

to the West was partially closed to him. The New England pioneer allowed no landlord or official to stand between him and Nature; he could apply all his intelligence in just those circumstances that bring all of it to bear, i.e., when all the risk—and gain—is a man's own. But when there are no longer pioneers on the verge of primeval yet fertile land; when all habitable land is occupied by men who claim to own not only the work of their hands but the unworked bounty of Nature, then the descendant of the hardy pioneer is born a pariah in his own country. He starts to listen to any creed, however

irrational or subversive, which promises relief from present conditions; power-seekers start to exploit his discontent; the nation starts to lose confidence in itself.

The future is to that country which will keep open the frontier which never alters its position, which will see that in the midst of every great city as well as in its remotest province, no barrier can be interposed between any of its citizens and any of its land. In that country the free spirit of the pioneer, confident in himself and the ideals of his country, will not decline.

F. D. P.

RATING OF SITE VALUES—THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Statement submitted by Mr. JOHN ORR to the Interdepartmental Committee on Site Value Rating

SITE value has come to be regarded as a peculiarly appropriate basis on which to levy rates. This view has arisen from the perception that, although the value of the site is closely associated with that of structures erected on it, the origins of the values are different. A site is an immovable subject. To shape it so that it may serve their purposes men must improve it where they find it. They cannot treat it as they do parcels of the produce which they detach from land, such as timber, minerals and various crops. Before a community grows very large the need for certain kinds of equipment of the area on which it chooses to live becomes urgent. These create the value of the site. The character which they all share is communal—roads, lines of communication between members of the same or other communities, water supplies, drains, lighting systems and other services which facilitate the steps which members take to satisfy their needs and ambitions.

In most countries the earliest attempts have been made to raise public revenue directly from holders of land. Contemporary accounts, or traditions, give more or less clear accounts of how they fared, and probably none of these equal in clearness and fulness than that given by the results of the experiments in England, and by the writings of those who were near the events which they described. In the year 1085, nearly 20 years after he had defeated Harold, and made himself King of England, William the Conqueror brought forward his most serious piece of legislation. It was concerned with the valuation of land and its taxation. He met his Great Council at Gloucester at the end of the year, and in the words of the Anglo-Saxon chronicler, he had "much thought and deep speech" with them about the land, how it was held and by whom. It was decided that commissioners were to go over all England to make enquiry by oath of the Sheriffs, of all the barons, and of the whole hundred, the priest, the reeve and six villeins of every township. This was the most widespread use of the jury system yet made.

Nothing is said about the opposition of the barons in the meeting of the Council. This expressed itself in violent resistance to the enquiry. William, however, took it seriously, and went up and down the country to expedite the work, which was completed in seven months. Another meeting of the Council was held on August 1st, 1086, at which all the landholders of substance attended, and swore the oath of allegiance to the King on the basis of information contained in the survey.

A tax of 6s. on the hide of land (120 acres) was imposed. Various estimates are made by historians of the amount raised by this tax. They agree that it was substantial.

But there was no permanence about the return. William died in 1087, and, as we know from recent history, it requires a strong central authority to maintain a valuation as well as to institute it. Under his successors and especially during the anarchy of Stephen's reign, the revenue derived from the Domesday tax was cut down to a small sum. Kings with an insecure position were unable to control barons who rebelled against this measure. Even Henry II, who restored law and order in the more general government of the country, failed here. At the meeting of the Great Council at Woodstock in 1163 he proposed to transfer to the Exchequer from the Sheriffs the small remnant of the tax which was still collected. Thomas Becket, now head of the Church, opposed him in an unseemly altercation, and with this the tax ceased to appear in the record of the receipts.

Bishop Stubbs tells us that "so long as all the taxation fell on land, Domesday Book continued to be the rate-book of the Kingdom." But including the many years of dwindling and depleted yield, the tax had a career of less than eighty years. Sir James Ramsay, in *The Revenues of the Kings of England*, offers an explanation while he criticises the action. "It seems odd," he says, "that the King should refrain from exacting a perfectly legal tax, without introducing any new impost to replace it. We can only suggest that, pestered with applications for remission, Henry thought the Danegold (tax) more trouble than it was worth, and that he preferred to fall back on arbitrary assessments and judicial penalties." The direction which legislation took was due to the barons more than to the kings. The arbitrariness of the assessments took different forms, such as imposts on wool, a poll-tax, levies of various proportions on the possessions of various classes. And after they had successfully resisted valuation and taxation of a regular and recurring nature, the landowners proceeded to systematize the enclosure of land. Gibbon, in the midst of his wide survey of this kind of history, makes the following reflection, "The desire," he says, "of obtaining the advantages, and of escaping the burdens, of political society is a perpetual and inexhaustible source of discord." This reflection was illustrated in the four centuries of English history which followed. Unemployment, begging, highway robbery and other evils increased, and these were attributed directly to enclosure. In the sixteenth century legislation became common to compel landowners to rebuild decayed houses and to restore land to tillage, but it was not "put in execution," and was ignored. In 1598, however, the Poor Relief Act was passed. But its extension and the final shape given to it in 1601 signified the intention of the legislators to make it work. Overseers were instructed "to raise by taxation of every inhabitant,

person, vicar and other, and of every occupier of lands, houses, tithes . . . coal mines, or saleable underwood, a convenient stock."

