

PROGRESS

An Australian Journal to Advocate the Rights of the People in the Land

POLICY: 1. APPROPRIATION OF LAND VALUES OR GROUND RENT AS PUBLIC REVENUE.
2. THE ABOLITION OF TAXES NOW IMPOSED UPON LABOR AND LABOR PRODUCTS.
3. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FOR ALL ELECTIONS.

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CURRENT COMMENTS

INVENTION CRIPPLED

The inventor of a £10,000 house heated by solar means said taxation authorities had ruled that he would have to pay tax on the difference between the cost of his heating and that of conventional methods. Because of this taxation ruling, the project was being handed over to a Canadian firm.

The inventor, Mr. Leslie Gardner, said his 10-room house could be heated and power could be provided for cooking by solar energy for 2/- a week. To provide the same facilities with coal, coke, and electricity would cost £2/10/- a week.

The foregoing strikingly illustrates that the power to tax is the power to destroy. The inroads of taxation officialdom into all realms of life is being all too passively accepted. What is needed is a burning moral conviction that arbitrary confiscation, even by Governments, of honestly earned wealth, is as wrong as chattel slavery.

Data from "Age," Feb. 9, 1957.

CHANGE IN LABOR'S LAND TAX POLICY

"Age" (16/3/57) reports that an important change in Labor's land tax policy was made at Federal Labor conference that day in Brisbane.

Conference decided that in future, Labor policy would favor the imposition of overall unimproved land value taxation on a Federal basis.

This policy would be put into effect by the next Labor Government.

Previously Labor policy was for imposition of Federal land tax only on a holding totalling more than £10,000.

This change is one of the most important developments within the last 40 years in the Labor Party. Labor introduced the original Federal Land Tax as a measure to "break up the big estates." It was on a sliding scale with originally a £5,000 exemption and these two blemishes made it something of a class tax rather than a full scale endorsement of the principle of land value taxation.

The change in policy now links the Labor Party clearly with the principle of land value taxation without exemptions. It has still to be implemented but the first important step is the recognition and declaration of the principle as an objective.

To this encouraging development several factors have contributed. First is our own consistent pressure in conjunction with our fellow Georgists in other States pointing out the need for such change. A particularly important approach on these lines in New South Wales last year was reported in the "Standard."

Another is the split within the Labor ranks resulting in two rival parties competing for electoral support. This has caused a re-examination of objectives the need for which would not otherwise have been seen.

NATIONAL ROADS PLAN

The Australian Transport Advisory Council met in Sydney in March to consider a national roads policy. It had before it a "needs" programme involving £1600,000,000 over the next ten years. Of this Victoria's target was £346,000,00 to bring our roads and bridges up to a reasonable standard.

Unanimity seems to have been reached on what is needed but not on how the bill is to be met. The obvious hope of the States was that big brother Commonwealth Government would undertake the odium of finding the finance from taxpayers and then play Santa Claus to the States. But no commitments have been accepted by that Government.

Roads are essentially a matter for the States and the finance to put them into good order should come from a rate upon those benefited by the roads proportionate to the amount of their benefit.

The real beneficiaries from good roads are not the motorists or hauliers that use the roads. Roads are essentially a service to property owners and better roads will be reflected in increased land values.

It is not simply rural values that are benefited by arterial roads but more strongly the land values in the terminal cities and towns served by them. Road users are actually doing the property owners a service in using them because their cost and excellence would not increase land values unless people did make use of the service.

The commonsense and equitable source of finance is to impose a Main Roads Rate on the unimproved land values of the whole State. This would not be burdensome on rural areas for three-quarters of the yield would come from cities and towns. New South Wales had such a Main Roads Rate at 1d. in the £ of unimproved value. The amount is inadequate and should be increased. Other States should follow and extend this course.

IMPLICATIONS OF FREE TRADE

Assault on the Land Problem

All wealth is produced by the interaction of labour and natural resources. Of these resources, most, such as sunshine and the sea, are as yet more or less unrestricted in their availability to labour. Land, however, is not. Land is the product of no man's labour, and hence is not morally the right of any man, any more than the air we breathe belongs morally to one man to ration out to the rest of us at his own price.

The analogy of air is, I think, a fair one, since air, like land, is a natural product which has been created by no man, and on which we are utterly dependent for our very existence. Let us imagine for a moment that a restricted section of mankind managed in some way to secure the exclusive "right" to the air about this planet. That would entitle those people who "owned" the air to rent some of it to other men. But at what price? A man cannot live without air, and the air-owners would know it. Hence they would be able to demand from a man who wished to live, his full income, minus just that sum which he needed to purchase the other commodities which were equally indispensable to his existence. If improved methods of production were invented this would merely increase the amount of rent the air-owners could demand, since a man would thereby have more money left over after satisfying his other demands, which they could effectively claim for enabling him to live at all.

