

the law taxing vacant sites had been passed, they succeeded in reducing the tax to its lowest limits. When the regulations for the practical carrying out of that law were being drafted, they succeeded in amending them so that instead of contributing in accordance with the selling value, those vacant sites should contribute on the same basis as the best agricultural land in the district. And that is how they are assessed now; but the present Finance Minister is reported to have the intention of re-establishing the selling value as the basis of assessment.

As the Minister said: "The number of vacant sites in the towns is positively scandalous. In the very heart of Madrid, close to the Puerta del Sol, there are vacant plots worth one hundred million pesetas which pay taxes as agricultural land. The owners can thus afford to keep that land out of use; but as soon as we tax them on the full value of the land they will see the advisability of building on them."

Another instance of the power of the monopolist is shown in a case in Zaragoza. There (thanks to the efforts of our colleagues and specially of those of Don Manuel Marraco, who sent to the Ronda Meeting in 1913 a motion which was carried) a resolution to tax vacant town plots was passed by the Town Council for the specific purpose of wiping off the town's debts. More than two years ago this enactment was sanctioned by the Central Government in Madrid, but to this day it has remained a dead letter. Such is the power of the vested interests which, when afraid of fighting openly, exert themselves in the dark, and under cover.

Coming now to South America, our movement has made gigantic strides. We have no positive information as to whether the taxation on land values is in operation in any municipality beyond the very good news we heard here in this hall two days ago concerning Mendoza and Buenos Aires, but we know this much, that there are a great number of Municipal Councils in the Argentine and in Brazil where propositions and schemes have been put forward with the object of taxing land values, sometimes at the instigation of Mayors or Governors and other times through the instrumentality of the Single Tax organizations supported by public opinion. As you can see from my statement, there is not the slightest doubt that Georgism has taken a deep root in the fertile soil of those countries, and we look forward to the day when the taxation of land values will be put into practical operation by all the municipalities in South America.

The work carried out by the Georgists in that part of the world is deserving of the highest praise and is highly encouraging to us in this hemisphere.

I believe that this International Conference could create an organism which would enable the active co-operation of the Georgists of all the world towards the advance of the idea in Denmark and the Argentine. It would be necessary to organize a permanent International Committee, either in London or in any other town.

I also believe that our meetings should be held at more frequent intervals. From the first International Conference presided over by Henry George in Paris in 1889 to the second one held in Ronda in 1913, 24 years elapsed. From the second meeting to the present one there has been a gap of ten years. I have the pleasure to suggest that all Georgists should meet in an International Conference every three years. At each meeting the date and place of the next Conference would be agreed upon. If you approve of this suggestion, I would further propose that the next International Conference be held at Copenhagen in August, 1926.

It only remains for me to put on record the great satisfaction it gives me to find myself once more amongst so many faithful friends in this Conference, upon which I look as a first meeting of the true League of Nations, and I take this opportunity to send cordial greetings to all the friends who have been unable to join us and a

tribute of respect to the departed who worked with untiring faith in the propagation of the gospel which was given to the world by the great Master, Henry George, whose memory we revere at all moments, and to whom our love and gratitude are due for having opened our mind and our heart in the midst of the horrible darkness which enshrouds this corrupt civilization.

CAMBRIDGE

Mr. A. H. Peake on Housing

Mr. A. H. Peake (member of the Oxford International Conference) gave an address on Housing under the auspices of the Cambridge Borough Liberal Association, 10th October, Councillor J. S. Conder, Chairman of the local Housing and Town Planning Committee, presiding.

In the course of his remarks (we quote from a column report of the CAMBRIDGE DAILY NEWS) the speaker said:

The evil of the housing shortage was admitted in all quarters, and the extreme urgency of the problem was making many people desperate, and willing to adopt any means, whether just or unjust, if only they could do something to remedy the shortage soon. How strange it was that men were needing houses, while the raw materials necessary were all around them in abundance; building land, clay for bricks, gravel, limestone, coal and ironstone, etc., while many men remained unemployed, and some were in danger of becoming unemployable; and at the same time the progress of science had made possible the use of methods and machinery undreamt of when the stones, say, of King's College Chapel, were quarried one by one by hand labour alone.

What, then, prevented the solution of the housing problem? Was there some root cause, some radical injustice, which kept the hatches locked against the would-be users? If there was such an injustice, then no amount of tinkering and no legislation which did not deal with the injustice could be satisfactory or prevent evil fruit from being produced. In the speaker's opinion, such a fundamental injustice existed in land monopoly, which gave power to certain individuals to say as the hatches were opened, "This is mine." This monopoly was bolstered up by our present rating system, and would be broken down by the abolition of this system and the substitution therefore of the taxation of land values.

There is no need to inquire into the use to which the land is put, whether the owner possesses one plot or many, whether he be rich or poor, living here or abroad, etc. Experience of the system abroad shows that the peaceful co-operation of the owners is easily secured. They understand at once that they have only to see whether the market value of their sites is fixed in right relation to that of their neighbours, and to that of the remoter sites. We have Lord Northcliffe's evidence that Sydney, where the system is in operation, is a remarkable city, entirely free from slums, and plentifully supplied with great open spaces.

It was commonly stated that in the matter of housing private enterprise had failed. Had it ever had a fair chance? Was it not time that the incubus of the rating system was removed, and land monopoly broken down, to give it a fair chance?

The true function of government was to take care that justice was the foundation stone of the political system, so that men should be free to house, employ and feed themselves. The aim of politics ought to be the same as that of religion, that men might have life, and have it abundantly. An interesting discussion followed, and the speaker answered fully questions put to him by Mr. A. J. Winship, Dr. G. P. Bidder (who announced himself as a convert to taxation of land values), and by others.