

10/17

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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HENRY GEORGE

ANNUAL COMMEMORATION

will be held in Scots Church Hall,

Tuesday, 4th September, 1951

at 8 p.m.

The Address will be given by

Dr. K. N. GRIGG

RESERVE THIS DATE.

kind to themselves so easily and for an immediate change to the Site-Value Rating which does not penalise property owners for improving their properties.

RANDOM HARVEST.

Recently the orchard areas of Kent were invaded by casual workers for the fruit and hopping seasons. Whole families take up fruit picking; some full time, during the school holidays; some during the light evenings; and others at week-ends. Farmers pay high rates owing to the necessity for the crops to be gathered in as quickly as possible, and so earnings are high, especially with good crops easy to pick.

But the orchard areas were also invaded by another group of visitors, viz., income tax gatherers, who are reported to be confronted with a headache as to how to tax the harvesters. However, it was stated that "every effort is made to ensure that these earnings are taxed."

Bishop Barnes once spoke of "man, the adolescent." Often the term "man, the kindergarten child," would be flattery. With a tremendous need for increasing and facilitating production, officialdom does its utmost to hinder and discourage production. And the amazing thing is the the majority of people tolerate the insanity. For many, unfortunately, freedom has become a vague, emotional slogan, devoid of any genuine content.

THE BASIC MADNESS.

How much longer is the basic wage madness to go on? It is reported that the basic (?) wage is to go up 5/- or 6/- in August. One man says 12/-. So the socialistic wage chase after prices goes on. A Sydney paper put on one of its writers to go into the matter. A number of people were looked up. They got from £10 to £14 a week and had to struggle to exist.

I did not notice any cases of £4 or £5 a week and how they managed. But they seem all agreed on one point. These basic wage rises were no good as the prices beat them. Of course they were no good and if continued will make it impossible to carry on. None of those interviewed seemed to understand that the basis for fixing wages was wrong.

It is arbitrarily fixed on an official assumed cost of living. The true basis for fixing wages is ignored. What a man produces or the value of his work is the natural

Current Comments

MELBOURNE'S FOLLY.

The Age on the 1st August, 1951, reports that due to an unexpected high rise in the Basic Wage last December, and cost of living adjustments since, expenses of the Melbourne City Council have increased, so more revenue is needed.

Melbourne is part of the 10 per cent of Australia which still clings obstinately to the Nett Annual Value system of rating, which was in use in Queen Elizabeth's day. This system is a levy on the Nett Annual Rental Value of improvements and thus penalises those with the best buildings.

The finance committee of the City Council proposes that the extra revenue be raised by "revaluation" and possibly by increasing the present rate of 2/5 in the pound. Sub-standard buildings will not generally have their valuations increased and some indeed will be reduced, while the better class of buildings such as Manchester Unity, Century, T. & G. and modern flats will have their valuations increased sufficiently to provide the £170,000 of extra revenue required by the Council.

Inevitably people will think that the councillors approve of slums, or else that some councillors have investments in these blighted areas.

There is an urgent need for a uniform valuation authority throughout the Commonwealth so that councillors in Melbourne and elsewhere cannot be so

basis of wages. That is determined in the market. All that is necessary is for conditions to be free, no special privileges or monopolies and the wages will be all right, with effective buying power.

A man's needs, or cost of living, is absurd as a basis for paying wages. Unless the produce of his labour or the value of his work justifies wages he is loafing on other men. Of course this artificial wage fixing is just dodging the real issue. As in all such cases the poorest of the people have to suffer the most. — A. G. Huie.

HELPING THE COMMUNISTS.

The main occupation for the Italians living around the delta of the Po River is fishing. But as only a part of the population could be supported in this way, the remainder decided to resort to agriculture and appealed to the Government to drain the swampy land and to establish small holdings. So a bill for spending 400 million lire at Comacchio was passed by the Italian Parliament. But time went by and nothing was happening. So the responsible Minister travelled from Rome to explain the vast difficulties which the Government was encountering, and pleaded for patience. He received quite a favourable hearing.

A month later, on January 18th, 1951, since nothing further had eventuated, the Communists organized a demonstration which became a riot. Soon after the long awaited money arrived.

Now the Communists have claimed, not without justification, that without their activity, action would not have been taken. Be this as it may, and ignoring the question of the worth or feasibility of the contemplated reforms, the above incident illustrates an important point. In most parts of the world today the landlessness of the people is the cause of their poverty, and the Communists are able to exploit such situations to their own ends. People in distress will listen to anyone offering hopes of better conditions, although they will frequently find themselves eventually worse off than previously.

The best allies of the Communists are those who so strenuously defend the maintenance of vested interests and privileges, and use the State as the instrument for keeping people in bondage. Unfortunately Western Powers seem to believe that the way to combat Communism is to rely on force; the idea of aiming for social justice, e.g. insisting that ground rents be diverted from privileged individuals to the public treasury, is conspicuous by its absence from the thoughts and actions of our political leaders.