Certain factors might to an extent modify the monstrous expropriation of the air-owners. For example, there might be competition between them at first, as a result of which some would offer air at a lower price than others. On the other hand, there would be a speedy realisation of their common interests, which would very soon be mirrored in the creation of an "airless class," whose members periodically died of asphyxiation. This would serve to intensify the demand for air, and hence the price the air-owners could command.—By Roy Douglas.

HENRY GEORGE AND MOSES

"Leader and servant of men! Lawgiver and benefactor! Toiler toward the promised land seen only by the eye of faith! Type of the high souls who in every age have given to earth its heroes and its martyrs, whose deeds are the precious possessions of the race, whose memories are its sacred heritage! With whom among the founders of empire shall we compare him?"

Millions of copies of Henry George's famed lecture on Moses were distributed in the United States last year — by Paramount Pictures.

The lecture was specially produced — and very very handsomely — as twenty-page brochure, being

used to promote public interest in Paramount's spectacular film "The Ten Commandments."

Mr. Cecil B. de Mille in the foreword writes:

"In doing research for 'The Ten Commandments' we naturally read everything we could lay our hands on about its subject. Inevitably, then, we came upon and studied this lecture on Moses, delivered by Henry George in 1878.

"I confess that my first interest in this lecture stemmed from the fact that Henry George was my father's friend and the inspiration for some of my father's best dramatic work. It was in Henry George's house that I made my first venture into amateur theatricals, when I was about eight years old; my playmates were his children, one of whom later married my brother.

"But — as I might have expected — I soon found, upon reading this lecture, that it has an intrinsic interest and value which go beyond my affectionate personal memories of its author.

"This, I believe, is one of the two finest summaries in our language of the character and achievements of Moses, the other one being Sir Winston Churchill's chapter on Moses in 'Amid These Storms,' in which Churchill identifies Moses with 'the most decisive leap-forward ever discernible in the human story.'

"Conditions have changed . . . since Henry George made this application of Mosaic doctrines to the world of 1878 — but his estimate of Moses as prophet, lawgiver, and leader of men has an enduring validity and grandeur. The majesty of Henry George's language matches the majesty of his subject.

"For the purpose of this edition, I have lent to Paramount Pictures my personal copy of Henry George's 'Moses,' which is ordinarily never far from my hand and the underlinings reproduced are those which I have made in my own copy, marking the passages which were of greatest value to me in re-creating the intensely dramatic and human story of one of the very greatest men this world has ever known."

When Paramount Pictures were "shooting" the film in California nearly two years ago, they ordered copies of its edition of "Moses" from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York, the American publishers of Henry George's books and related writings. That was done at the instance of Mr. de Mille, who wished the cast to get the "flavour" of the character of Moses. Paramount published its own edition subsequently, sending copies to libraries and elsewhere. Miss Peterson, secretary of the Foundation, learning of this by mere chance, immediately sought to borrow the plates to print further copies, but so heavy had the first printing been that they were completely worn out. Using the offset process, the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation has since produced its own edition. This, too, has been exhausted and a further printing is being considered.

Land and Liberty, January, 1957.

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR SUB.?

SITE-VALUE RATING

By E. B. DONOHUE

OPPOSITION ACTIVE

There is an evident concerting of action by those opposed to site-value rating to seek some modifications in their favor.

Mr. B. S. B. Cook, of Malvern, has had several letters in the "Age" and has apparently swayed his Malvern South Branch of the Liberal-Country Party to seek an investigation of the operation of site-value rating in Malvern. He disputes the claims of rating reformers that "about 75 per cent" of homes pay less under that basis. An attack in the name of this Branch but unsigned was published in "Malvern Advertiser," and answered by the General Council for Rating Reform, who pointed out that proportions benefiting under the change could be easily checked from the rolls which print both values and sought co-operation of this and other branches of political parties to make such a comprehensive survey.

This was followed up with direct invitations to the branches to appoint representatives for this purpose.

The Liberal-Country Party conference had several motions before it from branches relative to proposed amendments of the Local Government Act on site-value rating. These were referred to the Party Executive with power to act. The man who had most to say on these motions at the conference was Mr. B. S. B. Cook.

Comments and other information relative to the proposed amendments have been submitted by the General Council for Rating Reform to the Liberal-Country Party Executive and appear elsewhere in this issue.

