

"LAND VALUE TAX WOULD LOWER RATES"

MEMBERS of county, borough, and district councils in Derbyshire and adjoining counties, and members of professions concerned with housing, town planning, and valuation attended Saturday's session of the International Conference to Promote Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, at The Hayes, Swanwick.

Mr. Ashley Mitchell, a Huddersfield manufacturer, presiding, said that in Sydney (Australia) land value taxation was adopted in 1916. The result was a reduction in rates from £12 to £5 a year, and a further reduction in taxation, and in the cost of living.

Mr. A. W. Madsen, secretary of the committee for the Taxation of Land Values, said they had hoped the Labour Government would do something about the taxation of land values as distinct from taxing the buildings and improvements on the land. They had been rather disappointed, for instead, the Government had produced the Town and Country Planning Act, which meant that every time there was an improvement made or a change in the use of land, a development charge had to be made.

He said that the community value of land—which was due to its geographical position and the services which the community provided—justly belonged to the community. The buildings and improvements made by man were a separate thing, and should be exempt. The present system of rating was based on an assessment of the rent land would produce in its present condition over a year, and this was paid by the occupier. Thus vacant land was exempt from rates, and any improvement on occupied land increased the rateable value.

Instead of collecting the land value from the occupier the landlord should pay a tax, and where the tenant enjoyed benefit from land values he should pay a proportion.

"FINED ONCE A YEAR."

Mr. Madsen said that in Derbyshire, because of the removal of local taxation on agricultural land, the burden was being borne by little towns and parish councils, which were classed as poor areas. They were financially aided nationally, with a consequent increase in the power of the central Government.

The Town and Country Planning Act meant that a man could not build without permission from the Central Land Board, and without first paying a development charge.

Dr. Rowland O'Regan, of New Zealand, said local government was good government, and the very basis of democracy. If you wished to destroy it you had only to destroy its taxing powers. He continued: "If you rob a house you are fined once. Under the present system of taxation if you build a house, you are fined once a year," he said.

"Our system means lower rates for over 80 per cent. of the people, because unused land is rateable and those who use land as an instrument to get other people to work for them pay more rates."

Mr. R. Mainstone, borough treasurer of Chesterfield, asked if an increase

in the tax paid by a landowner would not find its way back again on the rent, and if land values as a basis of taxation were sufficiently buoyant to be able to bear the constant increases in expenditure.

Replying to the first part of the question, Mr. Madsen said if landowners could get more rent they would do so now. He added that since vacant land would be rateable, more land would come on the market, and its price would tend to decrease. Land value tax could not be passed on in the price of land. That was why there was furious opposition from the landowners.

Dr. O'Regan, answering the second part of the question, said that in Sydney and in other places the answer to the question had been given. The adoption of land value taxation had proved more than sufficient to meet increased expenditure.

Coun. T. Cooke, of Belper Rural Council, asked what the effect would be on agriculture. He was told by Mr. J. R. Mason of California (U.S.A.), and by Mr. K. J. Kristensen, chief land valuer for the Danish Government, that in their countries it had proved beneficial and popular, because it did not penalise a man for his enterprise. It was especially popular with the small efficient farmer.

Derbyshire Advertiser
August 19

Swanwick v. Strasbourg

IS Swanwick wiser than Strasbourg? "Let us go home from this conference without making any appeal for further international discussions to solve basic economic problems internationally." The above, taken from the President's speech at the Conference of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, held this week at Swanwick Hayes, strikes a note of refreshing novelty in a Europe, where conferring is on the way to become the only prosperous industry.

The International Union was formed to propagate the teaching of Henry George, the American economist, who at the end of the nineteenth century urged that all other taxes should merge in a single impost on land values. Governments in those far off, happy days were not in the habit of asking for so much as they do now. The budgets of to-day running into thousands of millions would be a hard nut to crack at a single blow.

Nottingham Evening Post - August 20

INTERNATIONAL UNION'S POLICY DECLARATION

Equal Rights to Land

DELEGATES from ten of the 26 countries in which there are members of the International Union for land value taxation and free trade, who are attending an international conference at The Hayes, Swanwick, yesterday passed unanimously a declaration of principles and policy.

The declaration, submitted by Mr. J. R. Mason, U.S.A., states that in view of the financial and industrial crisis which faces the greater part of the world to-day, the International Union condemns all plans involving increased regimentation by the State and the arbitrary powers of government to control or prohibit import and export trade.

It further condemns plans which make the fiscal policy of one country dependent on the fiscal policies of another, and those which imply the retention of monopolies instead of their abolition.

"MANIPULATION."

It attacks the use of taxes and loans and the "manipulation of money" to put goods on the market at fictitious prices, and plans which contemplate the unbalancing of budgets and the expansion of public debts on the pretext that spreading purchasing power by these methods will have beneficial social effects.

The declaration continues: "The tenure of land ultimately determines the economic, political, and consequently the intellectual and moral condition of the people."

"Involuntary poverty and recurrent periods of unemployment are caused by the private appropriation of the rent of land and by the withholding of land from its adequate and proper use."

"The more completely land is thus monopolised in any country, the greater is the insecurity of employment and the nearer are wages driven down to mere subsistence level."

HOW TO DO IT.

"Until measures are taken to stop the private appropriation of the rent of land, all remedies currently advocated for improving social conditions are incapable of achieving their purpose."

The declaration states that everyone has an equal right to life, so that it "necessarily follows that everyone has an equal right to land on which alone life can be sustained."