(Adapted from Land and Liberty, March, 1951.)

BY THEIR FRUITS.

In the United States through price control the price of eggs and potatoes was fixed at a level higher than that determined by the interplay of supply and demand. Consumption was thus restrained, so that billions of eggs have been destroyed in American storehouses, while hundreds of acres of land have been rendered unusable because of piles of potatoes left to rot. Ship loads of potatoes were sold at 20 cents a ton to the Franco Government, which resold them to its enslaved people at a colossal profit. So generous of America, isn't it!—From "The Square Deal," March-April, 1951.

Poverty in Persia

The following comments on Persia have been culled from the Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 8, No. 3, 7th May, published by the Commonwealth Office of Education.

An important factor in the low standard of living in Persia is the economic system, characterised by a land ownership divided between the State and opulent absentee landlords. Some of the latter own whole villages, whereas the big majority of the 12,000,000 peasants are landless. Often, besides ordinary rent, the peasant is compelled to pay additional dues of butter, vegetables, cheese, etc. As land rentals are high and crop yields poor, the average peasant is usually obliged to resort to the moneylender.

Poverty also rears its ugly head in the cities. Teheran provides a contrast between magnificent modern buildings and the latest American cars of the landholders and Government officials on the one hand, and the pathetic beggars pleading for food on the other hand.

Such circumstances provide a splendid field for the growth of Communism, and the opportunities thus presented have not been neglected.

Many Persians identify the Western Powers with the privileged classes of their country, and would like the granting of economic and technical aid to be conditional on steps being taken to rectify those aspects of the status quo which depress the living standards of the majority of their people. Unfortunately, this is something which the Western Powers are unable or unwilling to apprehend, and such a failure will inevitably entail bitter consequences.

The situation has been brilliantly summed up by Maurice Hindus, in his "In Search of a Future" (Gollancz, 1949): "While statesmen battle over Russian aggression, over the threat of Communism, over the rising tide of rebellion in Asia and Africa, over oil and strategic bases; while general staffs draw up secret blue prints of possible military campaigns, and geologists and engineers are deep in calculations of the oil reserves of lands other than their own, and of their exploitation—there is the fellah (peasant), the most forgotten man in the world. Neither Western diplomats who pit themselves against Russian diplomacy nor Persian or Arab spokesmen ever mention him. Neither do the diplomats ever deign to mention the dirty four-letter word LAND. But if the fellah will not find or be shown a genuine solution to the land problem, he will reach out for a false one. If the West will not help him while it can, the East eventually will. If Western democracy fails to meet the challenge of the landless or land-poor peasant, Communism will run away with the triumph, even as it did in the peasant Russia of yesterday and is now doing in the peasant China of today.

"Dressing up the countries of the Middle East with foreign loans, while leaving the fellah to his agonies, is like putting rouge on the cheeks of a cancerous patient to give him the illusion of health."

The same lesson was taught in the following words of a young Persian student in Cairo:

"Suppose you are desperately hungry and live between two neighbours. One of them offers you food, while the other talks to you about freedom and tells

you to go on being hungry because the food offered you is poisoned. Your instinct for preservation will naturally give you the strength not to eat for another day or two, but after that, the same instinct will make you accept the food in the hope that the freedom-loving neighbour was wrong."

At present, while statesmen wrangle about the oil question, the economic problem abides. Settling the former is inadequate; Persia needs a radical programme of agrarian and social reform.

THE HIGHER ART OF STEALING.

I have often pointed out that the function of government is to prevent one man from stealing what another man produces. Today, in America to some degree and in Europe to a much greater degree, government's principal function is to take from the best producers and distribute to those who are unable or unwilling to work. To the extent that this is done by government, will our civilization become more and more decadent. In the early days of government, those in power could keep that power by dividing what they stole in taxes with a few of the lords and barons who were in key places. By so doing government made it unnecessary for the most capable people to work at all.

Later, as the democratic idea broadened, it was necessary to divide the "loot" with an increasingly larger group. Today in America we have the spectacle of a government which steals from the people for the benefit of organized groups numbering into the millions. While the thief in the beginning kept only the lords and barons idle, present day government aims seem to be to give millions the idea that their welfare lies not in greater effort but in looking to government to help them to steal from their fellow man. All of Europe is convinced that their salvation lies in that direction. Apparently a majority of Americans are convinced of the same thing.—Jerome Joachim in "Is This True About Business?" "Henry George News," January, 1949.

PROTECTION

In my country I have witnessed the insatiable growth of that form of State Socialism styled Protection, which I believe has done more than any other cause to foster class legislation and create inequality of fortune; to corrupt public life; to banish men of independent mind and character from the public councils; to lower the tone of national representation; blunt public conscience; create false standards in the popular mind; to familiarise it with reliance on State aid and guardianship in private affairs; divorce ethics from politics and place politics upon the low level of a mercenary scramble.—Hon. T. F. Bayard, U.S. Ambassador to Britain, at Edinburgh, November 7, 1895.