In Broadmeadows the same clique of councillors who have opposed site-value rating for years are still doing their best to attack it. Cr. Rayner has tabled a motion seeking amendment of the Local Government Act to require petitions for polls to be presented to the Minister instead of councils; the Minister then to call for a survey how change would operate and then to have comparative statements and a poll if the Minister orders it.

Intimidation

Indicative that holders of vacant land are becoming apprehensive of the demand for site-value rating in Devonport (Tas.) is the following text of an unsigned and unstamped letter received by Cr. E. H. Churcher:

"Why don't you shut your big mouth on the site-rating issue because if you persist someone will plant a fist in your ugly dial and shut it for you. You are nothing but a fanatic and a skiter, so shut up before you get done over—and I mean done over!"

Rate Protest Meetings

Protest meetings have been held in many municipalities which have had revaluations over the last two years. Those which have been prominent in the press have included the following rating U.C.V.: Camberwell, Heidelberg, Brunswick, Moorabbin. Those rating buildings and improvements (N.A.V.) included

Lilydale, Keilor, Mulgrave, Malvern, Whittlesea, Dundas, Bet Bet.

Mr. Fagan, Municipal Association Secretary, was reported as saying that there were probably many times the number in country districts that didn't make headlines in the daily press like the metropolitan ones.

Malvern and Mulgrave have since changed to site-value rating and are free from rate protests while their councils have more funds available for works. Keilor is to take a poll next August.

The basic reason for intensification of complaint this year lies in discussion at the municipal association conference which suggested it was better for councils to go for a big increase in revenue when they revalued instead of smaller increases from year to year. The principle was to get all the complaints over in one year and have the extra revenue. The sponsors of this idea have evidently misjudged ratepayer-reaction.

Some of the protests are quite unfounded. Brunswick only increased its revenue 15 per cent, which is quite reasonable and at least one of the progress associations was reported as passing a motion that it considered the increase perfectly justified.

Camberwell and Heidelberg protest meetings were exclusively directed against the substantial increase in scale of proposed expenditure in one year without any criticism of the rating system. Nevertheless opponents in other places have cited the complaints as a product of the system.

They conveniently forget the more numerous protests in the districts rating upon improvements.

Wangaratta

"Wangaratta Chronicle" (13/3/57) reported that the Ratepayers' Protection League had issued instructions for a Supreme Court writ to prevent the Borough Council from collecting its rates under site-value. It claimed counsel had advised that the referendum conducted last August had not been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Act consequently any rate based on the referendum was "ultra vires." It was indicated the League would meet that night to discuss the question.

The nature of the alleged breach was not given but reports of the meeting (understood to have been attended by five persons only comprising ex-Cr. Nolan and friends) suggest that it is claimed the results of the poll were not published in the Government Gazette.

If that is all we don't give them much prospect of success. The attempt to upset the 1947 poll in Heidelberg failed because (although irregularities were admitted) site-value supporters could not produce 17 persons in court deprived of their vote as would be needed to lead the magistrate to infer the result could have been affected.

In this case there is a 4-to-1 vote that has to be talked down. We will be surprised if that writ is actually lodged and will look forward to ex-Cr. Nolan footing a bill for costs as a fitting retribution to his obstruction to ratepayers' wishes over the last four years.

MOE BOROUGH

The General Council for Rating Reform has called a public meeting for 1st April to establish a Moe Site-Value Rating Committee to press the campaign.

SWAN HILL BOROUGH

From several sources we have heard that this council has carried a resolution to change to site-value rating.

WARRAGUL SHIRE

The council has convened a public meeting for Tuesday, 16th April, to discuss site-value rating and has invited Mr. A. R. Hutchinson to address the meeting.

CLARENCE MUNICIPALITY (TAS.)

In November last Clarence Municipality carried a resolution to change its rating system to the Unimproved Capital Value (site-value) basis. The action was taken then because of a requirement that six months notice must be given before a rate can be struck on this basis and in order to be able to make the change with the new year's rate.

The Land Values Research Group survey has since been presented to the council and shows the overall effect of the change to be summarized as follows:

Item	Rates Least Under U.C.V.	Rates Least Under A.A.V.
Number of vacant land assessments	—	1,397
Number of building assessments	3,605	1,177
Proportion of total buildings	75%	25%
Total Assessed Annual Values	£527,613	£178,476
Total Site-Values (U.C.V.)	£1,742,842	£2,066,435
Value of buildings and improvements	£9,523,212	£2,216,532
Proportion Improvements to C.I.V.	85%	51%
Rates payable under A.A.V.	£80,342	£23,254
Rates payable under U.C.V.	£51,905	£51,942

Of 4,678 dwelling assessments 3,523 would carry lower rates under site-value basis while only 1,085 would pay more because of the change.