It advocates that the equal right to land should be secured by collecting the rent of land and devoting it to the uses of the community, assuring to the producer the full fruits of his efforts by abolishing the imposts, tariffs, taxes on improvements, exchange controls and other injurious

of a "coercive State," which "penalise production and obstruct the free movement of men and goods."

The declaration considers that all landlords should be required to make a contribution according to the value of their land, apart from improvements. It believes that this would make unnecessary all tariffs and taxes that are repressive of industry and would give the world free trade, and would make the use of the land profitable only to the user. Fines and penalties, in the shape of taxes, "which are levied on who adds to the general stock of wealth," would be abolished.

The declaration thinks that in this way involuntary poverty could be abolished, "over-production would be inconceivable until all human wants were satisfied, labour-saving devices would be made a blessing to all and there would be such production and distribution of wealth as would enable all to achieve comfort, leisure and participation in the advantages of a progressing civilization."

PROPERTY RIGHTS.

Dr. Rowland O'Regan, of New Zealand, submitted a resolution, which was adopted, to clarify the question of property rights.

He said all men had an equal right to the land and all other natural resources. Subject to these and to this common ownership, the rights of the individual should be the exclusive occupation and use of the land, the right to the free transfer of the land within the laws of the country and the right to transmit land by inheritance.

The individual had no right to use the land in a manner contrary to the common good of all. Neither had the individual any right to appropriate the economic rent of the land—i.e., the annual value of the land apart from improvements created by labour.

He said this value was created by the existence of the community and was, in justice, the property of the community. To allow this to be appropriated by individuals enabled the land to be used not only for the production of wealth, but as an instrument of oppression of man by man, leading to the gravest social consequences, which were everywhere evident.

COMMON USE.

Dr. O'Regan said man could exercise his natural and equal rights to land by holding the land as an individual or by sharing in the common use of the economic rent of the land.

The community-created land value could be collected by the present machinery which existed for the collection of taxes. The multitude of taxes which now penalised industry, thrift and enterprise, could be abolished.

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London News Chronicle
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Land taxers gather

SOME 400 international delegates meet at Swanwick, Derbyshire, next week—all inspired by a single idea.

They come from Denmark, Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, U.S., New Zealand and Australia, as well as from Britain. And they represent bodies which advocate the theories of Henry George, the printer-journalist of California, who, in the latter half of last century, proposed a single land-tax as the solution for all economic problems.

The Danes are sending a large delegation to this gathering, of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, because this year's president is Danish M.P. Bue Bjorner.

Manchester Guardian
August 16

ECONOMISTS' "TIME OF THEIR LIVES"

A Dane on Five-Year Plans

Mr B. Bjorner, a member of the Danish Parliament, in his presidential address at Swanwick, Derbyshire, yesterday, to the international conference to promote land value taxation and free trade, said that the decades of trade restrictions and bilateral trade agreements had fostered an army of "writing-desk" economists in every country who had had the time of their lives working out their five-year plans. Did anyone believe that further State control and further planned economy would put a country back on a competitive basis? he asked.

Economists and statesmen had made tremendous efforts to find a way out of the jungle of trade restrictions, bilateral trade agreements and planned economy which prevented post-war recovery, but so far the results had been modest. In the long term programmes of the various countries in which they explained how they intended to administer Marshall aid the spirit of liberty had been sacrificed to the considerations of national economic security.

"These programmes present a new record of planned writing-desk economy. Though many a kind word is said about the desirability of attaining free international trade you find little or no understanding of the fact that only by the simple method of free competition will the development of really sound enterprise take place." He urged each delegate to work for the breaking down of his country's national barriers regardless of what others might do.

INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR LAND VALUE TAXATION AND FREE TRADE San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1949

News

FINANCE
and
INDUSTRY

Union for Land Value Taxes Elects S. F. Capitalist Chief

Henry George Disciples Insist Their Plan Would Cure Many of the World's Ills

J. R. Mason, San Francisco capitalist, has been elected president of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade. He returned here last week from London, where a conference of the organization was held. More than 400 delegates attended. The next session will be in Copenhagen in 1951. At that meeting, Mr. Mason will preside.

Mr. Mason, an ardent disciple of Henry George, brought back with him texts of resolutions at the conference.

In recognition of the industrial and financial crisis facing the world today, the group advocated "abolishing tariffs, taxes on land improvements, exchange controls and other instruments of a coercive state which penalize production."

In its declaration of principle and policy, the conference condemned plans which involve increased regimentation of the individual by the state. It also lashed out at "arbitrary powers of government aimed at controlling or prohibiting import and export trade."

The disciples of Henry George stated, as their basic premise, that "the tenure of land is the great governing fact which ultimately determines the economic, political and consequently the intellectual and moral condition of the people."

Thus, the group argued, "the private appropriation of the rent of land, and the withholding of land from its adequate and proper use, are fundamental causes of involuntary poverty and recurrent unemployment."

The organization explained that, since the existence of the community creates the value of land,

then the entire community, and not only the individual, should benefit from the land. This benefit should be realized, the conference stated, by making the tax on land sufficiently high to carry all the burdens of government.

"Thus a multitude of other taxes would be eliminated—and every one would be reaping the fruits of the land."

Mr. Mason has been for a long time in the movement here. He was prominent in the Ralston campaign in 1938. He is a member of The Commonwealth Club in this city where Henry George wrote his book, "Progress and Poverty."