

A LETTER TO AN ENQUIRER

The movement for Land and Liberty is based on the conviction that justice—or equal freedom—must be the first test of any social proposal, and that the greater freedom any person enjoys to provide for his needs so must he be able to secure more prosperity for himself.

We contend

- (1) That the majority of people in all countries fail to recognise that, despite the outward complexity of modern conditions, every person for every moment of his existence depends upon access to land and, apart from minor qualifications, equal freedom of access to land is everywhere denied;
- (2) that the value (or comparative advantage as registered in letting or selling price) of any plot of land, apart from improvements, is produced by the presence and activities of the community as a whole, not from its being owned or occupied by any particular person;
- (3) that in accordance with justice this land value is the property of its producers, the community as a whole;
- (4) that in accordance with this same just right to property no person, official or other, may hinder or obstruct any normal member of society from working in the manner which seems best to himself, and enjoying the full fruits of his labour according to his own desires, subject to the similar rights of others—this notwithstanding the taxes, rates, trade restrictions and private appropriation of rent, now in operation, all in conflict with this principle; and
- (5) that the denial of equal right to land, being the fundamental injustice of modern society, constitutes the basic evil to which the other great evils and weaknesses of our civilisation may be traced.

We accordingly demand that land value (or rent, in the true sense) be collected by public authority and restored to its rightful owners by devoting it to the provision and maintenance of those necessary public services which by their nature must be freely and equally available to all.

As a prudent person you will not, of course, immediately agree to all this without further examination. But before deciding whether further investigation is worth while we suggest you ask yourself the following questions: Have I ever met any person who *could* exist without access to land? Have I ever found any article which was not of animal, vegetable or mineral origin, and is not land the original factor in all three? As the law stands at present, if I owned merely the surface of a plot in the centre of a great city—without owning any of the buildings thereon, or the businesses carried on in them—would I not be in a position to levy a toll in the form of rent upon all those who produced or maintained previous production on the plot, while I myself lived at ease without contributing at all to production? And, without casting any aspersions upon the personal benevolence of landowners in general, can this state of affairs be just or even, ultimately, sane?

If you start to investigate the answers to these questions, unless you are different from almost everybody else, you will come up against the problem of definitions, e.g., what *exactly* do I mean by wealth, land, labour,

capital, etc.? Can I really get anywhere unless I know what I am talking about? And that is just where we start in our discussion circles, called for convenience schools, already operating in several different countries. Strange though it may seem, we find, although many much-publicised economists always avoid this subject of definitions, that if a few ordinary, intelligent men and women discuss it together, by a process of elimination they always arrive at the same clear and satisfactory definitions. After this, an understanding of economic law is comparatively easy. Does this not suggest that the solution of the basic causes of poverty, insecurity and the conflict of classes and nations arising therefrom is within the reach of any intelligent non-specialist, and the non-specialist is in the most independent position to advocate the solution?

This might persuade you to sacrifice the trivial sum required as a subscription to this journal.

If, later, you decide to help our movement, we do not promise any immediate material advantage to yourself. But we can promise advantages you may not have expected. To understand, from the exercise of your own common sense, the essential basis of "economic" phenomena, apparently so confusing and in the process to discover the only full and sufficient answer to State Communism and similar dangers brings a mental confidence which is itself a reward. In addition, you will join the comradeship of a body of sane, intelligent men and women throughout the non-Communist world: people quite capable of appreciating other aspects of life but none the less united on principle and knowing exactly what great reform they want. And this reform requires no sacrifice of faith, loyalty or tradition on the part of any person who respects the same in others. Instead of destroying the good things of our civilisation it will show you how our civilisation might reach a happier and nobler stage, and human character a richer, freer development than any past records can show. You will probably discover that a vision is not less inspiring because it is founded on plain common sense.

With the world as it is you would be quite justified in asking: Who are these people, and what special interest is behind them? We would reply that we are just ordinary people drawn from a great variety of nationalities, occupations and conditions, and serve nothing but the general interest, which is justice. Further particulars are available to any genuine enquirer; but as a rough indication we would mention that this present statement has been endorsed by supporters of our reform drawn from more than twenty different countries, including Great Britain, United States, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Brazil, Israel; and among these are representatives of the following positions or occupations: Academician, barrister, clergyman, clerk, coal-miner, doctor, estate agent, historian, journalist, judge, manufacturer, Member of Parliament, priest, senator, shopkeeper, university professor of economics.

If such a variety of nationalities, ranks and occupations can be serving any fanaticism or special interest we would be glad to know it.

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