Of 204 business and other buildings 112 would carry lower rates and 92 increased rates under the change while the 1,397 vacant land holdings would pay more than £12,000 more in total. Purely vacant subdivisional land would pay five times as much in rates under the change. (Vacant land under A.A.V. in Tasmania is only rated at 4 per cent. of its site-value compared with 5 per cent. in Victoria and is thus more lightly treated.)

A concentrated effort is now being made in the council to rescind its previous motion to make the change. The object of those interested in preserving the present order is to prevent the next rate being imposed on site-value and so delay action for a year hoping for something to turn up to stall further. Council elections will be held in April. Three of those opposed to site-value come before voters and may lose their seats. Those seeking the change are determined to make it an issue.

At last report council had adjourned the rescinding meeting for a fortnight after debating to 2 a.m. At another meeting in the absence of one of the councillors opposed to site-value a motion was carried that all ratepayers be given a statement comparing their rates under the alternative systems. On a further motion that a poll be taken at the same time as the municipal elections three of the councillors opposed to site-value rating got up and walked out leaving the meeting without a quorum.

Cr. Eltham has presented a criticism of the Research Group survey. His comments show strong bias against site-value rating and the 34 pages of examples have been "selected" very carefully to make it appear the number of houses paying lower rates under annual value are greater than is the case.

One significant development here is that while it is not certain whether or when the change in rating will come, vacant lot holders are taking fright and selling off land which is now getting into the hands of prospective home builders. The same thing has been noticed repeatedly in Victorian municipalities during the campaigns leading to the change.

LIBERAL-C.P. CONFERENCE ITEMS

Text of a Letter to Executive of Liberal and Country Party from General Council for Rating Reform.

We note that three items relative to site-value rating were referred from your conference to the executive for investigation and any action considered necessary.

You will therefore welcome information which may help you to come to sound conclusions on these various matters, as given in the following paragraphs.

Item (38) Proposed amendment to provide for urban farm lands over 5 acres in shires to be rated at not more than half the normal rate.

(i) It is claimed this is operative in New South Wales under section 118(2) of the Local Government Act. This is only partly true since part (a) provides for a maximum of half the normal rate OR (b) the amount in the pound of the general rate levied in the shire adjoining such municipality or if more than one such shire the highest amount in the pound of the general rate levied in any such shire.

Whichever of these two alternatives is the greater applies. In practice although a reduction is generally given it is rarely down to half because basis (b) is the greater.

(ii) In seeking this amendment sponsors are overlooking that the Victorian Amending Act No. 5443 of 1949 gave councils power to give lower "farm rates" to properties over 5 acres used for primary production. There are no limits stated but the extent is left to the councils themselves according to their own circumstances. There has been no reluctance to use this clause lower "farm rates" being struck in Box Hill, Nunawading, Moorabbin, Heidelberg, Mulgrave, South Barwon, Sale, Eltham, Warrnambool, and probably others. In some cases the rebates are most substantial.

(iii) We suggest this already existent Victorian amendment is superior to the New South Wales since the need for a farm rate and its amount varies from one council to another. It depends largely on the methods used in valuation which vary widely. In some cases analysis shows that a substantial majority of the farms carry lower rates under the site-value basis without need for a lower farm rate. Under such cases to fix an arbitrary figure of further reduction would be unnecessary and unjust. In other cases a substantially reduced "farm rate" may be needed.

(iv) To determine what "farm rate" should be applied the Lands Values Research Group in surveys (particularly Mulgrave Shire) have suggested that councils on site-value basis adopt the working principle to give such lower farm rate as needed to ensure that a majority of their farmers resident on their holdings pay less or no more than they would under N.A.V.

(v) Applying this simple analysis it was found that a majority of farmers in Dandenong Shire, Eltham, Rosedale, Frankston and Hastings are already benefited in lower rates under site-value without a farm rate. On the other hand Mulgrave, Morwell, Moorabbin and some others need a lower farm rate.

(vi) We suggest this principle of self-determination of each council from analysis of its own records is the best and most flexible.

Item (39) Proposed amendment to permit councils to adopt U.C.V. for One Ward or Riding and N.A.V. for another.

(i) This is most cumbersome and would be a complication to municipal administration.

