

# The Henry George News

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## Coffee Land

### A Fortune In Parana

**M**ONSIGNOR L. G. LIGUTTI, winding up a long and dramatic visit in South America, wrote a report of a day in the Amazon valley in one of his news letters which we could not resist sharing with our readers.

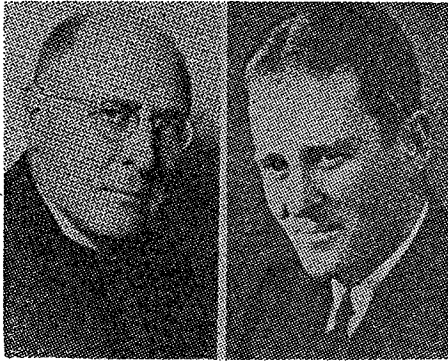
"Here," he writes, "is the story of Western Parana: About 3,000 feet high, slightly undulating, small hills, high trees and underbrush fill the whole territory. It's the mato (woods), fertile land, plenty of rain, excellent climate. Years ago an English company owned all of it. Then during World War II, a Brazilian company took it over. Within the last few years roads have been put through. Next year the first railroad engine will puff into Maringa. It's the conquest of the West—the victory of man over the jungle. There is wild speculation in land values. Fortunes are made overnight.

"I watched the digging of the covas (small holes) 18" x 18" wide and about 12" deep, where about 12 coffee beans are planted. Four inch square, 20" long sticks partially cover the hole to protect the new plants. About six are left to grow. After a year the plants are visible and wax strong, about 15 feet apart. They are clean tilled by hand-hoes; intertillage of beans or corn during the first three or four years. In the fourth year the first coffee bean crop is harvested. The branches are stripped by hand, and the beans fall into cloth. In this region of rather cheap coffee, there is no fermenting of the pulp that covers the bean. It's just stripped off by machine, and the coffee is put into bags for the Sao Paulo wharves.

"Coffee is getting more and more expensive. Wages, transportation and all services have skyrocketed. We in the U. S. may complain of high coffee prices, but if we produced coffee in the U. S. with our wages, we would have to pay double the price we pay now.

"Actually the guiltiest ones are the profit takers on land values. To prove the absolute correctness of Henry George advocacies, one need but study the present Parana situation. It's absolutely unjust, yet legal and respectable. Many former European and U. S. diplomats hold titles to land—and what efforts are being made to have land purchased for colonization of large groups, so that investors may benefit by more human beings settling in a neighborhood!"

**Msgr. Ligutti and Rev. Young have been invited to speak at a rally to be held by the New York Henry George School on June 24, at Hunter College, 69th and Park Avenue, New York.**



Mons. L. G. Ligutti

W. Wylie Young

after year until the soil had been impoverished. Then the entire tribe would move on to another virgin piece of woodland, clear it and repeat the whole performance.

In such a simple economy there was no advantage in holding title to land and though the lack of aggressiveness and the general absence of know-how severely limited the production and exchange of goods, nevertheless the mild communalism which resulted found all members of the community sharing equally the benefits of their common toil. The means of life were meagre and social activity was limited, but there were no masters and no slaves and life was tranquil and free from the vicious and evil aspects which characterize the more "civilized" parts of the world.

When it was discovered that one could, by flooding an area annually, grow rice indefinitely on a piece of land, the practice of individual ownership was introduced. The more enterprising members of society claimed the right to own and operate farms as individuals. With the coming of this new system there arose a division

## Fairyland Revisited

As the Coronation approaches millions will think of Queen Elizabeth II with interest and awe. The Head of the House of Windsor is one of the richest persons in the world. She inherits, among other treasures, an art and jewel collection valued in millions of dollars. The crown jewels alone are worth about \$80,000,000.

The new Queen owns, as part of the incalculable fortune, all sturgeons and whales caught in home waters, the land around the perimeter of the islands between high and low tide, all gold and silver mines in Britain, and the exclusive right to search for oil.

The British sovereign does not pay an income tax, because in theory she would be paying the tax to her own treasury. While it is almost impossible to separate personal possessions from those belonging to the Crown, the Queen naturally inherits the royal estates of Balmoral in Scotland, Sandringham, and thousands of acres of farm land. The Windsor family is said to own personally a portfolio of gilt-edged investments, as well as valuable real estate in London and New York.

