

The United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values Ltd.

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Secretary : Mrs. B. P. Sobrielo

Dear Fellow Member,

May 1986

In ten days' time the International Union Conference in Vancouver begins. Both Jose Mernane and I will be attending, so for the period 15 May to 27 May, the office will be officially closed. Richard Mernane will be calling in frequently and Jessica Baker will also put in an appearance if needed to help deal with any urgent mail or messages left on the answerphones. I shall be back in the office on Tuesday 27 May. Jose will return later as she is also attending the Council of Geogist Organisations conference being held in Vancouver, and will take the opportunity to talk over preliminary arrangements for the 1989 joint conference in Philadelphia.

Ron Banks, our Chairman, hosted a lunch at the Ritz - entirely at his own expense I hasten to add as, as you know, our budget is rather tight for Dr Donald Denman ex head of the Department of Land Economy at Cambridge University, Mr Hector Wilks, the valuer of the Whitstable Survey and Fred Harrison. Mr Wilks, who was made an MBE in the last Honours List, is now a strong advocate for taxing land values and is a member of the International Union. I gather he endeavoured to convince Dr Denman of the practicality of the system. Although Dr Denman resists conversion so far as dry land is concerned - hiding behind semantics rather than facts - he nevertheless sees the merits of the case when it comes to land under the sea. This is in line with the paper he gave at the Cambridge IU Conference "Land Value Taxation in Deep Water". On this latter point, the office, with the help of UC member David Redfearn and Ron Banks, is keeping up correspondence with the main British companies likely to be involved in possible deep sea mining ventures and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. An extract from a recent copy of the Financial Times at the end of this letter helps to set the scene.

A letter from Helen Fjortoft found its way on to the desk of a BBC radio programme director and he expressed interest in seeing the American film "Tale of Five Cities". Using the facilities of Sonovision, our very cooperative neighbours, a showing of the film was arranged and the BBC programme director then discussed site value rating and the two tier rating system in Pennsylvania at the office with Ron Banks and Fred Harrison, who were told that funds had been cleared for a BBC representative to go to Pennsylvania to investigate the system operating there. We are hopeful that a radio programme may develop from this.

This issue of Land and Liberty is the last to be printed in Newcastle. The July/August issue will be printed by a firm in Reading, the typesetting being put out to a company in Weston-super-Mare. As mentioned in my previous letter, by doing this and reducing the number of pages to 16, we can effect such a saving as to be able to offer propaganda copies to members for the cost of postage alone. Therefore, with your July/August issue a form will be sent setting out ways in which you can be involved in a wider distribution of the journal. Please look out for this and in the meantime give

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some thought to people, organisations, companies, local groups, etc., to whom a copy of the journal could be sent. We are not thinking so much in terms of acquiring new annual subscribers, but in influencing someone by drawing attention to a particular article in a particular issue, although names and addresses of people you would like placed on an annual complimentary list would be welcome. So when you get your next Land and Liberty, see if the contents strike you as being relevant to any local group. Since it is an international journal and we need to keep in mind the needs of our overseas contributors, some issues will offer more scope for propaganda perhaps to the States and others will be more relevant to the home market.

This copy of Land and Liberty has an insert supplied by the Free Trade League and any member able to attend the meeting at the Tallow Chandlers Hall will be very welcome.

Members will be pleased to know that a group of advanced students, led by Jim Walker, studied for the A level economics examination and they all, and Jim, passed with flying colours.

Vic Blundell and his brother Ron continue to come in regularly with Reg Smith, to press on with the sorting of books and papers so that the archives of the Movement are in a more retrievable form. Vic was never able to get his teeth into the job while Secretary here, since there were always too many calls on his office time, so he has made it a first task in retirement.

We continue to receive misdirected telephone calls - mostly for an organisation called the Economic and Social Science Research Council - but one on a Sunday a little while ago was rather amusing. Richard Mernane was in the office and answered a call from a man who said he was stuck in a lift in a tower block in Hackney and would someone please get him out. Richard was rather surprised and enquired why the gentleman had rung our number. He was told that it was on a notice in the lift with the advice "In the event of emergency ring 834 4266" Richard said he would do what he could and was fortunately able to get on to an emergency number at Hackney Borough Council. He asked for someone to get to the block of flats and let the poor man out of the lift - and while there to please remove the sign!

Before signing off, I would like to express the thanks of the office to Jonathan O'Regan for giving up a day of his holiday to rig up an additional bell so that callers to the office who may come "after hours" when the rooms containing the phone for the hall porter service are not in use, can be heard from our boardroom where classes and meetings are held and be let in and not left standing on the doorstep.

Seabed mining conflict settled

BY CANUTE JAMES IN KINGSTON

21/3/86

A UNITED Nations effort to establish an internationally accepted convention for mining the international seabed has made a small but significant step forward with an agreement by Japan, France and the Soviet Union to settle conflicting claims for mining rights in the Indian Ocean.

Mr I. G. Ghingran, deputy chairman of the preparatory commission of the UN Law Of the Sea Conference, in its fourth session here, said the agreement was reached last month at a meeting in Arusha, Tanzania. The conflicts were discovered when the three countries filed claims with the commission.

The commission is seeking the establishment of the International Seabed Authority as a specialised agency of the UN, to implement the Law Of The Sea Treaty governing the exploitation of the mineral wealth of the international seabed. At stake is the recovery of billions of tonnes of poly-metallic nodules containing varying quantities of manganese, copper, cobalt and nickel.

Although the treaty has been signed by 159 nations and international organisations, it is being opposed by a group of industrialised nations led by the US, Britain and West Germany. They argue that the seabed authority will have too great a control over seabed mining, and that private mining consortia should be given a greater role.

The treaty becomes international law when it is ratified by the legislatures of 50 countries.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Sobrillo