. Our readers can look forward to a competent review of them in our next issue.

TOO MUCH SECURITY?

To say that no "A" farmer can ever be turned out of his farm, whatever the changes may be in its ownership, sounds an attractive proposition. This, in effect, is what the new Agriculture Act decrees. It always seemed wrong, somehow, that a man with sufficient money could come along, buy a property and take away a farm from a man who may have spent most of his life in building it up to a high condition of excellence.

But there are other sides to this picture. There is, of course, the owner's side. It has accentuated the existing tendency by which it had become almost impossible to get rid of an unsatisfactory tenant unless he was astonishingly bad. Nor is it difficult to find cases where it does seem very bad luck for an owner who is unable to get possession of his own land for himself or a member of his family to farm.

We are finding, however, that other considerations are arising when the admirable aims of this new piece of legislation are put into practice. It has put a premium on farms with vacant possession, adding to the already high price. Farmers are therefore finding it increasingly diffi-

cult and expensive to obtain another farm, and this presses hardly when they want the farm to start a son.

The increased competition for owner-occupied farms with vacant possession overflows and swells the price people will pay to rent farms. Something very like the system of the fantastic premium flat-seekers will pay in "key money" is beginning to appear in agriculture. I heard of a case the other day where £6,500 was paid as "in-going valuation" for a very ordinary 170-acre dairy farm. About two-thirds of that really represented a premium to get on to the land.

Farming is the reverse of a static industry. Conditions are changing all the time. Some farmers want to progress to a larger holding: others often feel they would like to have a smaller acreage. New farmers come along; older farmers may want to reduce their commitments. The tendency of the new Act to "freeze" the occupation of land naturally restricts the free market in farms.

So it can well be argued that this legislation makes it more difficult for the industry to adapt itself to the changing conditions that are always confronting it. No one will quarrel with the principle of giving the good farmer the utmost possible security. The question that has to be answered is, have we thought too much of him and too little of the industry as a whole, including those newcomers who will be the "A" farmers of to-morrow? —"L. F. M." in the *Farmer & Stockbreeder*, Nov. 9th.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

FREE LAND : FREE TRADE : FREE MEN

Plan your next year's summer vacation so that part of it will be spent at "The Hayes," Swanwick, Derbyshire, England, during the week, August 14th to 21st, as member of the International Union which in those delightful surroundings and in that week holds its Seventh International Conference.

The terms for board and lodging are on a moderate scale and (subject to any material change in the level of prices) are as follows: Seven days' stay, £5 10s.; six days, £5; five days, £4 10s.; four days, £3 15s.; three days or less, £1 per day. This is for accommodation in the main building and the hostel in single and double bedrooms and bedrooms with three or four sharing. Accommodation under camp conditions (in well-appointed hutments) is available at cheaper rates.

Already, the announcement of the Conference in our previous issues has brought numerous responses. Besides the many in the United Kingdom who have enrolled (or intimated their intention of joining) correspondents in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France have named themselves or their associates as coming to England for the occasion.

Conditions attaching to membership of the Conference are—due enrolment as member of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, accepting and approving its objects and having paid the annual membership fee of 5s. or \$1; also payment, any time before August, 1949, of the special Conference fee of £1 towards meeting the general expenses of the Conference.

As the accommodation at "The Hayes" is of course not unlimited, it is important that early reservation be made. Address communications to: The International Union, 4 Great Smith Street, London, S.W.1—See Page 207.