

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S IDEAS ON LAND

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

Lincoln was the straightest and one of the most honest thinkers the world ever produced. His name, "Honest Abe," was given to him when a young man, and it was his greatest asset in life. And he had the reputation of possessing more commonsense than any other man in America. This was the point pressed upon the delegates in the Chicago Convention that nominated him, in view of the critical time sure to follow, owing to the repeated threats of the Southern Disunionists to secede in case a Republican were elected President. And the world now knows that he showed himself to be the embodiment of both commonsense and of Moral Sense—a vary rare combination. So it is very interesting to know what such a man thought on the buying and the selling and the speculating in land that was so rampant in his day, and is yet, for that matter. When in Congress in 1847, he voted for a resolution that was tabled, to the effect, that the public lands should be sold to actual settlers for the bare cost of surveying and conveying title. This shows that he saw clearly that the cheaper the land the easier for the people to have homes of their own—and vice versa.

Further, the long agitated for Homestead Bill did not become law till Lincoln became President—as the Southern slave holders, who had controlled the Government, always looked upon the advocates of free land to settlers with the same regard that they looked upon the opponents of Chattel slavery. They could see farther than than many of our so-called Statesmen seem to see now?

Robert H. Brown was a young man during the fifties when Lincoln was becoming active in Illinois to prevent the spread of Slavery all over the Union—North as well as South. Brown was often with Lincoln at meetings—often stayed at the same hotels, slept in the same room, sat on the same bed and talked over politics and progressive reforms. He is the author of the Life of Lincoln in two volumes. He became a practising physician in Illinois, and when a young man, spent some time in a law office. He gives closer up views of Lincoln than most of the other biographers. Here is the gist of what Lincoln told him one night when they both sat in the same bedroom just before retiring.

"On other questions there is ample room for reform when the time comes; but just now it would be folly for us to undertake more than we have now on hand. But when slavery is over and settled, men should never rest contented while oppression, wrongs, and injustices, are in force against them.

"The land, the earth, that God gave to man for his home, his sustenance, and support, should never be the possession of any man, co-operation, or society, or unfriendly government, any more than the air or the water—if so much.

"A company or enterprise needing land, should hold no more than is needed for their home and sustenance, and never more than they have in actual use in the prudest management of their business; and even this much should never be allowed when it creates a monopoly.

"All that is not so used should be held for the free use of every family to make Homesteads, and to hold them so long as they are so occupied.

"A reform like this will be worked out in the future. The idle talk of foolish men that is now so common on Abolitionists, Agitators and Radicals, Disturbers of the Peace, etc., will find its way against it with all the force that it can muster, and as strongly promoted and carried on by all the monopolists, grasping landlords, and the titled and the untitled enemies of mankind everywhere."

Lincoln declared himself to be possessed of second sight, and every one of his prophecies turned out just as he predicted. He could always see the end from the beginning. As a philosopher, not Socrates nor Plato, nor Aristotle, ever approached him. He was a combination of poet, prophet, philosopher, orator, leader, statesman, humanitarian and emancipator, and he never ceased to be a pupil to the day of his death. His mind was always broadening out.

Chicago, Ill.

—W. D. LAMB.

## FOR NORMAN THOMAS

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

So you advise us to vote for Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate! Good. "New powers bring new duties." Henry George says so in Chapter XVII of "Social Problems" entitled "The Functions of Government." Here he presents about all the arguments which are urged by present-day socialists in support, not only of the public ownership of railroads, the telegraphs and telephones, electric light, heat, power and gas, but also of *all those businesses that are in their nature monopolies.*

But he goes still further, and says, beyond owning those businesses which in their nature involve monopoly, there is a field in which the state may operate beneficially as the executive of the great co-operative associations into which it is the tendency of true civilization to blend society.

He also tells us in this chapter that the natural progress of social development is unmistakably towards Socialism.

He speaks of the development of species and says, as the powers of conscious co-ordinated action of the whole being must assume greater and greater relative importance to the automatic action of parts, so it is in the development of society. "This is the truth in Socialism", he declares.