WESTMINSTER.

About 350 years ago a Miss Davis married into the family and bought a farmstead as a dowry. It was valued at four shillings a year. Now it is Belgravia, part of 600 acres running from Oxford Street to the Thames which before the war were valued at £20,000,000. Westminster's estate includes Park Lane and Grosvenor Square. He recently sold the west side of the square on a 999 year lease to the American Government for about £1,000,000.—From Land and Liberty, March, 1951.

Tasmanian Banana Industry

KEEPING MONEY IN THE COUNTRY.

Tasmania is the island State away to the south where the summer climate is so cool that tourists enjoy its climate. Queensland to the north is much hotter and grows the semi-tropical fruits including the ever popular bananas. These are shipped south and imported by Tasmania in exchange for its potatoes exported to the north.

New Industry Advances Self Sufficiency.

But Tasmania has large resources of hydro-electric power. With an industrial expert available, such as Mr. G. C. Puzey, formerly of the Department of National Development, then this power could be utilized to establish Tasmania's home-grown banana industry. A skilful entrepreneur, by means of electrically heated hot-houses, artificial sunlight from electric lamps, subtly blended electro-chemical fertilizers and mechanised handling could do the job. Tasmania can grow bananas!

Application of the most modern ideas of costing, of budgetary control and scientific management would assist the economics of the project. The result might be luscious Tasmanian bananas full of vitamins and flavour. But these would cost the consumer a great deal more than the Queensland bananas raised in the open with copious sunlight. However the Tasmanian Industries Preservation League, following the lead of Melbourne's expert, would still assert that Tasmania CAN grow bananas!

Competition is Unfair.

Further, the electrically operated banana industry should not be exposed to unfair competition from cheap sunlight. Since it is cheap, competition is not fair. Indeed the Tasmanian economy should be made self-sufficient in bananas because as a "protective" food for children the undoubted vitamin content and the high price would put bananas in a class apart—especially so for large families. A Professor of Economics has pointed out that these additional costs are "soon absorbed by the economy." The manifest advantages of keeping the home market for Tasmanian-grown bananas could be proved by statistical economics, as a treatment of the discordant facts.

The Multiplier.

Other advantages also arise. Tasmania would no longer be required to send her potatoes to Queensland. This would relieve the burden on interstate coastal shipping. With further similar steps of Protection the whole crop of Tasmanian potatoes could be retained in the island and would be available for Tasmanians alone to eat and pay for. Thus Tasmania would benefit doubly from Protection. It would have both the bananas AND the potatoes. Protection is grand.

Vote Puzey for Protection.

Vision.—"When we think, if we can, of the vast solar system, with its suns, and stars and worlds, moving through aeons of time in majestic order, and contrast them with the most minute forms of life revealed by the microscope, yet fashioned with exquisite perfection of detail, we shall surely be inspired as men created in the image of God, to make our community lives of such a pattern as will not be unworthy to fit into the mosaic of the majestic and logical order of nature."—C. R. Swan, Sydney.

A Genuine Jubilee

For most people the word "Jubilee" connotes a politically stimulated celebration in which there is little basis for true rejoicing. But to the ancient Hebrews the word contained a genuine association with thoughts of rejoicing.

The Jubilee was an integral part of the Hebrew socio-economic system, or more specifically, of the Mosaic Law. This system was characterized by an equitable division of land which gave every family in the Commonwealth of Israel direct access to the earth. As the latter is the source of all material necessities for man's subsistence, this measure ensured the prevention of involuntary poverty. Chattel slavery was indeed permitted to the Hebrews to some extent, but the more subtle, insidious form of slavery, viz. monopoly of natural elements essential for life, was prohibited, for, as Shakespeare says, "You take my life when you do take the means whereby I live."

Thus a worker was not compelled to share his produce with a landlord or exploiter of labour. So it was possible to envisage the conditions described in Deuteronomy 15:4, viz., "There shall be no poor among you: for the Lord shall greatly bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it," but only if the people fulfilled God's laws (cf. verse 5). Note the phrases, "the land which . . . God giveth" and "an inheritance to possess."

However, the Mosaic Law recognized that any system, however sound in theory, could be perverted through the frailty and weakness of human nature. To allow for this, the Jubilee was therefore instituted.

Hence every 50 years the original equitable division of the land was restored. Inequalities due to foolishness, improvidence, injustice or selfishness were rectified (cf. Leviticus 25:10—"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee to you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.")

