

equal rights and justice to land they might lead the way for the entire human race to experience economic freedom. It would be ironical, but a boon to mankind, if the Caucasian race was freed of its repressive land tenure system and tax practices and of its own

economic enslavement by the descendants of a less privileged race. If such an honor can come to anyone may it be the blacks who achieve it. Today it is their turn to seek an enlightened land policy which has been dismissed too lightly.

Ricardo On Rent

LAND rent has certain unique characteristics, but there is nothing mysterious about rent," said Percy R. Williams in "Understanding the Tax On Land Rent" (June HGN). He quoted Ricardo's statement that "rent is that portion of the produce of the earth which is paid to the landlord . . . for the use of the land, and for the use of the land only."

Siebe Sevenster, a Dutch Georgist, author of a book on *Creative Justice Through Land Reform*, also quotes Ricardo's *Principles of Economics* (Everyman's Library #590) but differs somewhat from Mr. Williams in interpretation. While he agrees there is no mystery about rent, he thinks there is competition in every situation and by the single tax monopoly rent will diminish through the competition of the landowners. "The landowner knows that the future value will mean more tax, and that brakes the monopoly," he says.

Mr. Williams finds it necessary to collect rent. Mr. Sevenster says, "the point is to give the right destination to the rent, this is to the community." He doubts if the economic power of the landowner will be limited by a single tax and sees the fault lying with the community as a whole which gives the rent to private persons and taxes every wage earner.

He doubts also whether the single tax is designed to reduce rent. It might improve the economic situation and the result would be more production

and more need for good housing, recreation and rent of land — which is quite natural.

A member of the New York HGS teaching staff, Josephine Hansen, also an enthusiastic student of Ricardo, finds the views of Messrs. Williams and Sevenster interesting but believes they are talking of different concepts. Percy Williams is discussing 20th Century economics and the impact of population and technology on rent. Henry George was aware that Ricardo, though not the first to do so, had defined an agrarian law of rent which considers all production (farming) going from good to worse land—and all marginal land needing more labor and capital to be worked. This is true only in an agrarian economy in which there is no land held in speculation. In the North Slope (Alaska) for instance one sees a marginal land turning into a potential high income land. We do not always go from good to worse—sometimes worse becomes best, says Mrs. Hansen.

Otto Dorn, a former director and trustee of the HGS, used to tell about his family going out to the shores of Lake Erie to settle. They rejected the sandy soil near the lake and moved upland to the rich farming soil. The sandy shore became the harbor and center of the City of Cleveland. "The economic difference for my generation," said Mr. Dorn, "would have been infinite if we had held the land where people congregated."