During the past summer I visited seven European countries, where I met and discussed social affairs with representative socialists. Nearly all recognized the fundamental doctrine of Henry George that all mankind have an equal right to the use of the earth, and that the way to secure that right is through the collection of economic rent, by the state, for governmental expenses.

I believe in Henry George, but I do not believe that he was infallible. And I think one of the greatest mistakes of his life was when in 1887, at the State convention on the United Labor party he parted company with the socialists, who had supported him in his campaign for Mayor in 1886.

The hostilities then aroused have led many Georgists to always speak slightly of socialism, and often sarcastically of socialists, as if they were enemies in a hostile camp instead of allies.

I hope our joining with the Socialists in support of Mr. Thomas, (as many of us will) may bring about a friendly and co-operative feeling towards socialists, by all land reform advocates.

I said so to a Single Tax friend and he answered "I do not like this mixing up of socialism with the Single Tax."

Well, Henry George started it. In "Progress and Poverty," chapter I of Book VI, he says: "The ideal of socialism is grand and noble, and it is, I am convinced, possible of realization."

And in chapter IV of Book IV he tells us that the revenue arising from the taxation of land values would enable us to establish public baths, museums, libraries, gardens, lecture-rooms, music and dancing rooms, theatres, universities, technical schools, shooting galleries, play grounds, gymnasiums, etc. Heat, light, and motive power as well as water, might be conducted through our streets at public expense; our roads be lined with fruit trees; discoverers and inventors rewarded, scientific investigation supported; and in a thousand ways the public revenue made to foster efforts for the public benefit.

"We should reach the ideal of the socialist, but not through governmental repression. Government would change its character, and become the administration of a great co-operative society."

I am aware that Mr. George said and wrote some things seemingly contradictory of some of the things I have quoted. Walt Whitman said, "Do I contradict myself? It is well, I contain multitudes." Henry George too contained multitudes.

I am aware that Henry George did not believe in the wisdom of abolishing competition. Neither do I. It is the law of life. It is one of the main-springs of progress. It also often produces injustice and cruelty also and so needs to be restrained and guided.



And I find that most of the socialists in this country and abroad question the wisdom of abolishing all competition, and believe that there should be along with the public ownership of many things a broad field left for private initiative and private enterprise. The Russian fiasco has taught many reformers that evolutionary progress is better than revolutionary progress and that it is not wise to turn society and our economic system upside down.

"Ah Love, could you and I conspire, to grasp this sorry scheme of things entire.

Would we not smash it into bits, and then rebuild it nearer to our heart's desire?"

Thus wrote a very old-time poet. But this idea of reform is absurd. The bit by bit method is the scientific one. Experiment is necessary in the field of social reform. The only way to tell whether some of our Utopian theories will work or not is to begin with small doses.

Rye, N. Y. —CHESTER C. PLATT.

#### REPLY BY THE EDITOR

Mr. Platt goes us one better, and we do not follow him so far. We do not believe that the law of competition produces injustice and cruelty where left free to work. Under the one-sided competition that prevails ("jug-handled competition" was the happy phrase of Louis Post) it *does* work injustice. But free competition has not yet been tried. Nor do we think a natural law needs to be restrained and guided.

And the things we can do cooperatively with the surplus of the land rent fund remaining after governmental expenses are provided for—if there is any remainder—will be few in number.

Nor can we endorse the argument that because the Russian experiment has failed we must therefore substitute *evolutionary* for *revolutionary* progress. It is conceivable that the Russian experiment might have succeeded if it had begun right. Even now it has a better opportunity of working around right—a better opportunity than we have, since mountains in the way have been removed. The Russian experiment failed not because it was accompanied by revolutionary methods but because its leaders did not know. If they had known there would have been no need at all of *evolutionary* processes after the overthrow of Czarism. Power was in their hands, and therefore Mr. Platt's argument seems to us to lack force. And this does not mean that we are disregarding the evolutionary processes either.—  
EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM.

