

The Lengthened Shadows

THE importance of Australia and New Zealand in the annals of Georgism is rich and unique — both in the distinguished leaders it has known and in the persistent efforts to bring the awareness of LVT's advantages to the understanding of all.

A recent letter from Allan R. Hutchinson of Victoria (South Australia) reports "a most important victory in the success of a referendum of rate payers in South Melbourne on a proposal to cease local taxation of buildings and transfer it to the value of the site alone." In a poll taken on November 7th the vote was 10,949 for and 6,506 against.

A local land values research group distributed material showing "How Site Value Rating Would Affect South Melbourne." A colored map indicated which areas would carry lower rates, which would remain the same, and which would be higher under the unimproved value (LVT or site value basis). Almost all the residential areas were in the first group and this had great influence on the favorable result.

If we take a long step backward in time we will see that it has taken nearly a century for this to mature. Perhaps then we will realize that the mills do indeed grind slowly, and one should not be discouraged if achievement is delayed.

A. G. HUIE

We have a new HGN generation who missed reading about the tremendous influence of A. G. Huie who died in November at the venerable age of 95. He was called a most indefatigable letter writer and leader of forlorn hopes, but his letters were not forlorn. His views were clearly expressed with agreeable objectivity. Straightforward logic and courtesy made his defense wear well — there was nothing about his manner to cause people to turn

away as from a subject that had begun to pall.

He was a farm boy who had very little schooling, but in 1890 he read *Progress and Poverty* (an education in itself!) and was instantly impressed. When he went to Sydney to work he joined a debating club. Other celebrated Georgists, too, can trace their convictions to preparation for debates, a form of sparkling entertainment which we would do well to revive. In 1901 Mr. Huie was invited to help form a movement by acting as secretary pro tem. That became his life work and he labored untiringly for 52 years in the Georgist cause. His salary was low and sometimes nil when funds were low. In 1905 he became the first editor of the Standard, now known as Australia's Georgist voice. In 1916 he was honored with a citizen's banquet presided over by the Lord Mayor of Sydney where the one-time farm boy was warmly celebrated for strenuous efforts in door to door canvassing in the interests of LVT, this method of taxation having been made possible in 1906.

NEW ZEALAND

If we step over to nearby New Zealand we encounter Georgian history in the form of a recently published account of reminiscences by the Honorable Sir George Fowlds, a Scotsman who died in 1934 after a distinguished life on three continents — Great Britain, Africa and New Zealand. He dedicated his talents to the service of all the disinherited.

George Grey was another of the great Sirs of that period whose name is revered not only among Georgists but written large in history. Sir George Fowlds wrote of this older friend as "the greatest servant of the Crown during the Victorian era and one of the greatest empire builders. His first

governorship of South Australia laid the foundations that helped it to stand out through all the intervening years as one of the best governed states of Australia, while his two governorships of New Zealand, in its most difficult years, have been a great factor in its development. The failure to accept Sir George Grey's advice, and the departure from the principles which he advocated has, in practically every case, been unfortunate for the Dominion.

"Grey realized that free land meant free men, and that low priced land easily available to working men meant high wages and a prosperous people. Much of the best land in New Zealand had been parted with in large estates, and the late comers had to go on poor land or into the backblocks. Grey could see the lands of the large landowners growing rapidly in value, apart from any expenditure of labor or capital on their part. Every increase of virile population and all the public expenditures were tending to make these landowners rich, while the landless newcomers had to pay twice over for the value of public utilities, once to the landowners in the form of rent, and again to the state in the form of taxation through customs for the payment of interest on the loans which had created the land values.

"For many years Sir George Grey kept urging the governments and people to adopt the taxation of the 'unearned increment' in land values, in order to overcome the social injustice. In 1878 a bill was passed for the levying of a tax of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound on all land values held by any person beyond the value of £500. This was nearly two years before Henry George wrote his epoch-making book, *Progress and Poverty*.

"At that time there was a very restricted franchise in New Zealand with lawmaking mainly in the hands of the large landholders, who could vote in as many electorates as they held property in. Great opposition was offered by these landholders to the Grey government measure, and it was defeated. The seed had been sown, however, and in 1891 the land tax act imposed one penny in the pound on all values beyond £500 with an additional graduated tax.

"The effect of this change in the incidence of taxation in New Zealand was remarkable. In the seven years preceding imposition of the tax in March, 1891, the Colony lost in the balance of migration 19,939 people and in the seven years following it gained 25,438. Prosperity and a much improved distribution of the products of land, labor and capital, continued for more than 20 years, up to the advent of the war (1914-18) when the abnormal prices paid for wool, butter and cheese caused a boom in land values, which submerged for a time the good effects of the land tax and left the country in the same depression and acute distress which prevailed in every land where the private appropriation of land values is permitted."

We are indebted to George M. Fowlds of Auckland, son of the late Sir George, for some of these insights into past lives, which can be fairly appreciated only now in retrospect. The records of achievement from across the seas are a never-ending challenge. American Georgists, too, owe much to their pioneers, especially to Henry George and his contemporaries. But a new day is dawning with thoughtful, new leaders, and honor, though it may be dimmed, is not dead.

First a thought, then a wish, then a faith, next a struggle, at last a fact. So have entered into human life and history some of its profoundest truths. Such has been and is to be the story of universal peace.

— Justice Brewer