A description of the Jubilee is given in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus. Actually there is no definite historical record of the observance of the Year of Jubilee. But in the Jewish Encyclopedia page 607, the tradition of its observance before the captivity is indicated. And in "Antiquities," page 378, Ewald has observed: "On a close inspection nothing is more certain than that the Jubilee, in spite of its at first seemingly strange aspect, was once for centuries a reality in the national life of Israel." And Driver, in "Literature of the Old Testament," 7th ed. page 57, has remarked: "At least as far as concerns the land (for the periodical redistribution of which there are analogies in other nations) it must date from ancient times in Israel." And finally, Ezekiel (Chapter 7, verses 12 and 13) refers to the non-observance of the Jubilee as one of the signs of the impending doom of his nation for its misdoings.

It is worth noting that the Hebrew did not own land: it was only his to use, subject to the equal rights of others. In the Old Testament, the word *possessor*, and not *ownership*, is used in connection with land tenure, on the basis that God, being Creator, has the sole claim to be called owner. Moreover, the interest

of future generations in land could not be sold. The situation might be expressed by saying that the land was leased by God to the various families, and at the end of fifty years all leases fell in simultaneously, and then a fresh grant of land made for the next fifty years to all the Hebrew families. Thus the growth of a wealthy landed class and of a landless pauper class was obviated. John (Biblical Archaeology) described the Jubilee as "a regulation which prevented the rich from coming into possession of large tracts of land, and then leasing them out in small parcels to the poor, a practice which anciently prevailed, and does to this day, in the East." And Heinrich Heine wrote: "Moses endeavoured to bring property into harmony with morality, with the true law of reason, and this he accompanied by the introduction of the Year of Jubilee." While, of course, inequalities could arise through varying degrees of industry, the equality of economic opportunity under the Hebrew law precluded both the idleness of unearned riches and the idleness of involuntary poverty.

Further, it may be noted that the Hebrews distinguished between land (made by God) and improvements (made by man), between the title to land and to usufruct. This may be discerned in verses 14-16, and 29-31, of the 25th chapter of Leviticus. At any rate Josephus, in Antiquities iii 12, 283, 284, states clearly that if an outgoing tenant spent more on the land than what he gained from it, he received compensation for his unexhausted improvements.

Indissolubly linked with the Jubilee was the idea of liberty. The Hebrews recognized that slavery and denial of equal rights in land are closely associated, the latter being an important cause of the former (cf. Genesis 47:18-21, Nehemiah 5:5). So at the Jubilee liberty was proclaimed to the captives (cf. Leviticus 25:39-43, 47-55). Thus Ezekiel called the Jubilee "the year of liberty" (Ezekiel 46:17) in keeping with the tenth verse of Leviticus 25 quoted above. And "the acceptable year of the Lord" to which Jesus referred in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:19, and note also the previous verse), was, to quote Josephus, "the Jubilee . . . which name denotes liberty." Thus at the Jubilee emancipation of man (cf. Leviticus 25:43-52), and restoration of land go hand in hand (cf. Leviticus 25:25-28).

Unfortunately, however, privileged classes were set up, despite the warnings of far-sighted statesmen (e.g. I Samuel 8:11-18), and land monopoly emerged even though the prophets, particularly Isaiah, Micah and Amos, uttered stern warnings. After the captivity in Babylon the Jubilee was never again observed. However, there are some interesting post-exile references to land restoration in the Old Testament, notably the fifth chapter of Nehemiah, where Nehemiah succeeded in attaining the abolition of land monopoly without compensation. Moreover, in the writings of the prophets are to be found passages expressing conviction in the coming reign of justice, where equal rights to land would be restored (e.g. Ezekiel 36:28) and where men shall enjoy the produce of their labour (e.g. Isaiah 62:3, 9, 65:21-23, Ezekiel 28:25-26).

One cannot help compare the Hebrew Jubilee with our present Jubilee, with its artificially stimulated enthusiasm, its housing shortage, its slums, its increasing burdens on wealth producers, its growing inflation, its privileged classes of land monopolists and tariff monopolists, its interclass factions . . .

A genuine Jubilee in Australia in 1951 would ensure the realization of two freedoms about which many professing lovers of freedom are strangely silent, viz., freedom of access to natural resources, or freedom to produce, and freedom to exchange one's products as one thinks fit. These freedoms entail collection of ground rent for community purposes by the community, and elimination of taxation on labour and its products. Thus the principles of the Jubilee of Old Testament times can be embodied in a form appropriate to our times.

[Note: For further information on the land question and related matters in the Bible, readers are advised to buy Frederick Verinder's "My Neighbour's Landmark," obtainable at the League Rooms for 1/-]

TARIFFS.

In all lands the interest of the great majority is in free trade, and unless and until this interest is satisfied there will be strife and wars without end. The Atlantic Charter implies as much, when it urges for all nations "access on equal terms to the trade and raw materials of the world" and calls for "the fullest collaboration of all nations in the economic field."—The Co-operative Builder.