#### THE FARM SITUATION IN IOWA.

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

I am a dirt farmer and like all my brethren have hard scratching to keep going financially. There is much dissatisfaction among farmers and this will probably be manifest at the polls. There are doubtless many Hoover farmers, but they are very quiet. There is a growing lack of confidence in the leaders, especially since the defection of Senator Brookhart. The evils of landlordism are much in evidence here; two thirds to three fourths of the farms are occupied by tenants, although there is a noticeable movement of retired farmers back to their farms, because the returns from the latter are no longer sufficient to maintain them in town. About all the sales of farms are forced sales. The Eastern loan companies will gladly sell foreclosed farms for the amount of the mortgage, and this depresses the price of all farms.

Correctionville, Iowa. —W. B. CHAPMAN.

#### EMASCULATING THE GEORGEAN PRINCIPLES

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

The letter of Mr. John F. Scott, of Pasadena, in the March-April number of your paper concerning Mr. Stoughton Cooley and the Tax Relievers seems to call for further comment.

In the first place the Tax Relievers deny that they are Single Taxers

and when organs of landlordism like the *Los Angeles Times* accuse them of advocating Single Tax they are peeved.

But still they complain bitterly of the evils of landlordism. Indeed they claim heroic measures are necessary to relieve industry of burdens which should be borne by economic rent, and while any reductions of taxes on industry is welcome and beneficial, their programme is wholly inadequate.

Instead of attacking the great evil they seem to think it is possible to sneak around on the blind side of the people and quietly put over some such needed relief legislation without their knowing about it.

Mr. Cooley has stated plainly that he thinks "Henry George made a mistake when he attacked the institution of private property in land," and in a talk at The Freeland Club in this city he argued that the landlords should be paid for "their" lands if they are taken away from them.

I confess I am at a loss to understand people who in one breath favor depriving landlords of the full benefits of ownership by increasing taxes on rent and in the next breath advocate compensation for their losses.

If private ownership of land is just why deprive the owners of the rent and on the other hand if it is wrong why not attack the iniquity with all our might and take all the rent by taxation?

Los Angeles, Calif.

—A. V. HAHN

## NEWS NOTES AND PERSONALS

J. O'DONNELL DERRICK, of Glasgow, Scotland, has mailed at his own expense to clergymen and leading public men over one hundred copies of the pamphlet by Joseph Dana Miller, "Has the Single Tax Made Progress?"

CAN any one tell us of a little-known work, on "The Making of a Commonwealth," by Patrick Edward Dove.

HATS off to John Lawrence Monroe, Marien Tideman and Theodore Saunders who have issued a convention number of the *Chicago-Single Taxer*, with a gossipy report of the Congress and much matter of interest concerning it. Send for a copy, or, better still, send one dollar for a year's subscription to 538 South Dearborn Street, Chicago. We constantly deplore the absence of young people from our movement. Let us show we are sincere by helping to push the work of this very interesting group of young folks in the Windy City. John Lawrence writes us under date of Sept. 29: "I never had a better time in my life."

It is always a pleasure to record the triumphs of the young. This time it is George Geiger, son of Oscar H. Geiger, who has been called to the Polytechnic Institute at Peoria, Ill., to be head of the Department of Philosophy in that institution. As the Philosophy course is one just established George has prepared the subject matter for all his classes and to him fell the selection of the library and the books to be read. His classes are growing, and already one has had to be divided into two, thirty students being allowed to each class. George is a disciple of Henry George, is only twenty-five years of age and is singularly modest, having many of the traits of his esteemed father and endowed with originality and strong independence of judgement. He is probably the youngest head of a department of philosophy in any college in America. George spent eight years at Columbia.

We regret to chronicle the death of Clarence Jenkins, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, long a subscriber of this paper and a contributor to its sustention fund. He died suddenly at LaGrange, Indiana, while on a trip east where he intended to pay a visit to this office, for besides being a subscriber he was a personal friend of the editor and associated with us for many years as a fellow member of a fraternal organization. His death has saddened us, for he was a loyal friend in his personal relations as well as to the great cause he had espoused.