

a Christian aspect, a stewardship, which calls for a social responsibility in the use of the land.

Every man should have access to the natural resources; a security of tenure in connection with these resources for the development of his personality, and the fulfillment of his social obligation to his fellow human beings.

We are all engaged in a struggle for the exercise of human rights. We must be missionaries so that other people will understand what those rights are, and how such rights may be secured for man. It is for all of us to use all possible means in achieving a just social order. Can it be accomplished? Yes, because the truth will always prevail. Can you change the world all at once? There is a very good expression used in Nova Scotia, where they are successfully developing the cooperatives. This is what they say: "To save democracy, we must have a lot of little people in a lot of little places, doing a lot of little things."

I believe that more families should be living on the land, deriving their living directly from the good earth. The present landholding system and tradition make difficult such an ideal. The Granger Homesteads, to which I have given much of my attention, are a case in point. The coal miners of Iowa have always been faced with a very short year. It was my belief that these men should give their empty days to the culture of the soil. Slowly, but emphatically these men have raised themselves from despair. As Executive Secretary of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference I hope to see such a program developed on a wider scale throughout our nation. I want the land freed for not only the men working in the shops of New York, Detroit and Des Moines. I want to see homesteaders have an opportunity to be close to the soil in the country. If a Marxian says this is agrarian socialism, like my seminary textbooks maintained, I'll not quarrel with the misnomer. But let us free the land for productive use—for national happiness.

Please TAX My Land!

By George H. Comings

I AM a New York farmer specializing in Holstein-Friesian cattle. I speak, not as a member of the Farm Bloc, as a Special Government officer, or as a reformer trying to prove something. I have tried to give a thought to my place as the father of several grown children, some of them off to war; also as a member of that vast body of food producers, I have thought much about my place in a world that is now, and going to be, very, very hungry.

Like the machinations of vested interests in urban centers, farmers have been hoodwinked by the same gang. For more than two decades there has been a concerted effort to reduce the taxes on real estate, and place the burden of taxation on the consumer in hidden taxes. This effort has not been headlined by either the urban or farm press for what it is—an attempt to place heavier taxes upon the farm people.

Such is not the way in which revenue laws are passed. Instead, a great clamor arises about the farm people being ruined by heavy taxes on real estate, and laws are passed reducing this tax in favor of indirect taxes that place a greater burden upon the farm people than they had previously borne.

If we investigate the ownership of our State's land values, we find at once that our farm people are not large owners of land values.

According to a survey, "The Land Use Problem," prepared by Dr. V. B. Hart of Cornell University, New

York State has 18.7 million of acres of farm land, also about 1.3 million of acres of land at one time farmed, but now abandoned, or reforested. This gives a total of 20 million acres of agricultural land out of a total area for the State of 30.5 million of acres. The farmers are the owners of nearly two-thirds of the land in the State. But this agricultural land has relatively little value.

FARMLAND IS 3.5% OF NEW YORK REAL ESTATE VALUES

According to recent census figures, the farms of New York State make up only 3.5% of our total real estate values. The sales of farm real estate in different parts of the United States indicated that very little agricultural land has much real cash value. From the sales of farm property, little is realized above the value of the buildings and improvements, and in many sections a fair return can not be secured even for them.

A brief survey of the earning power of our farm people will disclose why so many farms have been abandoned; also that farm people are the lowest paid skilled labor group in our nation.

One who has had any experience with farming must realize that it is exacting work, requiring labor of great skill. The State College of Agriculture, Cornell University, in its studies of labor income earned by farm operators, reveals that the farmer's labor is pretty cheap.

To determine it, we see what is left when annual expenses and 5% return on gross cash income have been allocated:

Quality of Land	Annual Labor Income	Per Cent of
		Total Farm Land (New York)
I—Very poor.....	\$ 112.00	17
II—Poor	155.00	12
III—Fair	204.00	38
IV—Good	356.00	21
V—Better	592.00	8
VI—Best (muck).....	1,285.00	1
VII—Residential	—	3

This table shows that 88% of our farm operators on the first four land classifications receive an average labor income of \$215.80. Is it surprising, considering such facts, that only one farm family in seven has a bathtub or running water in the home, or that the health of many of our farm children is below par?

Most farm enterprises are never cleared of the mortgage on the buildings, stock, tools and the land. Most agricultural land is marginal, producing no return above that requiring an excessive amount of labor. Therefore, all taxes paid by farm people, whether called real estate, consumer, or by any other name, are in effect a tribute from the labor performed by the farmer.

The farmer's investment in buildings, stock, tools and land is lost as soon as it has been paid. He makes his investment, that he may employ himself at labor of his own choosing, somewhat in the same way as the laborer who is compelled to pay a high membership fee to join a labor union—that he may get a job in a certain line of work.

FARMLANDS NOT VALUABLE

Farmers are not land owners, in the sense of owning valuable land, though they hold title (largely mortgaged) to much marginal and sub-marginal land. Farmers are not capitalists in the sense of receiving returns from invested capital. They are large users of capital (mostly borrowed), but much of the interest on this borrowed capital must be charged against the returns from their labor.

The farmers' first need, like that of industrial laborers, is the right to the full product of their labor.

Why do we have such conditions in a basic industry like agriculture?

Because governmental special privilege has made it possible for certain industrial groups to monopolize our natural resources, and rob both rural and urban people by exorbitant monopoly prices.

Our industrial workers through strong labor organizations, have been able to fight these industrial overlords, and through constant warfare, maintain a living standard

nearly as good as it was when our country was new and undeveloped, and when land and opportunity were free.

We unorganized farmers have not fared so well. Competing among ourselves for the market, and unable to fight the monopolies built up by special privileges from our Government, the machinery and fertilizer industries, particularly, we have been nearly ruined. We must buy in an artificial market, whose prices are exorbitant, because they are monopoly prices, set by a policy of producing only what the market can dispose of.

What special privileges do these industrial overlords get from the Government, that allow them to rob the farmers so ruthlessly?

The one basic privilege is the private ownership of our natural resource. With the control of iron, oil and other natural raw materials necessary for our modern industrial life, these industrial overlords control the standard of living for all the producers.

FARMERS SHOULD DESIRE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES

We farmers must learn that to break monopolies we must have a heavy taxation of land values. We own relatively little land values, so the burden of taxation would fall on the possessors of our real valuable natural resources of oil, minerals, coal, and downtown urban sites.

Farmers and laborers alike should join hands for a program that plans to take the full earning value of all lands for State revenue, and exempt labor and its products from all taxes. This would force our industrial overlords to produce for the market, and compete for our trade the same as farm people have always done, thus producing abundance at a fair price under the law of competition.

I might add, that I work with our County AAA and believe most of these agency men are sincere, just as most labor leaders are sincere in their erroneous belief that high tariffs, immigration restrictions and interstate licensing is practical. Our farm bureau, the Grange, and most farm people in New York State seek trade restrictions and want foreigners excluded from our shores and our markets. Too many New York farmers feel that the New York City market belongs to them, and resent having Wisconsin cream shipped in.

I came here to Bainbridge (N. Y.) twenty-five years ago from Wisconsin. This helps me look at world exchange differently. I have talked in our farmers' meetings of these privileges we have sought through government regulation. I have urged them to bargain for a free market in farm produce so that the free market would be granted us as buyers of factory produced goods.

It is an everlasting job of education—education in "Progress and Poverty." They need to read Henry George again.