(ii) Such suggestions have been made before usually by people who appreciate the principle of site-value rating but for personal reasons are prepared to have it implemented in the other fellows' riding but not their own.

(iii) So far as this suggestion is based on a belief that site-value rating would suit the urban but not the rural parts it will be seen that the existing amendment for a lower "farm rate" described above already provides the protection desired to farmers.

Item (42) System of voting on a poll of ratepayers for rating-reform considered to be anomalous.

(i) It is understood that the main "anomalies" specified in support of this item are that at such rating polls resident ratepayers have been able to out-vote absentee vacant lot holders. Mulgrave and Malvern have been cases cited.

(ii) The practical proposals sought by its sponsors appear to be (a) abolish multiple voting at rating polls (since they appear to think this has helped in last year's polls) and (b) give votes to vacant lot holders whose rates paid are so low that they do not carry a vote under N.A.V.

(iii) Both these devices are put forward by persons who seek to press their selfish interests in face of the interests of their fellow party members. It

is suggested that the normal local government provisions found satisfactory for all other purposes should be jerrymandered when it comes to municipal rating to rob your members who are homeowners of their votes and artificially increase the voting strength of the insignificant numbers who are merely owners of vacant lots to prevent them paying more in rates.

(iv) The site-value rating poll last year in Mulgrave was carried by 10,735 votes to 2,302 (five to one); Malvern, the previous year, by 11,758 to 6,339 (two to one). **Both these polls were essentially carried by the votes of the home owners who are the mainstay of your party voting strength.** These districts are essentially Liberal-Country Party areas (as are practically all the districts rating site-values). You are now being asked to make some alteration to the voting basis to circumvent the democratically expressed wishes of these your supporters.

(v) Attached are the voting details at the individual booths in Malvern. You will see there were majorities for site-value rating in 13 booths and on postal votes compared to only 4 booths favoring annual value. In Malvern you have nine branches, most of which are centred in the areas which voted most strongly for site-value rating. Only one of these (Malvern South) with Mr. B. S. B. Cook as its spokesman appears to have some objections to the change. But your party will surely recollect the public outcry which made headlines in this city in the last year of N.A.V. and which led to the demand for change. The great majority of citizens in Malvern are quite happy now since the change.

(vi) The multiple voting basis is one which your members have hitherto regarded as reasonable i.e. that persons with large rateable value should have more say in the election of representatives or financial proposals than those of small rateable value. Those persons with less than £5 N.A.V. pay such small sums (i.e. maximum amounts ranging from 16/- down to 4/- according as their N.A.V. is £4, £3, £2, or £1) have been rightly regarded as having such slight financial interest as not to qualify them for a vote.

The suggestion that these holders be given votes on rating polls (and on no other issues) can be seen in true perspective if put thus:

Do your members think it reasonable that such vacant holders paying less than 16/- per annum be given the same voting strength as householders (N.A.V. £50) paying up to £10 annually?

Or to go further — if it be proposed to abandon multiple voting entirely and give one vote to each landholder irrespective of the value of his property — would it be reasonable to put these insignificant contributors on a common footing with those paying £20 and upwards? (Even under site-value at three times their previous amount the contribution of these low valued lots is still insignificant.)

Trusting our information and comments may help your executive.

MOORABBIN MELODY

Horse-drawn carts used to bring vegetables from Moorabbin along the Brighton Rd. to Melbourne market, and return with stable manure for the vegetable gardens, which have been on that sandy soil for 100 years.

In these modern times powerful motor trucks bring in vegetables from the irrigated land at Werribee, Shepparton or even Mildura. There is no stable manure to be got in the city, and no reason to keep nearby Moorabbin land for acres of cabbages. Besides, the land holders can see big capital gains, non-taxable, too, by sub-division and sale as building blocks.

Home seekers pay big prices for Moorabbin blocks. The soil has been well worked and manured, and so the householder grows his own vegetables at the back, sometimes in the front garden, too, and even has potatoes on the nature strip. Metropolitan Board sewers take a long time for construction, but on the sandy soil of Moorabbin septic tanks work very well, and this fact draws purchasers to those building blocks.

Marriott's Estate, of 19 acres, at corner of South Rd. and East Boundary Rd., was sub-divided one afternoon for £75,785. Best prices were South Rd. frontages at £17 to £21 a ft. Top price block brought £1,050, and average was £735.

Vendor acquired this garden area in year 1939 at £200 an acre. O'Malley paper money has gone down to quarter value since then, so he was paying at rate of £800 an acre today. But he sold at £3,800 an acre. Vendor has had the vegetables each year, and these, at present prices, netted a large annual income. No rational man can justify, on moral grounds, a capital gain of £3,000 an acre in addition.

