

LANDLORD TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES

Mr J. RUPERT MASON writes :

"In the 'National Migratory Defense' Hearings, now being held by Congressman John H. Tolan in different parts of the country, I find (p. 8330) testimony by a minister in Nebraska to the effect that virtually all the land in his parish has been foreclosed by mortgage holders, who have made it a rule not to rent land to any man with children of school age, because they would have to be provided with education opportunities, which would involve employing a local school teacher, whose salary would have to be paid by taxes on 'local property,' in other words, the teacher's salary would have to be paid by the absentee landlords. Hence, no one with a family is allowed to rent a farm in his parish.

"In many of our States, the same economic group has got the States to enact

'sales' and 'state income' tax laws, to take the place of the taxes formerly levied on 'local property' for 'local' purposes. (Such as schools, roads, etc.) In California virtually all costs of local schools has been paid by the consumers since 1933, when our State sales tax law was first enacted and since then about \$80 million a year is 'allocated' by the State to the local 'school districts,' thus 'relieving' the ever vigilant appropriators of rent of an equal amount, which must obviously find its way into their treasury, and be reflected in higher 'prices' for land. The propaganda which is constant and nationwide, to the effect that until the price of land is back where it once was, there can be no 'prosperity,' has been carried on so long and insiduously, that any one who even attempts to question or challenge the

matter, is 'queer.' The public here, by and large, never questions the justice of taxing earned incomes or the products of labour, nor do but a few of them even suspect there is any other source to tap.

"On the other hand, land in our cities, formerly fabulously valuable is not saleable to-day. None is being bought nor sold. The courts are filled with actions by persons who haven't paid the rates on LV, and whose land is 'escheating' to the State. There are many million acres, now publicly owned, as I tried to call attention to in my paper to the 1939 International Conference, *Tax Delinquency in the United States*. Too few over here have tried to look into this, in their own State. Here is our point of leverage, in this country. 'Escheated' land should be kept in State ownership and leased, but never 're-sold'; it is a policy our courts have held to be wholly constitutional."

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)

ESSAY COMPETITION

The Prospectus of an Essay Competition conducted by the Henry George Foundation is in preparation. Cash awards amounting in all to £100 will be offered—namely one of £20, two of £15 each and five of £10 each. This will be the fifth Competition the Foundation has organized. On this occasion a wide choice of subjects is given and four books by Henry George are recommended for study: *Progress and Poverty* (1s. 6d.), *Social Problems* (1s. 6d.), *The Condition of Labour* (1s.) and *Protection or Free Trade* (abridged 1s., or 6d. in paper covers); but any one of these books will provide material enough for an Essay that can gain an award, since the choice of subjects is so large. Nevertheless, competitors will naturally be advantaged by reading all four of the books. The latest date for reception of essays will be the 31st March, 1943. The following are the subjects set:

(a) The bearing of the land and taxation system upon the pre-war economic and living conditions now so universally condemned, and therefore upon the promise and the possibility of a "post-war reconstruction" which shall prevent the recurrence of such conditions.

(b) The rent of land in relation to the distribution of wealth; rent in agriculture and in urban conditions; rent as influenced by increase in population and in wealth-producing power; the holding of land for future increase of rent and its social effects; incidence and economic effect of taxes on the rent of land.

(c) The moral, economic and legislative implications of the claim that there should be equality of opportunity in the occupation and use of land and that public revenue should be derived from the rent or value of land before any taxation is laid upon the products of labour.

(d) The practical expression of economic freedom which includes not only freedom to exchange but also freedom to produce, with examination of the arguments that are adduced in favour of the control and restriction of exchange and production.

(e) Examine one or more of the following proposals currently advocated to give labour a greater reward and generally speaking to secure better social conditions: Collective action in trade unions, co-operative enterprise, higher education, greater economy in government, extension of the social-welfare services, planned production and planned consumption with whatever may be involved in the State management of trade and industry, the State

ownership and control of the land. Three tests apply: (i) the larger production of wealth; (ii) the fairer distribution of wealth; (iii) maximum scope for individual liberty.

