



Road building is often held up through inability to acquire the necessary land for new highways, according to headlines in *The Advocate* in Barbados, West Indies. An old two-lane winding coach road extends the length of the island, 21 miles, and because of heavy traffic the taxi fare is often as much as \$28 from the airport to the northern tip.

The Barbados government decided that valuation of land must be done professionally, and a nine months course started on January 22nd, taught by John M. Copes, United Nations Adviser On Land Valuation and Wilfred W. Chang, Commissioner of Valuation in Jamaica, on loan through the U.N. Mr. Copes specializes in city valuation and Mr. Chang in rural valuing.

"Land looms large as a factor of production upon which capital has been invested," Mr. Copes said at the opening session, and the Prime Minister, Errol Barrow, said owners would have a right to appeal, and the government must look for a valuation section to advise them on properties where owners are reluctant to sell at a reasonable price. If we have a taxing and valuation system which discourages people from improvements and progress it is bad for the country, he said.

Tourism has developed on the west and south coasts, with soaring land values, as a result of the mild, soft climate. *The Advocate* says this must be the concern of the government, both from the view of taxation and "pricing" the citizen out of the opportunity to acquire homes in the desirable sections.

It is hoped professional valuation of

spiralling land values will result in the best locations paying a fair and rising share of the burden of public services. Professional schools for valuers are important to the future of Barbados, but they are even more needed in the U.S.A.

As Perry Prentice observed in Barbados last year, the present system of taxing improvements does harness the profit motive in reverse. By taxing location values and exempting improvements the society would use the profit motive to encourage new progressive features for the island in the sun.

LANCASTER M. GREENE
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[Mr. Chang, who was present at a Lincoln Foundation meeting in Hartford, thought his students would like to know more about the principles of property taxation. He therefore invited Mr. Greene to address the class. He cheerfully accepted and referred them to a symposium published by the University of Wisconsin on taxation, resources and economic development. At the completion of this, the first school of its kind in Barbados and well publicized in the island press, the students, many of whom are government employees, plan to take correspondence courses from the HGS in New York.]

I feel that Mr. Ende's conclusions in the November 1967 HGN, "Henry George and the Welfare State" should be questioned.

He says: "The ultimate result of the taxation of land values would be that the government would find itself with an enormous sum of money to spend, and this could only be utilized to maintain the welfare state, for which Henry George intended it should be used."

I do not know, nor do I think it possible for anyone else to know, just how large would be the income of the government whose sole source of income was derived from a 100 percent tax on land value. For this reason I do not think that Mr. Ende's conclusion should be assumed to be correct.

It is clear that at present there are two elements in rent. There is economic rent, i.e., the profit of association and the proper income of the State, and there is speculative rent which arises from the margin of production being forced down because other, better land, is either held out of use or under-used. Economic rent is a natural benefit which accrues through society's economic activities and is the State's proper income. Speculative rent is an anti-social phenomenon which should not exist at all and cannot therefore rightly belong either to the State or to any individual.

I surmise that with anything approaching 100 percent LVT much poor land which is at present occupied, and for the use of which rent is paid, would cease to be used at all due to the availability of better land. In those circumstances rent would be much reduced (through the raising of the margin of production), and wages would rise commensurately. I base my views on a study of population in relation to total known natural resources which seems to indicate that there is no absolute scarcity of land. I cannot prove I am correct, but then neither can Mr. Ende prove his conclusions.

I entirely agree that in the present economic framework the provision of all those facilities and amenities which are covered by the term "welfare state" and possibly some others, are necessary, but only because wages are unnaturally low. If a way could be found to raise wages, and I believe that collection of economic rent is the way, then many of our present welfare services would be much better dispensed with—not all of them—but many of them. The provision of many "free" state services requires a powerful government which makes

decisions for us that I think would be better left to individuals, provided the general level of wages were high enough to give everyone the opportunity to make reasonable choices.

In my view the State has a proper source of income, economic rent, and like the rest of us it should accommodate its spending to its proper income whether that income be large or small.

BETTY NOBLE
Wellington, New Zealand

The thought has occurred to me, or rather recurred, that the Henry George School should definitely continue to use *Progress and Poverty* as a textbook in Fundamental Economics. The glaring examples of the robbery of labor are needed to enforce the causes of involuntary poverty; especially so since the complicated machinery of present day production and exchange tends to obscure these causes, and since labor unions and government agencies are so loudly preaching their artificial cures.

The examples given are sufficient to point up the facts of the case. But I think it would be a profitable exercise for some expert historian to write a history of civilization, following the lead given by Henry George.

Of course such a history—to be a history—would have to include other things, such as the march of ideas, etc.—in other words about the same round of subjects that are treated in the usual textbook on history. Such a textbook could serve a future accredited Henry George College very well. Perhaps other colleges will be willing to use it too.

WALTER W. GERVER
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Senator A. W. Roebuck of Toronto, for whom no tribute can approach the esteem in which he is held, has been for 14 years chairman of a Senate standing committee on divorce. Though other members are younger than his nearly 90 years, none were as forthright as he is in pressing for humane reforms. "Correct abuses and bring about a greater freedom in, and certainly not a degradation of, the institution of marriage," Senator Roebuck said.