

Land and Freedom

Vol. XLI

MAY — JUNE, 1941

No. 3

Comment and Reflection

THE only form of government under which the Georgeist reform is possible of attainment is that of democracy. But to expect any measure of success should we not be willing to make use of the processes of democracy? The opponents of Georgeist principles are certainly exploiting those facilities to the utmost; indeed, they have acted with a zeal that strongly suggests an abuse of democratic processes. Is it not about time we recognize that the activities of our adversaries have reached a stage which demands immediate counter-action?

PERHAPS of late we have been relying too much on the notion that injustice will somehow become exhausted, thereby enabling us to overtake it in hare-tortoise fashion. This is wishful thinking, for it is not in the nature of injustice to assume any such static condition in this world as we know it. Such a negative approach must be futile when pitted against a wrong which has again and again demonstrated its proficiency.

ONE of the important factors in molding laws and public opinion is our educational system. Our opponents are quite alert to all the possibilities in this field. The opportunity for their further profiting in this direction lies in the fact that many universities throughout the country are presently faced with a serious curtailment of income. This leaves them easy prey to the temptation of "endowments," "scholarships" and the like, offered by real estate groups. The most recent of these to have fastened upon institutions of higher education is the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers. Under their sponsorship, courses are given in "professional training in real estate appraisal," both at Yale University and at the University of Southern California. With one division of the Institute on the Atlantic and the other on the Pacific coast, it would almost seem that they are applying to the propaganda of "respectable" economics the ideas gained from the pincer movements of present-day aggressors. They will probably close in on the mid-continent universities in due time. One thing is certain—whatever else may be taught in the courses, no effort will be made to point out the contradiction in the subject-term itself, *real estate*, a misnomer which confuses wealth with land.

WHILST working for land monopoly in the halls of learning, these groups are no less active in the halls

of legislation. The National Association of Real Estate Boards has concentrated its work on state legislative bodies. Their aim is to convince the law-makers of the advisability of "placing an over-all limit on the rate of a tax which may be levied upon real estate." This they glibly refer to as tax reform, and under such guise they have organized taxpayers' conferences in many states—and alas, more and more of our public school teachers are being lured by these tactics. Eventually, all states are expected to be well represented. Many of them, including New York, already have statutory tax limits on real estate. The National Association claims credit for the recent enactment of such a law by the State of Washington, and also points with pride to the recent abolition of the Florida state tax on real estate.

THE extent of this progress made by vested interests is also disturbingly apparent in a recent United States Supreme Court decision, pointed out by Mr. J. Rupert Mason in the last issue of *LAND AND FREEDOM*. The Court decided that the states' power to tax land values is no longer sovereign, but subject to interference and control by the Congress. This upsets one of our oldest traditions—the sovereignty of states. Supplied with such jurisprudence, landlordism is now able to entrench itself more firmly than ever.

THE problem with which Georgeists are confronted is how best to combat the subversive effects of these groups. There is no denying that our opponents have the "inside track." They have the benefit of courtesy generally accorded time-honored institutions, as well as a head start in recognition by legislative bodies and educational institutions. Their advantage is supported with almost unlimited monetary resources. Yet, though Georgeists have but slender material means, we cannot afford to delay any longer in making use of available opportunities, and in exerting the full force of our moral strength. Otherwise, with pressure from wealthy real estate organizations, and no counter-pressure to offset it, legislative chambers will hardly resist the ever increasing demands of entrenched monopoly. The only means by which legislators can know that the demands of landlordism are being opposed is in the existence of a vigilant, organized and articulate opposition. If we do not demonstrate that we are in the field to secure our tax reforms, we can hardly expect legislators to divine them. If democracy is worth preserving and defending, it is surely worth utilizing.