

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## CANADA

## Land Grants and the Public Domain

The *Square Deal*, Toronto, in its November-December issue contained articles and reports of absorbing interest, and a special feature was the account of the observance of the Henry George Centenary held in Toronto on 2nd December. The large attendance included representatives from Hamilton, Oshawa, Peterboro, Montreal and Brantford, and messages were received from other Canadian centres. Speakers at the banquet were Miss Dorothy E. Coate, who gave a most instructive description of "Henry George's Principles in Practice," Mr H. Bronson Cowan on "The Reaction of Governments and Economists to the Georgist Theory" and the Hon Arthur W. Roebuck, who gave his audience the benefit of recent researches into Canadian history. Private advices tell us that the most eloquent speech of the evening was that of Mr Wynne of Hamilton (where Mr E. T. Farmer has done such brilliant work). Asked to report on Hamilton, Mr Wynne merely called on the Hamilton delegates to rise. A solid mass of people rose, mostly young men and they and "the speech" were acclaimed with prolonged applause.

## Address by Hon A. W. Roebuck

Referring to the land-grant abuses in Upper Canada as stated in Lord Durham's famous report, Mr Roebuck said that the high point of abuse by the irresponsible government cliques of the day was in Prince Edward Island, where practically the entire Island was granted in a single day, 1,400,000 acres in large grants to friends of the government and upon conditions which were later totally disregarded.

In Upper Canada, the public domain was not subject to control of Parliament, but was considered the property of the Crown and was disposed of by the Lieutenant-Governor under the direction of the "Family Compact."

When Lord Durham made his investigation there were approximately 17 million acres of land surveyed in Upper Canada, of which three million acres were set aside as Clergy Reserves. No government responsible to the people would have been guilty of the Clergy Reserves, but even worse was the administration of private grants with their excess acreage and gross favouritism.

To the United Empire Loyalists were granted 3,200,000 acres; 450,000 acres to discharged soldiers and sailors; to magistrates and barristers, 255,000 acres, and in addition 50,000 acres to five individual executive councillors. Then 36,900 acres were granted to clergymen and their families as private property in addition to the clergy reserves. As many as 264,000 acres were assigned to persons who contracted to make surveys, and Lord Durham complained bitterly as to the inefficiency of the surveys of Upper Canada.

Officers of the army and navy received 92,526 acres, while endowment of private schools accounted for 500,000 acres. To Colonel Talbot were granted 48,520 acres for no good reason that the speaker knew of, other than his patriotism in settling near the City of London. To the heirs of General Brock went 12,000 acres, and 12,000 acres to Doctor Mountain, a former Bishop of Quebec.

Not one-tenth of these lands were settled upon by the grantees, and the same can be said of the 3,200,000 acres given to the United Empire Loyalists. The strips were sold by the United Empire Loyalists for paltry amounts in most cases, and members of the executive council and the judiciary were noted as purchasers from

the grantees in large blocks and at prices that ranged from a gallon of rum to five or ten cents an acre.

The grants above-mentioned constituted more than one-half of the surveyed lands of the entire province, and held for the most part totally unoccupied, uncleared and uncultivated, they lay like a wet sponge soaking up the results of the industry of the people.

Scattered all over the face of the township, these idle and uncared-for lands blocked progress, increased the distances and difficulties of travel, stagnated business, and brought about a condition of unemployment as bad as we have it to-day. The Rebellion of 1837 was even more an economic revolution against land speculation and land grant than it was a political revolution.

Some idea of the industrial conditions brought about by this maladministration is indicated in the fact that approximately one-half of the immigrants who arrived in Upper Canada annually departed for the United States, where conditions of land monopoly were less drastic than they were in Upper Canada.

Mr Roebuck said that the institution of municipalities with their ratings upon land values had done much to break up the large estates thus granted, but land speculation was by no means a thing of the past in the Province of Ontario. He instanced as an example the thousands of acres of mining land held in the north country, monopolized and unused. He referred to his own experience with the happy army of prospectors who at one time roamed the unclaimed areas of the north. That army is to-day as extinct as is the army of the Black Prince. The reason is that the lands have been staked out wherever there is an indication of a possibility of minerals, and do you know, he asked, how much the owners pay in taxes? They pay—when they do pay, and arrears run back for as much now as six years—5 cents per acre per annum. One company is said to own as much as 100,000 acres of nickel land, with most of it quite unused, and yet some people wonder why we have an unemployment problem in this Province.

## WHERE LAND IS CHEAP

## Pitcairn, Java, Bali, Samoa, Tonga

Prefacing her remarks at the Toronto Banquet, Miss Dorothy E. Coates contrasted the Seychelles with their poverty, prisons, and insanity, with Pitcairn Island where there is free land, no crime, no disease, no taxes, no prisons, no idleness and no extremes of wealth and poverty; or with Lord Howe Island, which the National Geographic calls "The Paradise of the Tasman," free from land monopoly and all forms of private privilege.

If we blame the poverty and unrest of India upon overcrowding, remember that there are no famines, mutiny, or other signs of over-population in Java, only five or six hundred miles long, but supporting forty million people; or in tiny Bali, with its million and more well-fed, happy inhabitants. In both countries, the people live up to their belief that land belongs to the Gods, who lease it to them to work and to live upon.

The same idea, prevailing in Samoa, explains why Samoans fare so much better than natives in troubled Trinidad or Jamaica. A year or so ago, the New Zealand minister for lands reported: "There are no starving poor in Samoa. These by-no-means-simple natives have retained the ownership of their land so that every Samoan is an independent landowner. If a Samoan wants a bicycle, he simply grows some extra copra or more bananas, sells them and returns to his leisure."