

QUEENSLAND'S ACHIEVEMENT

By the Hon. H. F. HARDACRE

(From an address to the Queensland Henry George League)

I will now state briefly some of the measures based on Henry George's principles which have been adopted in Queensland to its great benefit since the publication of *Progress and Poverty*. That great book was published in 1879. It was printed as a serial by the Brisbane *Courier* through its columns in 1883. Its influence was immediately manifested.

At that time there was in existence a Government, led by Sir S. W. Griffiths, and with a Minister for Lands, the Hon. C. B. Dutton, who had large pastoral interests. In the following year that Government passed what is known as the Crown Lands Act of 1884, under which almost the whole of the country lands of Queensland were put under Crown Leases based on rentals to be paid to the Government on Henry George's principles—the rents to be re-assessed at stated periods.

Prior to that great Act it had been the common practice of previous Governments to sell at auction immense areas at such low prices as 10s. per acre, giving freehold for all time. In that way very often what was colloquially termed "the eyes," in reality the picked portions of districts, were picked out and monopolised. The Crown Lands Act of 1884 soon ended such evil conditions and instituted the Georgian better principle of retaining at moderate rentals to tenants a growing revenue to the Crown over a considerable portion of Queensland.

Queensland was fortunate a few years later in obtaining another great legislative measure based on Georgian principles in the Valuation and Rating Act of 1890, obtaining rate revenue solely from the valuation of land. This was influenced directly by a visit to Queensland of Henry George himself. He arrived in Brisbane on a lecturing tour in 1890.

RATES ONLY ON THE VALUE OF LAND

At this time there was in Parliament a young man, the Hon. W. Stephen, as member for South Brisbane, who took an interest in George's lectures. He succeeded in obtaining in a new Rating Measure shortly afterwards in Parliament, the omission of rating improvements and imposing rates only on the value of land.

This was the first measure of its kind in the world and has since been followed by a similar measure in N.S.W., parts of N.Z., and some of the cities in U.S.A.

A still further measure of Georgian principles was introduced 15 years later by the first Queensland Labour Government with the Hon. T. J. Ryan as its Premier, and in its Ministry the Hon. H. F. Hardacre, who was the chief influence in having a Revenue Act passed, imposing taxation on the unimproved value of land in 1915. The then Treasurer at first proposed to balance revenue and expenditure by continuing retrenchment imposed by the previous Government on the salaries and wages of its employees. I succeeded instead of obtaining the required revenue by omitting the retrenchment and introducing taxation in substitution therefor upon the value of land. It has been in operation ever since and followed in principle by some of the other States in Australia.

AN UNDEVELOPED LAND TAX

An even greater measure of Georgian principles was adopted by the same Labour Government instigated to that effect also by the Hon. H. F. Hardacre—and which may truthfully be said to be his own proposal. This was a special Undeveloped Land Value Tax.

This is a special measure of original form not in existence, it is believed, in any other country in the world. Though not being in full accordance with Georgian principles, it has meritorious features that make it deserving of adoption everywhere. The taxation is upon the value of the land, but only upon such land as has not upon it improvements equal to a fourth of the value of the land.

The foregoing several measures of adoption of Georgian principles places Queensland as leader in the practice of the doctrines of Henry George in advance of all other countries. And it may be for this reason that we are stated not to have felt the prevailing world-wide depression as severely as in many other places, and that we are amongst the first to feel the effects of returning prosperity.

Certain at least it is that in Queensland has been laid the foundations of a better system of taxation than in almost every other country. It is true, alas, that we have not yet removed all obnoxious and destructive taxation. And also unfortunately we are subject to the numerous evil forms of taxation imposed by the Commonwealth Parliament. But the right way of advance that has been provided for others after us to follow which, being adopted, would usher in for us the ideal progress and prosperity of a higher civilization which Henry George has visioned for us as possible.

BRITISH WEST AFRICA

"A HAPPY PEOPLE"

In two articles in the *Manchester Guardian* (7th and 8th January) Mr Charles Roden Buxton has given an interesting account of a recent visit to West Africa. He contrasts the prosperity and contentment of the people with the conditions in East and South Africa.

"This happy people, this prosperous peasant economy, this underlying contentedness in spite of repeated wars in quite recent years—this marvellous Civil Service, whose mind and heart can be devoted wholly to the people's welfare without the pull of conflicting 'White' interests—why are such things so little known in our African dependencies elsewhere? For I could not doubt that the sum of human happiness was far greater here than in Kenya—incomparably greater than in South Africa.

"The smiling faces, the women pouring in with their own produce on their heads to the busy little markets which are to be seen wherever the tiniest group of houses is gathered together; the superior quality of the houses which I visited; the gay gatherings of the people when I was 'received' by chiefs and councillors—all helped to remind me of the difference.

"True, there was much lamenting over the slump in the export of palm oil; but I could see no signs of impoverishment, nor did the statistics reveal any decline of public health or of population. The people, it seemed, could still live tolerably, at any rate, on their little patches of land.

"Can it be, I asked myself, that these people in West Africa are so superior in social development and intelligence as to justify such a striking difference in our way of treating them? I could not see it.

"I concluded that it was unnecessary to seek for far-fetched reasons; the explanation lies on the surface. It is to be found in the land question. East and South Africa contain large areas which are habitable by white people; consequently, large areas were taken from the native population, a large proportion of whom have become labourers or squatters, removed from their own tribes and their own homes, a drifting mass of landless

people. In West Africa, on the other hand, where white settlement was not possible, the economic activities of the white immigrants have always consisted mainly in trade.