## Traditions in Conflict

By W. WYLIE YOUNG

**Y**EARS ago we were intrigued with a story about life in Madagascar, that huge island off the eastern coast of Africa. Here rice was the main crop for many generations. To grow it the natives would clear a few acres of thicket and on this fertile spot would grow their rice year

amongst the people. A solid citizenry became divided into classes. The master-slave relationship soon appeared and all the evils which invariably manifest themselves in our predatory society arose to plague the erstwhile happy and contented people.

One of the most intriguing areas of research awaits the student who wants to examine the effects upon social life which accrue when conditions are such as to discourage private ownership to land. Eskimo life could never abound in material comfort but the natural communalism which results provides definite compensations. Nomadism, if accompanied with a religious philosophy which is not too far from basic truth, will produce a brand of social justice which is little short of amazing to the highly tutored Christian, who thinks of his mode of life as being the best possible in this world.

Any person who has become enamored of the truths proclaimed by Henry George never ceases to be amazed at the tough resistance that is presented to his doctrines. All modern society seems to set itself in one solid mood of denial. The grip of custom and convention seems to block every intelligent approach to the land problem.

### Darkest Africa?

It is a matter of interest to learn that on the other side of the world there is a huge continent where the exact reverse of this attitude is being experienced. Africa and its economic ways are seldom considered as being significant. Its backwardness has seemed to indicate that there could be little that Westerners could learn from Africans. To one in Western society who has been baffled by the resistance to the basic truth about land, it is interesting to know that in Africa there is an equally tough resistance to the idea of treating land as something that should be bought, sold and mortgaged. For centuries the great majority of African people have never known what it was to hold exclusive title to land and to treat it as a commodity.

Two basic philosophies are lived out in African tribal life. First, the brand of religion known as animism predominates. Because of the interpretations of life which this sort of faith inspires, the Africans have become so hopelessly confused that the advantages that might have accrued to them, because of their practice of thinking of land as a common heritage, have been cancelled. To see in every stick or stone, or in any material object that happens to strike the fancy at the time, a force or influence of divine proportions, has tended to lead the Africans into a maze from which they cannot extricate themselves.

Second, the African has been taught to look upon the earth as a common or tribal possession. Since there is no habit of tilling a particular piece of land indefinitely and since every  
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## Traditions in Conflict

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tribe stays on one piece of land just long enough for it to wear out, automatically forcing the tribe to seek another area where the process is repeated, the pattern of economic life becomes that of a mild communalism with all sharing alike and no one pressing forward for any very vigorous program of production.

This attitude toward the land has fastened itself upon the African's mind so emphatically that his traditions are set against any tendency to accept the Western practice of holding land as an asset of the individual. Having no basic understanding of the inherent good that might be contained in the African's social attitude, Westerners, both missionary and business groups alike, insist upon introducing the Western practice of buying and selling land. Our general illiteracy as to the proper way to handle land, coupled with our observations that Africa is a backward land and that Westerners are progressive, blinds us to the fact that Africans, now beginning their struggle for civilization, have one of the richest traditions of any people upon this earth.

It is their religion which needs to be changed, not their attitude toward "Mother Earth." Could they be brought to look upon creation with that confident and assured attitude first struck by the ancient Hebrew and enunciated in the first chapters of Genesis, when God commanded Adam to "be fruitful and multiply and to conquer the earth and subdue it," and could they be brought to abandon the fear complexes which primitive animism engenders, Africa could conceivably become the most promising territory on earth for those who believe in the principles of Henry George.

### *Modern Africa*

Emory Ross in his book *African Heritage* has some extremely interesting things to say to Georgists. At least Georgists will understand the meaning of many of his statements.

There are 114 million people in Africa south of the Sahara. Of these perhaps 3.5 million live in cities. All the rest of the inhabitants of that huge land live in rural areas where the practice of holding land in common is a deep seated tribal tradition. It is not the only good thing about their religion but they do hold to the idea that land is sacred and that it should be considered the most precious and inalienable possession of the tribe.

Two diverse types of civilization are clashing in Africa. Their traditional attitude toward land is fundamentally right and socially sound. Ours is as basically wrong and socially unsound. Their religion is primitive and desperately lacking, whereas that of the West is, when divorced from those predatory concepts which are born of our faulty understanding of land, highly developed and fruitful. Could there be a fusion of African land concepts and Western concepts of value, as inspired largely by high religion, we could build a civilization which would truly be civilized.