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Veitch Receives Standing Ovation In New York On Land Valuation Address

(TRUMPET'S Special Correspondent) NEW YORK, September:

S. O. VEITCH, Deputy Secretary of the People's National Party of Jamaica, West Indies, received an outstanding ovation at the close of his 75 minute speech to the Henry George School of Social Science.

The occasion was the faculty dinner of the school, held at its international headquarters at 50 East Sixty-ninth Street on Wednesday, September 14, to which Mr. Veitch was invited as guest of honour.

The Henry George School of Social Science is interested in the system of Land Taxation established throughout the world and displays a particular interest in the Land Valuation Taxation on the unimproved value being instituted in Jamaica. This being the first introduction of the scheme in this section of the world, Mr. Veitch traced the history of Jamaica's land problem as commencing with emancipation in the year 1834, when the total population of the island was about 370,000, of which approximately 290,000 were slaves. Nearly all the land, and certainly all the good land then belonged to under 1,000 persons.

He traced the fight for taxation on the unimproved value to the formation of the People's National Party in 1938 and the issue of its first "Outline of policy and programme of the P.N.P." approved by the Party's first conference held in April, 1939, where it advocated reorganisation of the system of land taxation by the adoption of a system whereby land is taxed at its improved market value, and not on the value of the land plus its improvement. "Land for the Millions", a pamphlet issued by the Hon. Dr. Ivan Lloyd, then M.L.C. for St. Ann in 1940; "Plan for Security" in 1943, which advocated the abolition of property tax on all holdings of Twenty Pounds (£20) and less valuation on the roll; "Programme for Action Now" issued in 1945, "Why you should join the P.N.P." issued in 1948, which advocated reform of the system of taxation on land by taxing the value of the land alone so that:

- The man who improves his holding by his toil and sacrifice will not be penalised by

being taxed on the improvement he makes.

- But those who keep large-acre holdings will pay taxes on the full value of the land and so be forced either to develop it thus (and so give work), or sell it (and so make land valuable to those able and willing to work it).

- Check the exorbitant rise in the price of idle and uncultivated land.

The Party's "Plan for Progress", as issued in 1949 also came for display and quotation.

After great pressure by the P.N.P. Opposition in the House, the Bill to change the system of land taxation was introduced in 1950, but because its provisions would not satisfy the land barons of the day it was not taken to a conclusion in the House. Less than one year after the P.N.P. took power, the Bill was however remodelled and brought back to the House in 1956 and passed.

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In order to show that the valuable acreage of Jamaica's land was too small for its taxation to form any great part in the revenue of the island, he showed that the total acreage of the island was 2,823,000 acres of which only 570,000 acres or 20% was flat, the area used for agricultural purposes according to a survey made in 1950 was 1,018,000, of which 423,000 acres was arable land and

orchards and 595,000 acres permanent meadows and pastures. Of the rest of the island about 500,000 was considered forest land, about 312,000 acres were not used for any purpose, but considered potentially productive, and 2,000 acres were in the process of reclamation. There were 378,000 acres of permanent waste land including 5,300 acres of swamp, 175,000 acres of waste land, and 650,000 acres of land of low productivity, and the area used for roads, railways etc. estimated at 115,000 acres.

Details of the work for preparation for the revaluation and the many obstacles placed in the way by those opposing the scheme, were remitted.

Up to March 1960 the parishes of St. Catherine, St. Ann, Portland and St. Mary were completed and showed that while under the old valuation, these parishes were on the tax role for £7,108,158, the new valuation on the unimproved value amounted to £29,038,334.

It was hoped that the revaluation of the entire island will be completed in three years time.

The audience was very glad to hear that there was marked development in the parishes already revalued, but while no specific figures could yet be given as to the amount of development attributed to the effects of revaluation, evidence had been received of efforts to effect development as a direct result of the new taxation scheme.

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