"I found it much easier to sympathize with the activities of the trader than with those of the settler. Even the attacks on the great Lever combine, whose local firm is the United Africa Company and which is charged with threatening a monopoly, left me entirely cold. The traders are out for profits, naturally enough, but their primary interest is that the population shall be prosperous; whereas the primary interest of settlers is that labour shall be cheap.

"Labour conditions in West Africa are directly affected by the land system. Everyone could go back to the land if he chose; if he does not go back to the land, or stay on it, it must be because he finds some conditions which are preferable. Consequently, wages in the Gold Coast mines are two and a half times those in the Kenya goldfield."

In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* (11th January), Col. Josiah C. Wedgwood, M.P., explained how the Nigerian land system came into existence.

"Twenty-six years ago our Colonial Office, acting on the advice of a small departmental committee of which I was a member, established the land-tenure system of Northern Nigeria on Henry George lines. Each person, cultivator or trader, holds his land of the State with security of tenure at a revisable rent based on land value alone. This has been modified slightly since by officials who were not so Simon-pure single-taxers, but remains the fundamental land law of that happy country. Major Ormsby-Gore has since embodied it as far as was possible in Tanganyika, but failed to do so in Northern Rhodesia."

SPAIN

La Reforma Social (Velazquez 98, Madrid) for January, 1935, has with other important matter the text of the resolution passed by the Town Council of Torrelavega, halfway along the north coast of Spain, and near to the scene of the late Marxist rising in Oviedo (30th November, 1934). It demands powers to increase the tax on land value to 2 per cent, as the limit of 1 per cent now in force is in effect a barrier: and that the present taxes on property should be abolished—these are undeveloped land tax, increment tax, building licence, and tax on rental—the last equivalent to our general rates. An exemption is suggested of twice the value of good farm land: and the periodical revaluations should be made by a Court of Councillors and property owners considering owners' valuations and publishing results. The land value tax is advocated as the only one which falls upon fruits of communal effort and impedes exploitation while it lowers cost of living and stimulates personal activity.

Truly the cities of Spain can still turn out their legendary "knights in grey homespun" when the country is in danger! The Town Council expresses the hope that the powers given to the cities of Catalonia in these matters will not be refused to those whose allegiance remains with Madrid, and has voted the cost of a land value map of the town as a first active step.

Our readers who have a knowledge of French are reminded that the *Condition of Labour*, by Henry George, is now available in the French version, the translation having been made by M Paul Passy and published by the Ligue pour la Reforme Fonciere, 16, Avenue de la Criolla, Suresnes. The price is 6 francs, and copies may be had from our office at 1s. 9d. post free.

ALEXANDER CHALMERS

With great regret we learn from *Progress*, of Melbourne, that Alexander Chalmers, an able and devoted Australian follower of Henry George, passed away on 25th October last. He was 78 years old. Born in Scotland, he arrived in Victoria as a child. How he came to know of the Henry George teaching is not on record, but from the early days of the movement in this country his name was known in the overseas correspondence as a keen protagonist. In 1924 he visited the homeland with Mr F. T. Hodgkiss and spent many weeks in London, where at our old office in Tothill Street John Paul, whose personal acquaintance he valued beyond measure, was happy to welcome him and his colleague. He wrote frequently after his return and followed with profound interest the organization and success of the representative International Conference in Edinburgh in 1929. His letters with so much encouragement to the United Committee and the work of *Land & Liberty* will be much missed, just as we know he will be missed by his Australian colleagues in the movement he did so much to serve.

GIVING MEN PIE TO KEEP THEM FROM STEALING PIE

A tough-looking customer was about to snatch a pie. Said the owner of the pie, "My man, I will give you a cut of that pie, if you won't do that!"

The tough customer agreed. The owner of the pie gave him a cut of pie—one-sixth of the pie. Then the tough-looking customer reached for the rest of the pie. He was about to snatch the other five cuts of pie, when the owner saw him and said:

"Don't do that! If you won't do that, I'll give you a cut of the pie."

The tough customer agreed. The owner of the pie gave him another cut—making one-third in all that he had given the tough customer in order to protect that pie.

The tough customer ate that second cut and reached for the rest of the pie.

Again the owner of the pie said:

"Don't do that! If you won't steal that pie, I will give you a cut."

The tough customer agreed and ate the third cut of pie—he had then eaten half of the pie. He started to snatch the other half of the pie and was given the fourth cut.

In the same way he got the fifth cut.

Then, in the same way, he got the last cut—he had eaten the whole pie.

This little allegory is told by L. D. Beckwith in "No Taxes," Stockton, California. Our readers can supply a few applications of it in this country, where we are busy trying to combat the effects of high land values by providing subsidies for housing, subsidies for wheat growing, subsidies for allotments, etc., etc.

In an address to the Dublin Rotary Club (which received a three column report in the *Wicklow People*, 15th December), Mr Erskine H. Childers dealt with the case for land value taxation in a comprehensive and able fashion. He suggested that the government should introduce a land value tax, and continued: "In any event let us begin by putting into effect the Dublin Corporation's own suggestion. Let us end the scandal of paying £12,000 an acre for slum built real estate in Mercer Street, and £212 an acre for land on which the owner has paid agricultural rates only, way out beyond Cabra Village, and £1,900 an acre in Bray."