

earth with all of its natural elements and forces *exists?*" If people really pay Rent for the use of the *land?*"

Mr. Sanford J. Benjamin replied to this article in your last issue, and said: "Whoever collects the economic Rent is the landowner, whether it is the community or an individual." I am sure I fail to grasp the intended significance of this statement, since (if Henry George's intuition that Rent belongs to society is sound) it would appear to be analogous to saying that one who embezzles, thereby becomes owner of that which does not belong to him, which I cannot believe the statement was intended to imply.

But I dissent wholly from the view that by any act can human beings become "owners" of land. I believe, as presumably do most Georgists, that no man, nor any community of men however organized, can "own" the earth or any part of it. But supposing men *could* own land, what would that have to do with Rent if Rent is not paid for the use of land, but only for the services of governments in protecting users of land in possession of the fruits of their toil and in the enjoyment of all other social advantages? What would it have to do with "landowners" (if such there be) who neither provide the land, nor the conditions which make people want to use the land or willing to pay Rent—merely title-holders, the very security of whose possession of land, and the guarantee of the validity of whose titles to land, are services of governments?

While he who obtains title to land properly may be called a "landlord," possession of title does not constitute him a "landowner," since purchase of title is not an "investment in *land*." Rent received from an "investment in land" is not comparable, either in cause or effect, to interest received from a true investment. Invested funds properly are used to finance the enterprise in which they are invested. But funds involved in an "investment in land" are not used to finance the land, they are not used to improve its quality or terrain, to increase its area, its accessibility of usefulness to the user of land or to the community; nor do they finance the social conditions which make people want to use land, or to offer (as indeed they do) to pay Rent. In fact, such disposition of these funds is a detriment to the user of land.

Thus, the idea that Rent is paid for the use only of that which is *not* land, in contradistinction to the idea that Rent is paid for the use of that which *is* land, has deeper significance than merely an interest in a "method of achievement" of governmental collection of the total Rent and the total abolition of taxation. But even as a "method of achievement," does it not afford the means to the unification of the aims and endeavors of all who strive towards the goal which none would deny to have been the goal of Henry George?

No incitement to strife over land or cause for wars would exist, were payment of Rent to governments recognized as an obligation of *every* inhabitant in proportion to the benefits which each receives at the hands of governments; instead of as "interest" to "landowners" on pseudo "investments in land." By this method appeal can be made to *every* inhabitant on a basis of business principles of the highest sanction and of *universal application*. Unifying, not divisive, its pursuit could not so much as *simulate* the nature, spirit or aspect, of an "ism" of any sort.

In contrast, can the single tax program have within itself the power of universality to disarm opposition? The "land value tax" has the appearance of a discriminatory tax, since it is a tax ostensibly imposed upon only one half of the population—that half (or less) which holds titles to areas of land in this country. It arrays the latter against the other half of the population which holds titles to none of the land of this country; one faction voting or acting in opposition to the other faction, each seemingly in its own interest, a condition promotive of antagonism and strife rather than of har-

mony and peace. For these among other reasons was it asked: "Were these truths understood and recognized by all—what man or group of men would have the face or unwisdom to precipitate a war to preserve to themselves the privilege of ignoring their obligations to society, that is, the payment of Rent in full to the government?"

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W. R. B. WILLCOX

ANSWERS "PLEA FOR A REVITALIZED MOVEMENT"

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

Mr. Philip Rubin in his article in LAND AND FREEDOM, "A Plea for Revitalized Georgeist Movement in America", makes an eloquent apology for action and a strong plea for organization. Why have not we Georgeists in America progressed as have Georgeists in other places, like Denmark, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand? asks Mr. Rubin; and he proceeds to give us the answer. According to Mr. Rubin, a small part of the blame lies in the conditions of the times prior to 1933 (prior to the New Deal?) and almost all the rest of the blame lies squarely on the shoulders of Georgeists who are "intellectual snobs", "immaculate idealists" and "dogmatists" who "are proud, oh how proud, of our virginity".

If refusing to compromise with truth earns such labels, then purists deserve them. In my opinion, the only way to make real and lasting progress here or anywhere else is to stand by our guns and preach and, above all, teach truth and nothing else. Let us not degrade our "virginity" by the corruption of Socialism (even the variety known as "moderate"), nor soil our hands amongst the racketeers. As Mr. Chodorov says, throwing out the rascals does little good: "We must get rid of rascality." All the revitalizing suggested by Mr. Rubin has been tried over and over again, by all sorts of pressure groups, for generations, and has always been a failure, because it deals with effects and not with causes, or because admittance of heresies has revolted the very people it sets out to convert. In our own day, witness Townsendism, Buchmanism, Coughlinism, Communism, etc.

I hope and trust that most Georgeists, after reflection, will not be misled by such proposals as "revitalizing," and will persist in keeping our doctrines pure.

Chicago, Ill.

MALCOLM FRANKLIN

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

We have a fine example of the source of land value on the market here. There is a mud flat on the outskirts of New Orleans (which will have to be filled in), offered to the government for a defense need—four hundred acres at \$1000 per acre—as *is!* I wrote an open letter to the *Times-Picayune*, calling this fact to the attention of our tax commissioners and asking who or what gave this land any value; but it was not printed.

I send many letters to newspapers, and try to arouse some thought on the land question, but it is quite difficult to make people think. Thinking is hard work, and to save the trouble, the average man carries standard answers on the front shelf of his mind for handy reference. Typical among the answers to a challenge on the land question are the following: "Oh, we have so much land now that we can't use; the President has to take it out of commission." "People don't want to go back to the land. Look at all those families trekking back to the cities." "We haven't any more extra land. Our frontiers are all gone." "What would be the sense in producing more, when we have to plough under now?" I really get dizzy trying to think up answers simple enough to penetrate into the "average mind."

New Orleans, La.

MONA McMAHON