

Attachment to the Land

by JOHN R. FUCHS

SOME have expressed fear that the proposal outlined in my book *Constructive Taxation for Free Enterprise* will destroy the people's mystic, yet sacred, attachment for the land. I understand this well, and because it is very close to me I can see why the fear arises, but my experience indicates that it is not well founded.

As evidence that I am personally acquainted with this attachment, I turn to scenes of my childhood in Texas when I followed the old turning plow, felt the soil between my toes and eagerly inhaled the scent of newly plowed land and freshly cut hay. Even today I smile as I look at my gnarled toenails, remembering how many times I lost them by stumping against the rocks on my father's ranch in Blanco County.

I have slept on the ground with the saddle as my pillow, and have gazed up into the starry sky as I listened to the cowboys sing an old tune which comes to me across the years:

"I wonder whether ever a cowboy
will drift to the sweet by and by;

Oh they say there will be a grand
roundup, when cowboys like cattle
do stand;

To be cut out by the Rider of Judgment,
who is well posted and
knows every brand."

Fresh in my memory still is the mournful cooing of the dove and the doleful hooting of the owl, both speedily dispelled in the early dawn when the mockingbird held forth with cheerful songs. Quite different was the tempo of the hounds in hot pur-

suit of a fox, bobcat or timber wolf—but this was "sweet music" to the hunter.

There are old swimming holes, too, in my time-honored memory, but most of them now are filled with mud and silt because we neglected our surface waters and the preservation of our underground waters. In my dreams I can still wander through the woods and along the streams which abounded with game and fish. All these opportunities and many more the "good earth" afforded for those who were attached to it and called it their own. Do you wonder then why I say again and again that the land—this earth—which is the common heritage of the children of men—must never be subject to speculation?

Today when forward-looking, industrious and thrifty citizens build tanks, dam the water in the creeks, clear the land of brush, what do we do? We punish them for their initiative, energy and foresight. Along comes the ubiquitous tax assessor and collector and raises the assessment. We fine the man who improves his holdings and give a premium to the one who in his lethargy leaves his land unimproved while awaiting the unearned increment to be gained through the industry of others. Moreover, the progressive ranchman-and-farmer is chastised as we tax all his improvements, his fine cattle and other stock, as well as houses, windmills, etc. The result is that today land is bought for recreation and speculation, while from year to year the small

ranches and family holdings are diminishing in number and the backbone of the country is being weakened. Yet the mere institution of sound taxation would eliminate many problems: as people turned back, with attachment, to the soil.

A just and natural tax system would, in part at least, restore to the people the character and industry of a gen-

eration ago and bring about a much desired balance between rural and urban populations. It would encourage the great majority of families to improve and beautify their homes—and good homes are the strongest foundation for an enduring nation. Always remember that happy homes present the most formidable front to all subversive 'isms.

Noah D. Alper's Brief Cases

EVIDENCE

"We Communists damn General Douglas MacArthur," said Yasutaro Nakamura, the only Communist member of the Kagoshima prefectural assembly, in talking of the former commander of the occupation of Japan, "but we cannot deny that his land reforms raised farm living standards and robbed us of our principal objective here before the revolution."

From a dispatch by Robert Trumbull, Kagoshima, Japan, reported in The New York Times, January 21, 1958.

MORE EVIDENCE

"There is one brief and important respite from the dismal round, and it comes with the appointment of Peter Stolypin as prime minister. Stolypin was a remarkable man, the best prime minister Russia ever had. His program of agrarian reform was admirable and it was desperately needed: it permitted peasants to own their land outright instead of sharing it with others on a communal basis. Immediately there was an improvement. Men began to take pride in their farms and worked hard to buy more land and to increase the yield. Lenin, ever a realist, saw a great danger in this, the danger that the revolutionary spirit might die out among the peasants."

—The Russian Revolution—Part III, by Alan Moorehead, Life Magazine, January 27, 1958

GEORGIST PROPOSAL FOR TAX RELIEF

A student of the Henry George School in New York, Sidney Kass, too new to know "it couldn't be done," asked permission to appear before the Committee on Ways and Means in Washington and was asked to come on February 7th. He was the youngest of 16 who read reports, and the only one suggesting land value taxation, though all spoke of the recession and the need for tax relief. He felt he had the full attention of the members, especially as he was promptly corrected on the statement at the close of his proposal (see p. 16, Feb. HGN). Here the final sentence was mistakenly included in the quotation from President Eisenhower. He was told that with this correction the paper would be accepted.

Mr. Kass doesn't consider himself a crusader, though he has made a point of writing letters to newspaper editors with a fair amount of regularity. He suggests this practice to others and also suggests writing letters to Congressmen, and watching out for hearings of a similar nature at which recommendations can be made.