How come?

Needy souls seeking to build a home for wife and the kids flocked to the sale. Police estimated that 1,600 motor cars were there and 2,800 people were at the auction. Marriott's of Moorabbin was probably the largest sub-divisional sale ever held in an outer suburb. The vendor netted £75,000, and that is no small sum even for a company. Because human beings loaded themselves with debts in order to secure a home with a garden they will not be bluffed by the planner architect's praise of a flat in a 10-storey block in Fitzroy at a weekly rental.

Doubtless the vendor would have liked to hold out against that surge of eager hearts for several years longer and higher prices, since the "cost of waiting" was, to him, formerly very little. But ratepayers of Moorabbin decided to pay their rates on a site value basis, and that decision had a persuasive effect on the unbuilt acres, while the buyer knows that his new house will be exempt from municipal rates, and that knowledge makes Moorabbin attractive to home seekers.

Market Gardens Continue

Motor trucks enable vegetables to be brought to market from Dandenong district, and one branch of the Marriott family has bought land at Keysborough,

and there carry on the market gardening tradition. When selling the Moorabbin urban farm land one remarked that they had got "very good value for the land." Removal and resettlement expenses will be well covered by the unearned increment.

PUBLIC STATEMENT BY A.P.M.

This great industrial paper making concern with more than 1,600 employees comprises two associated public companies, Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd. and A.P.M. Forest Ltd. Both gave public statements in "Morwell Advertiser," 23/8/56 from which the following extracts are taken:

Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd.

Opponents of rating reform were inclined to forget the important contributions made by A.P.M. to the Morwell community, the Resident District Manager of A.P.M., Mr. J. W. Thorpe, said today.

His company had always shouldered its full responsibility in the shire and would continue to do so, continued Mr. Thorpe. Site Valuation would naturally benefit his company, but it would also benefit the shire as a whole. It would encourage his board to continue to develop the Company's mill at Maryvale without being penalised for doing so, as occurs under N.A.V. rating.

Mr. Thorpe pointed out that the other two large mills of the company at Fairfield (Victoria) and Botany (N.S.W.) are both rated on Unimproved Capital Value (site valuation).

Municipal rates are an important item when it comes to deciding development of a mill site. The continuation of N.A.V. in Morwell might well result in company expansion being carried out at one of the other mill sites of A.P.M. instead of at Maryvale, said Mr. Thorpe.

Already increased rates and taxes and the great increase in transportation costs to and from the mill were seriously affecting the economy of operations. The mill is an outstanding example of decentralisation in Victoria. To compete with other sites, however, it cannot continue to carry the burden of increased rates every time it makes an improvement at the mill, whether for production or to improve amenities for its employees.

A.P.M. Forests Ltd.

A.P.M. Forests Pty. Ltd. would pay more than twice as much in rates under Unimproved Capital Value (site valuation), Mr. J. D. Brookes, its general manager, stated today. But his company favours rating reform as being in the interests of the shire as a whole.

A.P.M. Forests Pty. Ltd. owns approximately 11,000 acres of forest and plantation land in the Shire of Morwell, and had already planted 2,500 acres with pines.

Some opponents of rating reform were under the misapprehension that the forest would be rated increasingly under Nett Annual Value rating as the plantations matured over the years, but this was not so, said Mr. Brookes. The Forests Act provides that, where land is planted with trees approved by the Commission as being suitable for mining or commercial

purposes, in computing the Nett Annual Value of the land as rateable property within the meaning of any Act relating to local government, the increase in value of the land by reason of the trees so planted thereon shall not be taken into consideration during such time as such trees remain thereon.

Similar legislation is enacted in other States, showing that many Governments have appreciated over the years the great importance of afforestation in their States.

Mr. Brookes said that his company helped to maintain shire roads at its own expense, in addition to paying rates, which are for this purpose. It created employment and brought money into the shire. It also helped materially and would continue to help in the fire protection of a large portion of the shire, at no cost to the shire or the community.

His company strongly believes in Unimproved Capital Value rating as the fairest form of rating. It objects to seeing all those who improve their land and who are helping in the drive for increased primary production to the utmost of their ability, taxed for their efforts, whilst those who do little or nothing to improve their land escape their proper share of local rates.

WHAT IS OUR PROPOSAL?

