
LAND & LIBERTY

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Our Policy

Since everyone has an equal right to live it follows necessarily that everyone has an equal right to the use of land by which alone life can be sustained.

The private appropriation of the rent or value of land constitutes a violation of those equal rights, and its consequences are that privilege exacts a monopoly price for access to land, the community is deprived of its natural revenue, taxation is heaped upon trade and industry, production is harassed and arrested, and industrial depressions occur.

The more completely the land is thus monopolised, the greater is the insecurity of employment and the nearer are wages driven down to mere subsistence level. This is true of all countries, no matter how they may differ in their forms of government, in the nature or development of their industries, in their tariff policies, monetary systems, internal or external public debts, or in any other way.

Therefore we advocate that the equal right to land be secured by requiring of all landholders the payment of an annual tax on the value of the land held whether it is used or not and excluding the value of the improvements thereon; and that such taxation, national and municipal, be based on a valuation showing the true value of the land, this valuation being made public and being kept up to date by periodic revision.

Land-value taxation is not taxation on land, but on the value of land. It would fall not on all land, but only on valuable land, and on that not in proportion to the use made of it, but in proportion to its value. Thus it would be a tax not on the use or improvement of land, but on the *ownership* of land, taking only what would otherwise go to the owner as owner, and not as user of the land.

In assessments under land-value taxation all value created by individual use or improvement would be excluded. The only value taken into consideration would be the value attaching to the bare land by reason of neighbourhood, public improvements, etc. Hence the farmer, for example, would have no more taxes to pay than the speculator who held a similar piece of land idle, and the man who erected a valuable building on a city site would be taxed no more than the man who held a similar site vacant. In other words, men would be called upon to contribute to the public revenues not in proportion to what they produced or accumulated, but in proportion to the value of the natural opportunities they held, and they would pay just as much for holding land idle as for putting it to the fullest use.

The collection for public uses of the value that attaches

to land by reason of the growth and improvement of the community would enable the producer to enjoy the full fruits of his labour, make the withholding of land from use unprofitable, put an end to the monopoly of land, and, in conjunction with the freeing of the channels of trade, would remove the main causes of internal and international strife.

Free Trade, in its true meaning, requires not merely the abolition of customs duties, but also the sweeping away of all restrictions on the bringing of things into a country or the carrying of things out of a country.

Further, the principle of free trade requires the repeal of all taxes, direct and indirect, on things that are the produce of labour. Real free trade would give full play to the natural stimulus of production—the possession and enjoyment of the things produced—in that it would impose no tax whatever upon the production, accumulation, or possession of wealth (*i.e.*, things produced by labour), and would leave everyone free to make, exchange, give, spend or bequeath.

The illimitable field of enterprise offered to man being by these means thrown open, the cause of the great disparity in the distribution of wealth would be destroyed, and there would cease that unequal competition by which men who possess nothing but power to labour are deprived of the benefits of advancing civilisation, and wages are forced down to a minimum no matter what the increase of wealth. Involuntary poverty would be banished, and the competition among employers to engage labour (which would replace, and be as keen as to-day's competition among men to get jobs) would carry wages up to what is their true level—the full value of the produce of labour—and keep them there. So-called "over-production" would be inconceivable until all human wants were satisfied; labour-saving inventions would be rendered a blessing to all; and there would be such production and distribution of wealth as would enable all to achieve comfort and leisure and to participate in the advantages of a progressing civilisation.

Report on East Africa

It was in November, 1951, that Sir Philip Mitchell, then Governor of Kenya, sent his despatch on *Land and Population in East Africa* (Colonial 290, HMSO), to Oliver Lyttelton, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies. Sir Philip stated that the whole problem of East Africa was "so serious, complex and controversial, that it demands examination by very high authority which it is suggested should be a Royal Commission."

In October, 1952, the Emergency was declared in Kenya and the same month Sir Hugh Dow was appointed Chairman of the East Africa Royal Commission to enquire into land and population problems.

The other members appointed were, Professor S. H. Frankel, Mr. Arthur Gaitskell, Mr. R. S. Hudson, Professor D. T. Jack, Chief Kidaha Makwaia, Sir Frederick Seaford and Mr. Frank Sykes.

The findings of the Commissioners were published in June this year and their Report (Cmd. 9475, HMSO, 17s. 6d.) covers in a quarter of a million words, a very wide field.

Details of this document, which has yet to be debated in the Legislatures of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda, will be published in an early issue of LAND & LIBERTY.

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The publishers will appreciate the return of any unwanted copies of this issue which readers may have.