

To the Editor:

Have just read the very fine February issue. The only sour note was in the contribution, "Henry George Condensed," by Leo Greenwald. I quote, in case you missed it:

Rent is part of the price you must pay for living in society. There are two requirements for living with our fellow men: cooperation and conformity. Every man has a right to live, but from society's point of view, this is a privilege.

It had always been my understanding that the shifting of taxation from productive capital and labor to land values was designed to create exactly the opposite of conformity—namely, to release the great forces of individual liberty and diversity, which are the mainsprings of progress.

Rent, which arises through no effort of the land holder, is no price at all. Nor do I see where anyone must pay a "price for living in society." Rent emerges out of the demands of many individuals for land. We hope to turn it over to government, in the expectation that a reasonably responsible government may use such revenues in the conduct of certain minimum essential public tasks. The payment of rent instead of taxes guarantees that no man shall have to pay an extortion from his labor for the right to live.

And where is this "society" which considers living a "privilege"? "Society" is a mythical invention designed to give reality to a conception which has no existence in fact. In the code of liberty, individuals exist, and carry with them a precious value which cannot be outweighed by the demands of any creation of the dictionary. The fullest achievement of the rights and liberties of each results in the attainment of the maximum security and progress of all.

From my point of view, my life is a right, not a privilege. I have a right to the earnings of my labor, but claim no right to that which I have not produced. To preserve the right to life, and to all the productive earnings associated with life, land value taxation was designed. In the metaphysics of the totalitarian state, the combined forces of authoritarian power, using the magnetism of mystical "states" and "collectivities" and "societies," may convince their human herds that life is a "privilege" to be extinguished at a snap of the fingers.

The aims of liberty, and the aims of Henry George, are exactly the opposite. Life is a right, to be enjoyed equally by all. To guarantee the preservation of that right, the earnings of labor and capital are to be retained by those who create them; and unearned increments from simple ownership of the earth are to be turned over to government, as the only visible representative of individual human beings.

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