(f) Choose from any one of the books named any theme which has so interested you that you are moved to expand upon it either in exposition or in criticism.

(g) Review any of the books named as if the book were newly published and your review has been requested by some influential daily or weekly periodical.

The Competition will be open to all residents in Great Britain and Ireland with, however, the proviso that persons holding office in any organization within the Henry George movement and prize-winners in previous competitions conducted by the Henry George Foundation will not be eligible for awards. Further particulars with conditions and instructions will be given in the Prospectus copies of which will be sent on request.

Making this preliminary announcement, we apply to interested readers to help in all ways they can to make the competition known by circulating the Prospectus wherever it is likely to have attention, or by giving us names and addresses to which the Prospectus may be sent. The aim is to reach and gain the co-operation of teachers and students of colleges and schools, educational associations and committees, study groups, economic classes, reading circles, study and discussion groups in the forces and civil defence services, etc. Aid in making these contacts in any part of the country will be greatly appreciated.

Already so many orders have come for the reprint of the article *How the English People Became Landless* that decision has been made to reproduce it in pamphlet form—a little booklet of 16 pages very suitable for the pocket. We hope to have it ready by the middle of August. It is advertised on another page—price 2d. the copy or 1s. 6d. per dozen post free.

The issue of *Land & Liberty* containing the review of the book *Single Tax George* by Arthur Birnie is wholly out of print. A limited number of copies of that review have been made so that they are available on special request.

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LONDON CONFERENCE

The Conference held on 23rd July at the Heather Bell Restaurant, 75 Strand, was well attended. Quite three-quarters of the audience belonged to the public outside the immediate membership of the League and it was this "outside public" which took the major

part in the interesting discussion that followed the opening speech. After tea and light refreshments had been served, Mr H. G. Chancellor introduced the new President of the League, Mr F. C. R. Douglas, L.C.C., M.P., and moved him to the Chair. The Secretary conveyed good wishes from a number who were unable to be present including Archdeacon Donaldson of Westminster Abbey, Sir Robert Hamilton, M.P., T. Atholl Robertson, Ewart G. Culpin, L.C.C., Miss Honor Balfour, Capt George Grey, M.P., Dr S. Vere Pearson, Rev J. Arthur Pearson and others.

Resolution as follows, which was unanimously carried, was moved by Mr Douglas:

"This Conference affirms 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 commodities and labour, and to take for public revenue the value of land which is created by the labour and industry of the whole community."

Speaking to the resolution Mr Douglas said that the two major problems after the war would be the resuscitation of world trade and the switching over of war-like production at home to peaceful channels. The solution of these was inter-related. Taxation must be so adjusted that it did not interfere with the production or exchange of wealth. This involved the abolition of tariffs and other trade restrictions as envisaged by the Atlantic Charter. It also necessitated relief from rates and taxes which penalized building and employment at home. Valuable land must not be held out of use and the opportunities of production and employment denied to willing workers by an antiquated system which exempted unused land from contribution to rates and taxes. Replanning and reconstruction must not be impeded by the high land values which public expenditure and the industry of the people had created. These community values should be made to contribute to the public expenditure which maintained them, and taxes on the products of labour correspondingly reduced.

Among those who took part in the subsequent discussion were Miss R. Cohen, Mrs A. Mole (Stony Stratford), Mr J. R. M. Senior, Mr C. Loveridge, Councillor Harrison (Battersea), Mr F. W. Powe (L.C.C.), Mr John L. Grant, Mr G. Woods (Watford), Mr John F. McManus, Mr C. McKeown, Mr Ernest Green (W.E.A.), Major Leith-Hay-Clark, Mr A. W. Madsen, Mr Gardiner (West Africa), Miss Hilary Cox and five or six others who did not announce their names. The questions asked and the discussion brought out many