I believe myself that protective tariffs wherever they have been introduced have done harm. I believe they have warped and restricted the growth of the industries of the nations which have adopted them. I believe that they have been unfairly injurious to the poorer classes. I believe that these tariffs tend to the corruption of public life and of public men; that they make every town and every part of the country send a member to the Legislature not to consider the generous and broad interests of the whole country, but to push the particular line of goods and of manufacture in the place from which he comes.—Winston Churchill, in "The People's Rights."

ILLINOIS.

The southern part of this State has produced millions of tons of coal and barrels of oil, yet the relief roll percentages at times have been the highest in the United States. At one stage 58 per cent of the people of Williamson County were on direct relief and another 25 per cent dependent on various social agencies. As usual, land speculation and inequitable land distribution were present.—Henry George News, August, 1950.

CALL TO ACTION.

"The standard that I have tried to raise tonight may be torn by prejudice and blackened by calumny; it may now move forward, and again be pushed back. But once loosed, it can never again be furled! to beat down and cover up the truth that I have tried to make clear to you, selfishness will call on ignorance. But it has in it the germinative force of truth, and the times are ripe for it. If the flint oppose it, the flint must split and crumble! Paul planteth, and Appollo watereth, but God giveth the increase. The ground is ploughed; the seed is set; the good tree will grow.

"So little now, only the eye of faith can see it. So little now; so tender and so weak. But sometime, the birds of heaven shall sing in its branches; sometime, the weary shall find rest beneath its shade!"—Henry George.

Site-Value Rating

Until 1877 every municipal council in Australia used the Nett Annual Value system of rating. Since that year the great majority of councils have changed over to the site-value system (officially called unimproved capital value).

Over the whole of Australia there are actually now 631 councils which use the site-value system compared with only 361 still using nett annual value. The councils using the site-value system actually embrace more than 90 per cent of the total municipalised area of Australia. Only one council in Australia has ever reverted to the old system after experiencing site-value rating.

In Victoria the following Melbourne suburbs are using the site-value rating system: Brunswick, Camberwell, Box Hill, Chelsea, Coburg, Caulfield, Kew, Moorabbin, Oakleigh, Preston, Mordialloc, Sandringham, Essendon. These are the suburbs which have shown the greatest development over many years. Site-value rating has made it easier for more citizens to become home-owners because the higher rates upon vacant land discourage continued holding by speculators.

Other Victorian councils using site-value rating are: City of Newtown and Chilwell, City of Hamilton, Town of Portland, Borough of Echuca, Shires of Frankston and Hastings, Dandenong, Rosedale, Yea.

Studies in these councils have shown that about three-quarters of the houses carry lower rates under site-value rating than they would under annual value rating. Although rates are increasing in all councils under whatever system they operate the increase on house-holders in site-value rating areas is only gradual whereas in those rating nett annual value it is sudden and drastic. (Heidelberg and Ringwood Rate-payers will have found this last year to their cost.)

Primary producers are benefited under site-value rating. A study of orchard and poultry farm properties in the Greensborough Ward showed that 74 per cent of the resident orchardists and 83 per cent of the poultry farmers would gain reduced rates under site-value rating.

Site-value rating is equitable in principle because it charges rates in proportion to the value of the service rendered by the municipality as measured by the land value. Nett annual value charges rates according to the value of the citizen's own efforts.

PARASITES.

It is obvious that the Protectionist, instead of creating a new industry, has simply taken one industry and set it as a parasite to live on another. A protected industry is not a producing industry. It is a consuming industry. If a factory is, as the Protectionist alleges, a triumph for the tariff—then it is not producing; it is consuming—Professor Sumner, in Protectionism.

(Editor's Note: The essential evil of Protectionism is that the tariff tax levied on imported goods results in increased prices. Purchasing power is diminished, i.e., tariff legislation compels people to take less commodities for a given amount of money. This results essentially in a reduction of wages.)

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT.

Betty Walden.

With regard to crime in the general sense, the present government's attitude is rather paradoxical. On the one hand they are trying to reduce crime by making a more humane approach to the problem of punishment; on the other hand they institute a controlled economy which, with its many restrictions, must inevitably increase the indictable offences, since government departments have almost unlimited power to issue regulations, and government orders must, to be effective, carry a penalty if disobeyed. In fact, in these "do as you're told" days we can never be sure that we are not committing a crime of some sort, and with all hopes of free trade rapidly receding in the face of bulk buying and bi-lateral trading, customs and currency offences will naturally not disappear but are likely to increase.

Much public indignation has been aroused by the increasing number of cases of parents neglecting their children, but surely to punish people for not maintaining conditions which are quite impossible for them economically is irresponsible. . . . Lack of housing accommodation is a primary cause of bad living conditions, and the tribunals which are set up to prevent exploitation are merely aggravating the position, as rents have risen through the housing shortage, under the natural laws of supply and demand.

