

A Word With You

AN interesting editorial in the April issue of *The American Home* begins with the question, "Why is it that ownership of land disagrees with so many of us?" This has been going on, says the article, "since heaven only knows when," with all sorts of wars, disputes and lawsuits over land ownership. The editorial sensibly advises that we should not consider ourselves as "landlords" but as "caretakers" and that we should have regard for the rights of others to the use of land.

This is most encouraging, and even though *The American Home* doesn't answer its opening rhetorical question, it does draw the right conclusions.

That rhetorical question may be worth looking into, however, as we often hear it said that the urge to own land is so deep-rooted in man that the Georgist reform cannot buck it. In fact, students of nature find that even birds and animals stake out land claims for themselves, and woe betide any rival who invades their territory.

What then? Are we fighting nature? Not so. For the birds and beasts are merely seeking to live and propagate and to find the necessary means and security for doing so. And we certainly do not ask any less than that for man!

It is natural and right for man to seek enough land to secure his livelihood. We must not forget, however, that *all* men are in this situation.

The "disagreeable" part of the business comes when man seeks *more* than

his share. "Woe unto them," says Isaiah, "that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!"

The urge to own land becomes more intense as the insecurity brought about by the monopoly of land by a few increases.

The private collection of the rent of land acts as a heady narcotic. This is what makes "the most rational and considerate individual," in the words of *The American Home*, "start acting in a most peculiar fashion." The grimness with which this privilege is grasped bears this out. People do not act with a fraction of the hysteria when earned income is taken from them as when unearned income is taken from them. For when earned income is taken, a person can calculate how much has been taken and he knows how he can recoup that amount. But when the unearned income of rent is taken away, its proprietor has been despoiled of an Aladdin's lamp, a mysterious source of bounty that he would not know how to replace. And so the continuance of this privilege is protected and defended like nothing else on earth.

But despite all the irrationality, there is a trace of rationality in man, and so there is still hope that we can buck — not nature, but the unnatural.

— Robert Clancy

Vol. 27, No. 11

November, 1964

The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021, supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community — known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

Publication committee: William S. O'Connor, Arnold A. Weinstein and Lancaster M. Greene, chairman. Editor: Alice Elizabeth Davis. Subscriptions \$1 a year; single copies 10c. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y.