

A Plan for Argentina

COLONIZACION INTEGRAL EN TIERRA DE PROPIEDAD COMUN Y CONCESION VITALICIA INDIVIDUAL y LA ENFI-TEUSIS RIVADAVIANA, by C. Villalobos-Dominguez. (*Colonization (internal) on Land under Common Ownership and Individual Lifetime Tenure*). Published in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1953.

Reviewed by JOANNA B. COLE

The author of this very interesting little book, written in excellent Spanish, is a Georgist-plus. In his preface, while he pays tribute to Henry George, from whose books, "bearers of the modern message of redemption," he says he received both great inspiration and the impulse to act on it, he also states that of George's doctrine he has retained only the fundamental point, the right of each people to common ownership of the land and equal participation in the economic rent accruing from it, as well as the right of each individual to the product of his labor and capital.

Using these principles as a point of departure, the author has worked out, in great detail and with admirable clarity, a system of land tenure based on rural-urban colonies, in which the land is owned in common and occupied by individuals who secure their plots by free public auction, with no purchase price but the obligation to pay an annual rent to the community. Sr. Villalobos-Dominguez gives fifteen "bases" upon which the system is to be founded, and he very lucidly explains the grounds for each.

The land is to be acquired in the first place by purchases—that is, the federal or provincial government is to purchase it from private owners. It is the author's opinion that the sudden inauguration of a system of collecting economic rent from the present owners, which he says would amount to confiscation, would not be feasible, although he agrees that private ownership of land and natural resources is unjust; also, he believes that, even in Argentina, practically all the good land is in private hands, and any free public lands would possess disadvantages of infertility, inaccessibility, etc. The next step in the execution of the plan is to form sections of some 35,000 to 70,000 acres, divided into plots of various sizes, from the smallest city lot to ranches of 500 to 750 acres for wheat growing and cattle raising. These sections are later grouped in districts, which later become "agropolitan municipalities," that is, territories of some 250,000 acres, with about 70,000 inhabitants, centered about a city of some 20,000 population.

Each agropolis would be more or less self-sufficient, as it would include every kind of in-

dustrial and commercial activity, as well as educational, health and recreational facilities. These municipalities would assume the financial obligation of paying the federal or provincial government the purchase price of the land, which would be gradually amortized, and the funds for this payment would be raised from collection of the rent agreed upon. There would be no other municipal taxes. Occupants would have lifetime tenure, to insure security, and improvements would be passed on to the heirs, but not the land, since that would be owned by the community.

The plan is worked out in great detail, and all objections are carefully dealt with. The aim is to secure justice and freedom for all, and the planning on which it is based does not entail socialism in any form, since all industries and services except postal, telegraph, water supply, etc., would be operated under private enterprise.

The last half of the book is an account of a law passed in Argentina in 1822, under an enlightened president, Rivadavia, by which common ownership of land, and payment of economic rent to the community, were instituted. However, in getting the law passed by the Congress, many alterations and concessions were made, weakening it greatly. Consequently many abuses crept in, and in the course of time the law became unpopular, until in 1857 it was practically abolished by a new regulation, although never actually repealed.

The fact that this law existed and was in force for some time, leads the author to state that the principle and practice of community ownership of land, and payment of economic rent to the community, have a peculiar appeal for the Argentine people. Certainly his lucid and convincing analysis should do much to win Argentinians and other Latin Americans over to this sane and just form of land tenure.