The reconstruction of large houses into flats is frustrated by the Development Charge, which would be imposed on the owner for a change of use from a private dwelling. So here again, we have the government on the one hand forcibly restricting rents, while on the other preventing a natural tendency for rents to fall as more accommodation becomes available. — From an address reported in "Land and Liberty," June-July, 1950.

THE CHURCH FATHERS AND LAND.

The early church fathers were enlightened on the land question, even if unfortunately, their successors are not.

St Cyprian: No man shall come into our commune who sayeth that the land may be sold. God's footstool is not property.

St. Chrysostom: God gave the same earth to be cultivated by all. Since, therefore, His bounty is common, how comes it that you have so many fields and your neighbour not even a clod of earth?

St. Ambrose: The soil was given to the rich and poor in common. The pagans hold earth as property. They do blaspheme God.

St. Gregory: They wrongfully think they are innocent who claim for themselves the common gift of God.

The inadequate recognition by church leaders of today as regards the land question is to be regretted, especially in view of the fact that the Old Testament is such a source of enlightenment on the question.

Site Value Rating Polls

MAJOR VICTORIES

Site-value rating secured three major victories in the polls held in conjunction with the municipal elections in Victoria on Saturday, 25th August. There were polls taken in the City of Heidelberg and Borough of Ringwood respectively upon proposals to change to site-value rating from annual value rating. A poll was also taken in the City of Kew upon a proposal to revert to nett annual value rating. Two further places in which polls had been demanded and should have been held at this time were unable to take them due to inability on the part of the councils to complete their valuations in time. These two places were the Shire of Woorayl and the Shire of Phillip Island. In the former case the valuer fell ill during the course of his valuation and was unable to complete it. In the latter the valuer did not give his figures to the council in time to permit the compliance with the act which requires comparative rate statements to be sent out at least three weeks prior to the poll. In consequence the poll was postponed to a date to be fixed. The results of the various polls are set out below.

	Favor Site- Value	Against Site- Value
Heidelberg City		
Fairfield Ward	1,982	1,625
Ivanhoe Ward	7,205	2,804
Heidelberg Ward	4,131	2,194
Greensborough Ward	893	759
Totals	14,211	7,382
Ringwood Borough		
	1,905	1,396
Kew City	6,027	5,343

These results are most gratifying both in the fact that all three polls were successful and in that the margin in each case was so decisive.

The two new additions to the areas rating site-value mean that that system has become the majority one in Greater Melbourne. There are 30 cities and the Borough of Ringwood comprised in Greater Melbourne. The two additions give 16 rating site-value to only 15 rating annual value. These last are now mainly the inner industrial ones with their extensive blighted areas. The 31 units mentioned comprise a total of 160,000 acres of which 104,400 acres are rating under site-value. This is almost two-thirds of the total.

In view of these facts it is evident that in the Greater Melbourne Bill about to be brought down by the government there should be provision for rating upon unimproved value to be applied to the whole area. With such a single authority as proposed one or the other system would need to be applied. The provisions of the Bill are not known on going to press but should annual value be proposed it is evident that the move would be most retrograde and against the public interest.

HEIDELBERG

This is undoubtedly the greatest single victory for site-value rating in this state. The area of this municipality is 27,200 acres which is more than twice that of Moorabbin, the next largest. This area will now provide an outlet for those seeking homes in Melbourne. It was hitherto largely in the hands of large land speculators who will now be induced to make land available more cheaply to genuine home seekers.

This victory is a tribute to the sustained effort of the numerically small but most enthusiastic members of the Heidelberg Ratepayers Defence League who have fought this campaign steadily since the defeat of the poll four years ago. The proposal was then declared lost by 17 votes in 12,235. The decision was challenged in the courts because of irregularities in the poll, many people only receiving a single ballot paper although entitled to multiple votes.

Arising out of this and the challenged Kew poll the campaign of the General Council for Rating Reform secured an amendment to the Local Government Act permitting those seeking the polls to have scrutineers in the booths. This provision was fully availed of in Heidelberg this year but the poll was conducted in an exemplary manner.

The enormous margin in favour of site-value rating is a fitting tribute to those who have worked for this result. It is all the more striking when it is remembered that multiple voting works rather to inflate the apparent opposition to site-value rating.

RINGWOOD

Here again the result is a most encouraging culmination of 18 months campaign waged by the capable efforts of a few people who have done grand educational work over the period. The local press have welcomed material upon the issue and so helped the result, but it is the persistence and drive of those who have made use of these opportunities to which the result is primarily due. Ringwood has 5,546 acres and more than half of the holdings are vacant. It has shown great development recently and this will now be accelerated.

