

MAYBE LAND DOES COUNT

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

I have read with interest the letter of W. R. B. Willcox in your May-June issue, in which he seeks to prove that rent is not paid for the use of land, but for what men produce on it. According to him, land is only of secondary importance to wealth produced on it. Well, let's examine his reasoning. The economic value of anything (that is the exchange value) is what it will bring in an open market; this includes the value of land. Henry George says that wealth is produced by labor applied to nature (land). All land doesn't have the same productiveness as *some* land and thus more wealth will be exchanged for productive land, than land of little productivity. This establishes the fact that land does have real value in exchange but such value represents *the value of an opportunity to produce efficiently*. This value attaches to particular sites of land, having as their primary advantage natural, strategic, potential possibilities. Men will not pay more for one site than for another site on which they may produce for themselves the same amount of wealth. No amount of labor on a useless site will produce value of any kind, even though Mr. Willcox does say that all value attaches to labor, and not to land. The socialists say that land is not a factor in the production of wealth: "it was one time, but we have outgrown that period." Evidently Mr. Willcox agrees with them as his letter indicates.

Mr. Willcox says on page 63 of his book "Taxation Turmoil": "Thus the problem of social and economic welfare becomes essentially a rent problem, and not a land problem." Even if the values concerned were all of labor, how would he collect, or even create them without land? How much labor would he have to furnish to make coal, iron, petroleum, water power, etc., etc.? Apparently it is also convenient to have a little land around, too.

I am also tiring of that controversy over whether there is any such thing as "land value tax." Taxation is a human and legal device by which revenue is secured by the state (justly or unjustly). While there is no doubt in my mind that the rent of land properly and justly belongs to the community, still the process by which it is secured is "taxation" and nothing else. If there is any other method by which rent may be taken by the state, than taxation, I haven't heard of it to date. It is unfortunate that purported Georgeists should consider it necessary to entirely revise the dictionary in order to make a complete job of confusing themselves.

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