

### Speculation and Soil Erosion

Writing in the *Springs and Brakspan Advertiser*, October 2, MR. MATHER SMITH showed how inflated land values were contributing to soil erosion in the Union: "Many of our farmers are just out to make all the money they can out of their mealies, potatoes, etc., and they succeed in getting rich—at the expense of the soil. 'After them the deluge!' But it would not be fair to blame all our farmers for not doing more. About one-third are tenants. It is not their soil. Others have their farms so heavily bonded that they have no money left for soil conservation. (I have been in that position myself.) As Mr. Strauss said when he introduced the Soil Conservation Act in June, 1946, 'a great deal of land abuse is due to economic pressure and the first factor in this is inflated land values.' As nothing has been done since then to check these 'inflated values' our soil is washing away faster than ever.

"Land values must keep on rising in a growing and progressive community, but the inflated and exorbitant prices demanded for land can be kept down, as our Site-values Rating Ordinance of Transvaal tends to keep them down by bringing pressure on the landlords in our towns to put this land to good use, or sell out to someone who will. When this ordinance was introduced by the Hon. F. A. W. Lucas, Q.C., in 1914, he tried to get the rate extended to our rural land as well. But this was vetoed by the Administrator. That was nearly 40 years ago and we have made no advance since then.

"Much of our land is ill-used and quite a lot is put to no use whatever . . . In different parts of Africa the natives are now being forced to protect their soil, so why should the white man be immune? . . . Is it not the property of the human race?

"Our rural land has never been valued, and that must be done first. Then all owners of our farming land must be called upon to pay a rate, or duty, as the Danes call it, on the value of their land, as is already done in our towns. This, if substantial, would knock off the speculative prices demanded for our land, and would produce the revenue needed to save our soil."

A number of other letters have been published relating the land value policy to South Africa's desperate plight.

### Fourteen Million Acres Sold in 1951

The Johannesburg *Rand Daily Mail*, June 9, 1952, gave these particulars: During 1951, 7,002,000 morgen of farm land were sold in the Union for £47,628,000, according to a special report published by the Bureau of Census and Statistics in Pretoria.

The total value of the land sold was only exceeded once in the preceding ten years. That was in 1948, when 7,947,000 morgen of land were sold for £49,709,000. The average price of £6 16s. a morgen, paid in 1951, was the highest throughout the ten years however. The lowest average price was in 1942, when 8,843,000 morgen were sold at an average price of about £2 12s. a morgen.

In 1951 the Cape led in both the total amount and total value of land sold, 5,104,000 morgen fetching a total of £22,354,000. The average price paid for land in the Cape was the lowest in the Union, however, at about £4 8s. a morgen.

Highest prices were fetched in the Transvaal, where 473,000 morgen were sold for £8,425,000, or an average of £17 16s. a morgen.

## RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

A Message from the  
President of the International Union

As we view 1953 in retrospect and the politico-economic confusion, not only in the field of International Relations, but in the domestic field, it can be confidently predicted that the old policies will be abandoned, or at least modified by many nations.

The burden of taxes now imposed upon all who are struggling to produce and distribute the things people desire and require, plus the obstacles to commerce and trade imposed through tariffs, quotas and controls over foreign exchange, loom as paramount issues for 1954.

This condition provides the members of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, and all supporters of the basic politico-economic principles that Henry George so steadfastly upheld, with opportunities greater than ever to win friends and influence people.

President Eisenhower said, in his Budget Message to Congress (May 20): "We must develop a system of taxation which . . . will not discourage work, savings and investment." In another declaration he has made it clear that: "A nation's success in war and in peace demands participation in the community of nations. Commerce and communication with others, the play and interplay of human activity—such international partnership is required for national vitality and strength . . . In an interdependent world, the ultimate good of any part can be attained only with full regard to its relationship with the whole."

Honorable Lewis W. Douglas, former U.S. Ambassador to England, has written to President Eisenhower, as follows (July 14, 1953): "For thirty years the barriers that we have erected against imports into the United States have been incompatible with and have operated against the re-establishment of international economic health and equilibrium."

Tariff advocates within the United States can be expected to defend the privileges which they worked so long and hard to obtain. They can afford to buy publicity, which will continue to mislead many. But monopoly and special privilege are on the defensive, everywhere.

I take advantage of this opportunity to thank the officers and members of the International Union and loyal co-workers in so many countries for their wonderful support and vigorous co-operation, for their many suggestions and for the reports about conditions and progress which they have sent. They are all very helpful.

Let us redouble our search for new members and for new subscribers to LAND & LIBERTY. The Declaration of Principle and Policy and other Resolutions adopted at our Eighth International Conference in Denmark are available in many languages, and effective use of them is being made by many members and friends. They may be obtained from Headquarters, London, or from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York, who will also accept subscription to LAND & LIBERTY.

Reciprocating the Greetings many friends have sent me; while regretting that I cannot clasp your hands, I thank each of you personally for the privilege and honour you have conferred upon me.

With every sincere wish that your endeavours for Justice and Peace will fructify.

J. RUPERT MASON, *President*.