KEW

This was a crucial poll. Had it been lost following upon the very narrow defeat in Northcote last year the reactionaries everywhere would have taken heart and driven for reversion attempts. It would also have weakened the case for mandatory site-value rating in the proposed Greater Melbourne Council. The possibilities of reversion were perhaps more propitious in Kew because this city had many properties of very large frontage carrying multiple votes and the proportion of built properties benefiting in lower rates under site-value rating (64%) is lower than any other city studied. Check of the rolls showed that if everybody voted according to which system gave lowest rates owing to multiple voting the margin in favor of site-value rating would not exceed a hundred. The fine margin of 679 is, therefore, most gratifying and compares with the margin of 206 at the adoption poll four years ago. Congratulations to those who worked so well for this result.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Among the municipal elections themselves are several of deep interest to site-value rating supporters. At the Malvern elections Mr. Ian F. McLaren was elected by a most substantial majority. We are indeed glad to see a strong site-value rating supporter on this Council. Mr. McLaren was member of the Malvern rating reform committee two years ago.

In Ringwood, two candidates openly and actively canvassed site-value rating. They were Messrs. Vic. Geisler and C. Horman. Mr. Geisler did not succeed in replacing the sitting councillor, but Mr. Horman was elected to replace Cr. McCaskill.

In Moorabbin, Cr. D. E. Blackshaw paid the penalty of his past opposition to site-value rating and was defeated by Mr. Ayers, who made a point of appealing to electors on this attitude. Cr. Blackshaw was one of those most strongly opposed to site-value rating five years ago. This removes the last of the original opponents, Cr. Barnett not standing for re-election.

DICTATOR DEMOCRAT

This short story, in bright dialogue, tells how equality of opportunity brings freedom. It is available from this office at sixpence per copy.

There are however, two misprints.

Freedom versus Coercion paragraph on page 73, 9th line, the word "not" is omitted and the sentence should read "can not be eradicated."

On next page 74 and the 12th line from the bottom, the word "not" is again omitted. The sentence should read "people's dispositions are not changed."

BUNKUM ON SLUMDOM

As our last page repeatedly shows the slum areas in northern portion of the City of Melbourne sell at very high foot frontage prices. Leading citizens invest in these slum properties because commerce is moving there and a rake-off on re-sale can be expected.

When accumulation of bare land values goes over £5000 these gentry become liable for the Federal land tax. Pass it on? They would — if they could! But as nearly all thoughtful economists have noted: a levy on bare land values stays where it is put.

So the City Land holders run an Association and employ a suitable secretary to make vague statements. Suggestion is that Federal land tax costs so much that our financial magnates cannot afford to rebuild their slum properties. This "cry from the heart" may influence the Liberal Leaders, but Liberal Voters merely scoff at the moans of Landtax Payers' Association.

LETTER TO HERALD

When will Mr. M. J. Petti-grove stop his petti-fogging complaints about Federal land tax?

The tax is not wrong in principle, for land values are created by the community as a whole, and the Government therefore has the right to make a levy upon them.

The trouble with the present Federal land tax lies in its restricted application. If it were made on all properties, without exemption, retention of slums on valuable land would no longer be an economic proposition. Slums would soon go then.

Notes from Various Sources

Planned Economy.—In Britain the weekly meat ration has been reduced from 1/- to 8d worth. For reduced sales butchers are compensated by increasing the rebate to them from 2/3 to 4/- in the £ of sales. This rebate costs the Food Ministry £450,000 per week, and comes from the meat subsidy. So an easy way to become rich is to somehow acquire a licence to run a shop not to sell meat.

Amazing.—The statement that the roads are to be policed to prevent the marketing of potatoes, and that hauliers loading potatoes without permission may lose their licences is, in a supposedly free and enlightened community, amazing in the extreme.—Alfred Thodey, Age, May 17th, 1951.

Editor's Note: A suspect sample of the fruits of unnecessary State intervention in trade and commerce.

Urgent Reform.—Road transport should be allowed for at least two years to carry all merchandise free of tare tax such as that in New South Wales.—Mr. K. F. Coles, quoted by Age, May 17th, 1951.

Editor's Note: Such hindrances to trade promote inflation and abet the growth of Communism.

The New Aristocracy.—My relatives, within 30 miles of Melbourne, are daily feeding their potatoes to pigs and poultry to save this product from being either eaten by grubs or rotting.—E. James, AGE, 2nd June, 1951.

Editor's Note: Mere humans apparently aren't even on the priority list for potatoes.

Astronomical Potatoes.—Potato yields in U.S.A. have increased 150 per cent during the last 35 years, although yields from year to year vary greatly. The increase has been due to a 200 per cent increase in use of fertiliser, by doubling the amount of seed used, and by mechanization. Those who take justifiable pride in such feats of applied science should recognize that land values are thus boosted.—Data from "Farm Economics," No. 176, September, 1950, U.S.A.

St. Albans, eleven miles from Melbourne on Bendigo line, 24 ac. site sold for £11,000 which is £460 an acre bare land value.—Sun, 29/5/51.

