

WILLCOX'S RENT

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM :

I must take issue with my friend John R. Nichols on some points in his article, "Concepts of Rent," appearing in your November-December, 1939 issue.

If Nichols will think the question through, he will discover that the most fertile land, finest pasture or richest mine produce no "rent" unless their "natural advantages" have been made accessible to society "by social and governmental contributions." Upon examination and reflection, W. R. B. Willcox's definition of rent, namely, "payment for the advantages of social and governmental contributions to the utility of provisions of Nature," seems to me to be absolutely perfect in its comprehensiveness and completeness, covering every conceivable type of rental value.

I maintain that all previous definitions of rent were faulty and did not cover the facts as observed, and therefore the definition of rent had to be restated correctly. I maintain that Willcox has given the only definition of rent that has proved satisfactory, complete and true in all circumstances.

Nichols' "land value" has been proved by Willcox to be a fraud and a misnomer, as it is not "land value" at all, but the value of the privilege of privately appropriating a publicly produced rental value. Even those who use the term "land value" admit that when you tax it to the full amount of the rent, the selling value of the land disappears, and you are left up in the air with no "land value" left to tax. This creates endless confusion and has alienated and antagonized industrious and thrifty citizens.

Willcox shows that rent is an entirely social product, and he proposes to collect the whole of it into the public treasury as a private payment for a definite public service. Such a payment is no more a tax than paying a grocer's bill for goods and services rendered—to the grocer, not to some one else. This is readily understood by men of various occupations and degrees of education.

Nichols says: "The proposal to collect rent for public uses leaves in doubt (as land value taxation does not) what is to be done with respect to the vacant taxation lot for which no rent is paid or accrues." My answer is that the rent or use value of any lot is always well known, and the public, in its own selfish interest, would see to it that the full rent was collected into the public treasury. But under the present, so-called "land value taxation" system, vacant lots are never assessed or taxed at anywhere near their use value, and insofar as they are taxed, their "land value" disappears proportionately.

Nichols and the rest of us have been beating the air for many years and getting nowhere with our confusing nomenclature and terms and unscientific methods. Why not try in the future the clean-cut, definite and correct nomenclature, terms and definitions of the Science of Economics, as proposed by our Western friends?
Chestnut Hill, Mass. EDMUND J. BURKE.

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM :

I learned about the land question from my father, Peter D. Ryan, now deceased. He was very active in spreading knowledge of the doctrines of Henry George. He conducted classes in lumber grading for mill workers in Oregon and Washington, and for forestry students at the Universities of both States. The economic system was discussed at nearly every class, and I am sure that a good many men in those classes now realize that there is a land question.

I am glad to continue the subscription to LAND AND FREEDOM which my father started. This magazine has been most valuable to me since I was in High School, and now I quote passages from it frequently for my papers in Political Economy and History, at the University of Washington where I am a sophomore.

Seattle, Wash.

HELEN MARIE RYAN.

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM :

In the May-June issue of *The Square Deal* we make editorial comment upon the point of view that advises America not to become involved in the European maelstrom. We point out that this attitude makes no attempt to evaluate the conflicting ideologies of the Nazis and the Allies, or to assess any war guilt against the aggressor nation which has wantonly overrun so many of the smaller States of Europe since the war began.

In contrast with these views, your "Comment and Reflection" in your May-June issue is much more pertinent, and in the writer's judgment, takes a much more balanced view of the issues at stake.
Toronto, Canada HERBERT T. OWENS.

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM :

Since the advent of our nation-wide industrial depression eleven years ago, I have written more than 10,000 letters to leading newspapers in all regions of the United States and Canada, urging the appointment of governmental commissions to investigate the causes responsible for over 11,000,000 unemployed; and to report on suggested practical and practicable remedies. A large percentage of my letters was published, and I was gratified by the numerous letters provoked by my suggestions.

However, since the formation of the American Newspaper Guild, which is affiliated with the C. I. O., and which has evident Socialist and Communist sympathies, I have found that many papers that had previously published practically all the letters I sent them were now turning them down—especially the letters contrasting the Georgeist system with the Communist system.

Reading the letters-to-the-editors columns in many large cities of the United States, I find that, whereas a few years ago there were many letters from Georgeists, there are now very few. I don't think this is evidence that Georgeists have grown tired of writing, and can only draw the conclusion that newspaper editors or employees, influenced by the C. I. O., are deliberately excluding letters that contain intelligent criticism of Socialism, Communism, or that mixture of both in the paternalistic notions of the New Deal.

I believe that sending letters to newspapers is one of the best ways of presenting the Georgeist principles to the public. I would like to hear from other Georgeists who have been active in such letter-writing, as to whether they are experiencing the same difficulties.
New York, N. Y. WHIDDEN GRAHAM.

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM :

Your issue for March-April was good; your May-June issue is better—due chiefly, in my opinion, to "The Reign of Natural Law" by Henry Ware Allen. The section in this article, entitled "Regeneration," treats of method—the *how*—in a brief, but rational and effective way. Mr. Allen's article is ably seconded in Mr. T. A. McHenry's "Message to Georgeists." These two items lead me to believe that we Georgeists may awake some time.
Aberdeen, S. D. DR. CHARLES J. LAVERY.

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM :

Those mothers and fathers who have sons eligible for military conscription might well give heed to the following truth:

As long as the rent of land goes into landlords' pockets, there will be an incentive to war for land; but when the rent of land is collected for all public needs, then the incentive to war for land will cease—because nobody will war for land when nobody can pocket the rent of land.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

GEORGE LLOYD