It is an axiom of statemanship, which the successful founders of tyranny have understood and acted upon — that great changes can best be brought about under old forms. We, who would free men, should heed the same truth. It is the natural method. When nature would make a higher type, she takes a lower one and develops it. This, also, is the law of social growth. Let us work by it. With the current we may glide fast and far. Against it, it is hard pulling and slow progress.

By making use of existing machinery, we may, without jar or shock, assert the common right to land by **appropriating land rent by taxation**. We already take some rent in taxation. We have only to make some changes in our modes of taxation to take it all.

In form, the ownership of land would remain just as now. No owner of land need be dispossessed, and no restriction need be placed upon the amount of land any one could hold. For, rent being taken by the State in taxes, land, no matter in whose name it stood, or in what parcels it was held, would be really common property, and every member of the community would participate in the advantages of its ownership.

Now, insomuch as the taxation of rent, or land values, must necessarily be increased just as we abolish other taxes, we may put the proposition into practical form by proposing—

To Abolish All Taxation Save That Upon Land Values.

—Henry George.

HENRY GEORGE "FORUM"

The first "forum" was not well attended but was considered to meet a strongly felt need. The next will be held in the League Rooms, 18 George Parade (off 113 Collins St.), on Friday, 12th April, at 8 p.m.

The subject will be the proposed Melbourne Underground Railway. A speaker from the City Development Association will put the view that it is a necessity. Mr. L. J. Hutchinson will put the view it is a luxury the community cannot afford at present.

The main speakers will have half an hour each to present their views and the subject will then be thrown open to public discussion limited to two minutes per speaker.

Make a point of attending yourself and inviting others. The following forum will be on Friday, May 10. Subject being import controls. Hold the occasion free and join in discussion.

SUMMARY OF PRESS PUBLICITY

Below is a summary of press reports and letters on site-value rating which have come to our attention since our last report. Figures in brackets are column-inches of space occupied.

"Progress Press"

- 23/5 (22) J. H. Morris on M.M.B.W. rates.
- 8/8 (11) A.R.H. on Mulgrave poll.

"Gippsland Mail"

- 29/5 (14) A.R.H. on S.V.R. effects buildings.
- 3/7 (11) J. H. Morris re Morwell poll.
- 31/7 (30) A.R.H. re Morwel poll.
- 21/8 (19) J. H. Morris answers Sale critic.

"Morwell Advertiser"

- 28/5 (15) A.R.H. compares development.
- 9/7 (10) L. W. Brwn case fr S.V.R.
- 2/8 (20) A.R.H. n rating systems.
- 12/8 (19) L. W. Brown on S.V.R.
- 2/8 (20) A.R.H. rate analysis.

"Sunrayasia Daily"

- 26/5 (14) A.R.H. on exempting buildings.
- 24/5 (12) L. W. Brown case for S.V.R.
- 8/8 (10) B. S. Nicholls on principle S.V.R.

"Malvern Advertiser"

- 29/5 (23) J. H. Morris on M.M.B.W. raes.

"Albury Border Mail"

- 14/6 (9) A.R.H. shopping centres on S.V.R.

"Wangaratta Chronicle"

- 16/6 (16) A.R.H. comparing shopping centres.
- 11/7 (12) L. W. Brown case for S.V.R.
- 10/8 (28) A.R.H. on merits S.V.R.
- 10/8 (19) Neil Payne loses, but favors S.V.R.

"Daylesford Advocate"

- 19/6 (12) A.R.H. on shopping centres.
- 27/7 (24) A.R.H. on S.V.R. poll.
- 14/8 (28) W. G. Cockburn supports S.V.R.
- 14/8 (17) L. W. Brown puts case S.V.R.
- 24/8 (11) K. Cole supports S.V.R.
- 24/8 (6) W. G. Cockburn puts case.

"Benalla Standard"

- 14/6 (13) A.R.H. on modernization of shops.
- 29/11 (9) L. W. Brown urges S.V.R.

"Bendigo Advertiser"

- 12/6 (11) A.R.H. on modernization shops.
- 8/9 (8) L. W. Brown suggests change to S.V.R.

"Geelong Advertiser"

- 13/6 (9) A.R.H. urges S.V.R.
- 7/9 (9) L. W. Brown results rating polls.

"Shepparton News"

- 24/10 (8) R. E. Powell advocates S.V.R.

"Footscray Advertiser"

- 3/8 (5) J. D. Henderson urges S.V.R.

"Coburg Courier"

3/4 (3) R. N. Collison on S.V.R. for railways.

"Traralgon Journal and Record"

1/11 (10) L.W.B. suggests move S.V.R.

19/11 (8) F. M. Goonan re rating poll.