Editor's Note: This farm land value does not arise from the fertility of the soil, but from an electric railway connection to Melbourne. Ricardo needs to be revised when Prof. W. Prest emerges from the last century.

Land Rentals are booming. Near Wonthaggi a St. Helier farm was rented at £5'4- an acre and a farm near Loch at £7'2/6 an acre.—Age, 7'5/51.

Editor's Note: High prices for primary products soon lead to higher "costs" for land. Does Prof. Wadham understand this?

Price Control.—"The Wall Street Journal," January 29, 1951, gives three reasons for the ineffectiveness of price control: (a) It impairs, and may even destroy, the mechanism by which the productive system operates and adjusts itself to new conditions; (b) it causes goods to move into the black market or perhaps to entirely disappear; (c) the relationship between prices of millions of items is so extremely complicated that the administration of price control becomes sheer chaos.

Government expenditure as subsidies for food stuffs (such as beef, mutton, and butter) were real benefits according to the Canberra Lobbyist (Mr. L. Whithall) of the Chamber of Manufacturers.—Sun, 3/7/51.

Editor's Note: Protection means bigger and bigger debts by Government with heavier and heavier taxes.

Aristophanes writing 2,300 years ago for ancient Greeks has a character, Praxagora say, "We see one man harvesting vast tracts of land, while another has not ground to be buried in. We shall have to have slaves."

Editor's Note: Big estates worked by slave labor, as Pliny said, ruined Rome. Monopolism marked the decline of Greece.

Ivanhoe East near Burke Road, south side of St. Hubert's Road, building block sold at £19 ft. frontage.—Argus, 25/6/51.

Editor's Note: Heidelberg Councillors levy taxes on the buildings.

Glen Waverley.—Panorama Estate, 42 blocks sold for £14,605.—Argus, June 25, 1951.

Editor's Note: What does State Treasurer (Mr. J. G. McDonald) do about collection of citizens' share of this unearned increment?

Onkaparinga Valley.—Mangolds are a profitable crop. Average yield about 30 tons per acre and the price £9 per ton. Mangolds are converted into crystallised artificial food stuffs. Land values in recent years have risen steeply in the Valley—up to £140 per acre is paid for good potato land while pasture country goes at £50 to £60 per acre.—Tas. Farmer, 19/7/51.

Editor's Note: Attractive profits are "converted into crystallised artificial land values."

Coffee Chaos.—The price of coffee has risen 100 per cent recently in Britain, although there has been no evidence of substantial increases in cost of production for coffee producers. The reason, then? The answer given by the Minister of Food was: "These prices were increased in exchange for the right to re-sell the coffee to earn dollars." This just baffles comment.—From Land and Liberty, April, 1951.

Sporting.—For the recent international ski-jumping contest in England on March 30 and 31, the Board of Trade, despite the risk of leaving Britain "open to unrestricted dumping of cheap foreign weather," waived the duty on the imported snow. Very gracious; but why not extend such an attitude to rubber for tennis balls and golf balls; stop-watches for timing athletic contests, and so forth?

Puzzle.—It might be asked why we maintain an expensive price control department to keep down prices while at the same time allowing food boards to create scarcity with the object of keeping prices up.—Alfred Thodey, Age, 18th July.

Delinquency.—Mr. F. E. Williams, of the Melbourne Children's Court, in a recent statement attributed the increase in juvenile delinquency which has occurred in recent months largely to the fact that mothers were taking outside employment, and as a result children were not receiving the necessary supervision and discipline. Mr. Williams remarked: "The cause was an economic problem for the consideration of other authorities."

Disobedience of economic laws has widespread repercussions. A command inevitably reaps the harvest of its error and ignorance. But unfortunately there appear to be no authorities capable of adequately gauging the economic problem referred to.

The Function of the State.—The only conduct by which the State can procure the greatest sum of happiness, is to secure to all its members equal opportunities for the achievement of their own happiness, i.e., equal opportunities for the exercise of their own faculties.—Max Hirsch.

Justice.—The just man is so earnest for justice that, if God Himself were not just, he would not care in the least for God.—From the Sermons of Meister Eckhart.

Protection and Weavers.—With all the protection the local weavers have had for the past twelve months their production has been far short of their estimates, and it is doubtful if they are able to supply even 10 million yards of the 70 million yards required for a normal year's trading.—H. C. Nicholson, Age, 12th July.

Camberwell South.—Burke Road, near Toorak Road, vacant site for shop or factory received a bid of £18 a foot. Frontage 45 ft. by 124 ft.—Argus, 6/4/51.

HENRY GEORGE LEAGUE OF VICTORIA.

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Next Executive Meeting, Tuesday, October 2nd, 1951, at 8.45 p.m.

Next Members' Evening, September 18th, 1951, at 8 p.m.

HENRY GEORGE JUSTICE PARTY.

Next Members' Meeting, Friday, September 14th, at 8 p.m.