The experience of receiving an unexpectedly large increase in income from the possession of recently enclosed land may have opened the hearts of the landowners. They may have had more enlightened leaders. At any rate, they controlled legislation, and they used this power to bring the value of land as the most prominent element into the basis of local taxation. Nor did they ever forget that this power had been theirs. Long afterwards, in 1822, when prices fell from their war level, they moved in Parliament that there should be a remission of taxation on agriculture. The Government refused the request, telling them that the farmers must look for remedy "to the operation of natural causes and not to the confiscation of the revenues of the State." Still the landowners remembered. In 1896, when prices had fallen once more, they relieved occupiers and owners of land of half the burden of the rates. Finally, in 1929, in the Derating Act, they cast off the whole burden.

They did not concern themselves with the question where it fell. The occupiers and owners of houses in villages and small towns have felt the weight. Rates

which formerly were a small percentage of the rents, are now often equal to them, and are called a second rent.

Farms are let on new leases at an increase of 150 per cent. or perhaps more. They are sold at prices increased in like proportion, and the confiscated income of the State in the form of repealed rates makes part of the rise.

The remedy for this dislocation is the rating of site values. In practice the valuation and the collection of the value is no more difficult for the State than for the landowners. What is invariably wanting when this is to be done is a government and minister who will act on the country's behalf as landowners and agents act for themselves. The judicial principle inherent in land valuation makes it an operation fruitful far beyond its service as a mere basis for collecting revenue. Its expansion and application to thousands of problems which contain the substance of corporate life would be a means of removing much of the never-ending discord which injures industrial and social life. First-rate valuers, highly paid, full time, equal in status to judges in any court, are needed to provide this basis for managing the land, the foundation of the country's life, for putting into operation the highest form of preventive law.

A CONFERENCE IN DENMARK

The Danish "Ecotechnical High School" (which gives instruction on the teachings of Henry George in classes conducted in many parts of the country) held its Annual Conference on September 10th—12th in Odense under most happy circumstances. It met and lived in the newly-rebuilt Folk High School, belonging to *Husmaend* of the Island of Funen. Peculiar interest was given to the occasion in that the adherents of Georgeism were the first to have the use of the premises for Conference purposes; and were able to celebrate a quite remarkable undertaking—the rebuilding of that school which, like a Phoenix, had arisen from its ashes; the school where the late Jakob E. Lange had been Principal and for two generations or more had given that "after education" for which the Danish Folk Schools are so famous, his pupils being the young men and women "off the land," sons and daughters of the hardy *Husmaend* stock. The *Husmaend* are, in fact, small peasant proprietors whose farms can best be described as "crofts," but who, nevertheless, thanks largely to the marvellously developed instrument of co-operation and their own loving care for the land as independent men, make their acres more productive than those of the greater estates. The magnificent new building, wonderfully equipped for its boarders (the young men in the winter months and the young women in the summer) takes the place of the old, which had been totally destroyed during the war, Nemesis at the hands of the R.A.F. having come upon the German Gestapo, which was using it for their dreadful inquisition. The *Husmaend* soon got together and with financial help from many quarters they restored their own educational institute, which now stands as a model for all Denmark. Another feature of the "auspices" of this occasion is that the *Husmaend*, those small landed proprietors, have been and are the most ardent among the classes in the country in promoting the Henry George policy, their late Principal, Jakob Lange, having been one of the most prominent advocates of that policy, translator of *Progress and Poverty*, and himself the author of *Social Economy* and many economic writings; besides the fame he has

won in his contribution to horticultural research and its literature. Most fortunate, too, are the *Husmaend* in Lange's successor, Mr. Grönborg, a man with the same broad sympathies, the same spiritual outlook and the same ability to guide in all their ways the young people over whom he has charge.

Among the things saved from the old school were the much-treasured bronze bust of Henry George, which stood on its pedestal in the grounds, and the oil paintings of Mr. and Mrs. Lange. By some good chance they had been removed before the Gestapo took possession. They are replaced. And with the inauguration of the new school, the Conference of the Georgeists concluded with a mass meeting, which dedicated a granite rostrum to the memory of Lange, the forum being the lawn on which public demonstrations are held, ready, too, for the many *Husmaend*'s meetings that will be held at that spot. The carvings are appropriate and the inscription, translated, reads: "To the memory of Jakob Lange, intimate friend of wild plants, the teacher of youth, guide of the *Husmaend*, fellow-combatant with Henry George." The dates are April 2nd, 1864, and December 27th, 1941.

The Conference had been ably organised by Mrs. Caroline Björner, under whose guidance the "Ecotechnical High School" has made so much progress. There were members from many parts of Denmark. The British movement was represented by Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Madsen and Mr. V. H. Blundell. The sessions, following the order of the programme, included: "The work for land value taxation in Great Britain and progress in the Dominions" (Mr. Madsen); "Children and the franchise" (Mr. Niels Skriver Svendsen); "Future of the land-value reform in Denmark" (Mr. Oluf Pedersen, ex-M.P.); "One world or none" (Prof. H. Brandt Rehberg, public lecture); "Productiveness of *Husmaend*'s holdings compared with larger estates" (Mr. Harald Grönborg); "Advancement of the study of social economy," with reports by Mr. Bue Björner and Mrs. Caroline Björner on the Ecotechnical High School, and by Mr. Blundell on the Henry George School of Social