"Building and Construction Journal"

6/11 (16) Article A.R.H. re building industry.

"Ferntree Gully Post"

27/9 (6) W. H. Pittspresses S.V.R.

"Box Hill Reporter"

28/9 (4) G. Forster on S.V.R.

Various

A letter from A.R.H. on comparative development under S.V.R. between States in June appeared in the following papers: "Snowy River Mail," "Bairnsdale Advertiser," "Maffra Spectator," "Warrnambool Standard," "Hamilton Spectator" (16 each).

Total column-inches in Press Letters above (625).

Notes From Various Sources

Somerton.—164 acres of unimproved grazing land with mile frontage to Hume Highway, 13 miles from Melbourne markets sold at £80 an acre.—"Argus," 14/12/55.

[Ed. Note.—Position or location is an element in bare land value quite as much as fertility — since position influences cost of marketing after agricultural production. Even Prof. Wadham would advance that far.]

Carlton and Fitzroy have seen big changes in property values. In 1905 (on gold sovereign currency) cottages in both suburbs could be bought from £200. In 1939 (on Fisher's flimsy currency) these were quoted from £400. Today it would be difficult (with Menzies' paper currency) to buy anything under £2,000. — Data by H. Perrott, "Argus" Property Writer, 8/6/56.

[Ed. Note: Increased population pressure with declining purchasing power of printed paper money are reasons for the boost of prices.]

Australian Senate: Mr. Menzies has suggested (1955) that each State be divided into "zones" — each zone to return a Senator — in place of present system of five Senators for each State; a multi-member electorate with preferential voting and quota counting. Menzies hankers for single-member electorates and "first-past-the-post" counting. This turns the serious matter of election into a Tattersall's gamble.

Provoking: Any present-day theology which has not a revolutionary sociology as part of its implicit logic is not truly Christian.—Dr. J. S. Whale.

[Ed. Note: Christians can be assured that the Georgist movement harmonises ideally with these sentiments.]

Challenge: The second has to do with the social implications of the Gospel. Has it not happened all too frequently that men of generous and noble nature, tormented by the spectacle of the wrongs of society and the sufferings of humanity, and on fire to help their brethren "bound in affliction and iron" have cried out against what seemed to them the appalling torpor and inaction of the Church, dragging its slow ponderous length along, with leisurely, lumbering organisation, and have flung away from it in impatience and despair? — From "Preaching," by Dr. James S. Stewart, of Edinburgh, considered by some to be the outstanding preacher in the United Kingdom today.

[Ed. Note: It is heartening to see this outstanding man aware of the social implications of Christianity.]

Theft: Society in its corporate capacity is guilty of theft. It steals in the completest manner — passively: Notwithstanding that its function is to see justice observed, in acting through its laws as an accomplice, by enabling landholders to take that to which they have no right. Actively, in taking that to which it itself has no right. Christ's teaching when questioned on the subject of taxation, to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," conveys that there is that which is the distinct property of Caesar — the State — has produced, and therefore has the right to claim. All those appropriating to themselves land values, or land rent, are robbing the State. — F. T. Hodgkiss, in "Christianity and Henry Georgism," copies of which excellent pamphlet are available at this office for a nominal charge.

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Melbourne City.—Latrobe St. has tram service. Two decrepit properties, Nos. 228-232 Latrobe St., north side, near Swanston St., sold at £24,000 as site of large new building where "opportunity cost" is above £20,000 per sq. chn.—Argus, 18/4/56.

[Ed. Note.—Departing vendor collects a huge sum which is capital value of public services provided by other citizens and so imposes a heavy charge on enterprise and development. Does City Development Association approve?]

Practical Politics.—As a means of kicking value out of the printed paper £1, Menzies' Minister for Customs arranged an increase of tariff taxes on adults' rubber shoes and boots from 2/4, to be 5/6 a pair and for children's rubber footwear to be taxed at 3/6 pair. Most imports come from Gt. Britain and are of good quality. Consumers' choice has now been restricted, as part of the "Liberal" policy of "putting value back into the £1."

Planned Economy.—Sales tax on women's and children's leather cases, hand bags, etc., is 12½ per cent., but if a vanity mirror is included, sales tax is 50 per cent. on same hand bag.—Bulletin, 5/12/56.

[Ed. Note.—Vanity of vanities: the notion that economic planners are "scientific" workers.]

" 'That did it,' exploded Pa. 'You kids will have to find work somewhere else. The farm's gone. All we got left in this world is the house, the barn, the orange grove, and a million in the bank.' "

—Henry George Herald, Jan., 1956.

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