

## Eighty-two years ago he shook the political world with a gospel of reform...

★ IF THIS is the first you have heard of The Henry George League, you probably have one question: "Who's Henry George?"

It's not a question anyone would have asked 82 years ago. At that time, Henry George, a crusading American economist, was touring Australia, and was drawing huge, excited crowds to his lectures.

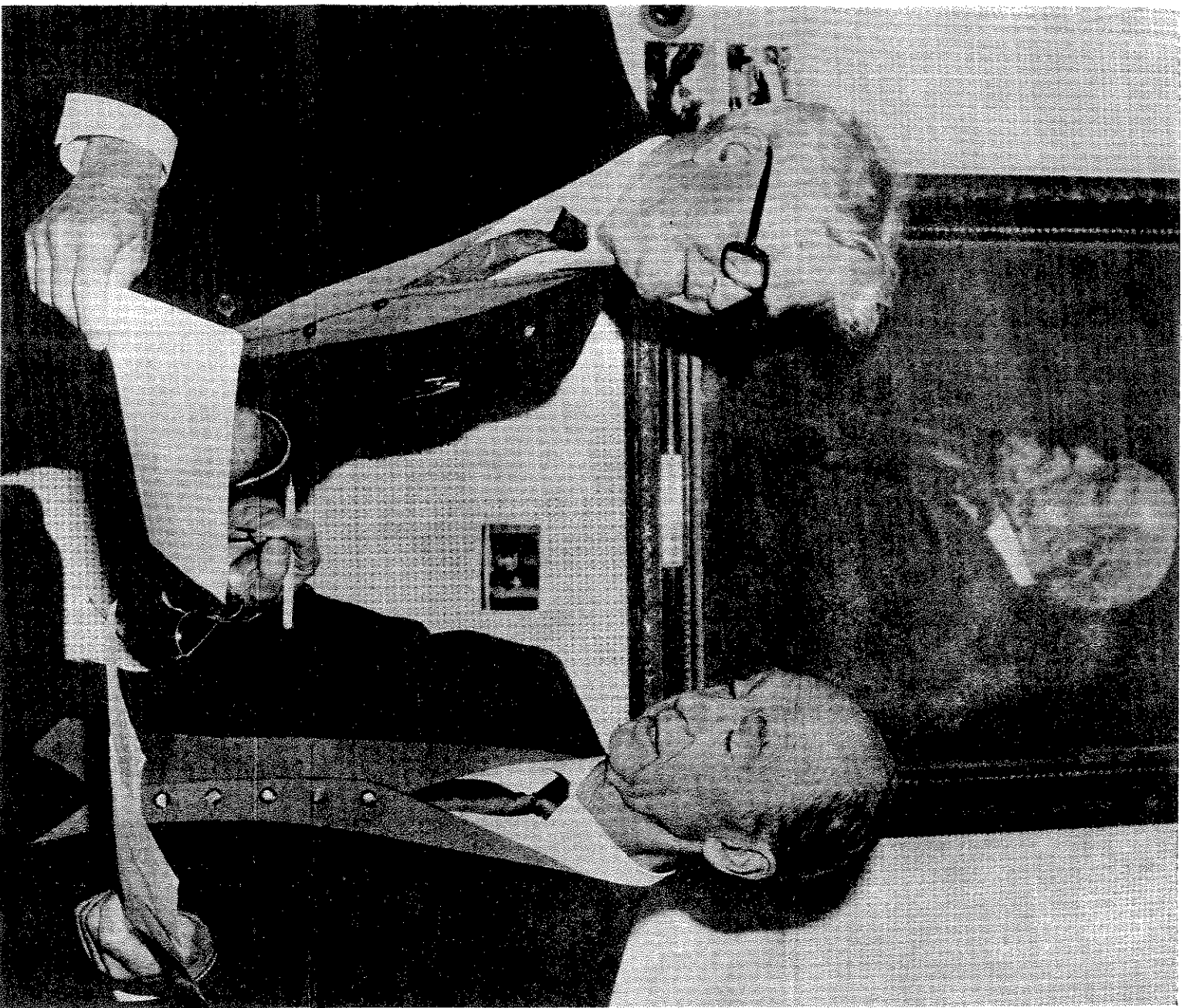
He was world-famous as the author of a controversial best-seller, "Progress and Poverty". His gospel of land and tax reform seemed to offer a cure for the economic depression which was then racking the country.

Today, hundreds of members of the Henry George League, in Australia and New Zealand, are still dedicated to his revolutionary tax scheme, based on charging land-holders rent for their properties.

The largest group is in Melbourne, with carpeted offices in the city's commercial district. POST met the immediate past president, Councillor Allen Hutchinson, a chartered engineer and economic research consultant, who is a member of the suburban Camberwell City Council.

"We are reformers," he explained. "Our objective is to abolish poverty."

"We hope to do this by the introduction of a new tax system, under which the primary source of Government revenue would be, not taxes on production and income, but rent for land.



★ WATCHED by Henry George's portrait, the Henry George League's immediate past president, Mr Allen Hutchinson, and the president, Mr Bill Pitt, discuss land values and tax reform, at the group's Melbourne office.

# Who was Henry George?

"The State Governments now own all the land; the people who are loosely termed owners really only have a lease on it, but are not charged rent on their lease."

"We believe that the State Governments should begin collecting the land rent which is due to them. With this money, they could finance their works and services, and would not need so much from the Federal Government's income tax pool."

"This in turn would mean lower income tax; it would put an end

to land speculation; a lowering in land prices would mean that more families could afford their own homes; it would cut inflation, at the same time as it stimulated the economy to end unemployment."

League members pursue their aims by organising public lectures and courses in economics, by speaking at open-air gatherings, and writing letters to newspapers. Aided by rent from its own Melbourne building, the group publishes a steady stream of pamphlets, and a

monthly newspaper with a circulation of 1600.

Mr Hutchinson feels that the league and other bodies have had major success over the last 80 years in persuading local government councils to charge rates on unimproved site value. Now, two thirds of Australian councils, covering 93 per cent of the whole area under local government, rate on this basis, instead of the old improved value rating system.

However, these days, he admits,

it is difficult to compete against home swimming pools, power boats and TV, to attract new members to the cause.

"Only widespread adversity, such as a problem of widespread unemployment, will drive governments into using our land rent system," he says.

"It was in the depressions of the 1890s and the 1930s that our league made the greatest progress, and people flocked to join."

— VAUGHAN MAWBEX