

Land and Freedom

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Platform Adopted by the Commonwealth Land Party in National Convention New York, February 9, 1924

WE, the Commonwealth Land Party, formerly the Single Tax Party, in national convention assembled, reaffirming the principles enunciated in the platform of the Single Tax Party at their National Convention at Chicago in 1920, declare:

That the Earth is the birthright of all mankind and that all have an equal and unalienable right to its use.

That man's need for land is expressed by the rent of land; that land rent results from the presence and productive activities of the people; that it arises as the result of natural law, and that it therefore should be taken to defray public expenses.

That the earth is not now free to the use of all the people; that it has become the private property of a few; that this private ownership of the Earth enables the owners of land to take for private purposes the rent of land, which is created by, and which belongs to, the community.

That the rightful ownership of all wealth rests on the production of such wealth; that no such justification of ownership enters into the ownership of land, as the Earth is not a product of labor; that therefore the appropriation

of the rent of land for private purposes is robbery of the community, is in violation of man's natural rights, is without moral sanction, and is no less iniquitous because sanctioned by law.

That as a result of permitting land owners to take for private purposes the rent of land, which belongs to the community, it becomes necessary to impose the burdens of taxation on the products of labor and industry, which are the rightful property of individuals, and to which the government has no moral right.

That the rent of land, always sufficient to defray all the legitimate expenses of government, if taken for public purposes in place of all taxes, will provide a surplus available for public improvements, public benefits and human welfare on a scale hitherto undreamed of.

That there is therefore no justification for taxing business, industry, labor, or thrift, and that such taxes merely

WILLIAM J. WALLACE, THE PARTY'S STANDARD BEARER.

tend to burden industry, breed evasions and dishonesty, drive wealth into hiding places, divert capital from production, increase the price of commodities, and raise the cost of living.

That the private ownership of land is a denial of man's right to the Earth; that it restricts the conditions under which the landless must produce; that it therefore lessens the return for their efforts and compels the employment of the entire time and energy of the great mass of mankind to obtain a mere subsistence.

That the struggle for existence is not fundamentally a struggle between capital on one hand and labor on the other, but between capital and labor on the one hand and land monopoly on the other. That capital and labor are the joint producers of all wealth; that together they are entitled to all wealth, and that they are both robbed of their production by their common enemy, the land-owning, franchise-holding few who, through their monopoly of the Earth and its natural resources, exact from both labor and capital, and without any return to either, the first fruits of all their efforts.

That because of private land ownership and the resultant denial of the use of land to the people, save at exorbitant prices due to the consequent speculation in land values, production of wealth is everywhere curtailed and an unfair and unnatural competition for existence arises which in every field of labor or effort turns man against man.

That all evils arising out of our unjust economic conditions, such as business depressions, hard times, unemployment, poverty and the fear of poverty, bad housing conditions, and the crime, vice and diseases due to these conditions, are the result of the private ownership of the Earth and the appropriation of its products by the few.

That these conditions are becoming daily more intensified; that relentlessly the cost of living pursues the slender purse and robs industry of its toil; that the unnatural and unequal struggle between the landless on the one hand and the private ownership and monopoly of the Earth and its natural resources on the other, is strangling both the producer and the consumer.

That out of the false foundations upon which our economic structure rests, false ideas of life arise; that among these are the theory that taxes should be levied according to ability to pay, or on the evidences of industry and thrift—a false doctrine that is even taught in our colleges—and that it is proper to take wealth by taxation from those who have it merely because they have it, and that tariffs and subsidies are justifiable, and because of which greedy parasites attack the public treasury through legislative channels, and that oil, coal and mineral resources and the land values involved in public franchises are the proper objects of plunder to be exploited by the mighty, and as a result of which men and nations vie with each other to appropriate to themselves and for their private purposes the gifts intended for all, and the benefits of which should be shared by all.

That any attempt to adjust the glaring and evident inequalities and injustices of our present economic system by the taxing of incomes is a fallacy, is communistic in

principle, and must remain wholly ineffective to rectify such inequalities, as it leaves undisturbed the source from which all improperly obtained incomes are derived; whereas the collection of the rent of land for public purposes, wherever it appears or whatever its nature, would stop unearned incomes at their source, and would at the same time protect and hold secure all honestly acquired wealth against confiscation through unjust taxation.

That the violation of natural law cannot go unpunished; that the diversion of the rent of land into private pockets and away from public use is a violation of natural law, and that the evils arising out of our unjust economic conditions are the penalties that follow such violation as effect follows cause.

That none of the other political parties, Republican, Democratic or Socialist, appears as the opponents of unjust wealth or incomes obtained from land ownership, which is the fundamental basis of monopoly, nor as the defenders of wealth honestly acquired from labor, industry, enterprise, talent or invention.

We therefore demand that the full rent of land be collected by the government in place of all direct and indirect taxes, and that all buildings, machinery, implements and improvements on land, all industry, thrift and enterprise, all wages, salaries, incomes, and every product of labor or intellect, be entirely exempt from taxation.

Furthermore, we pledge ourselves to formulate into law such measures as will make effective these demands, to the end that all economic evils will be forever abolished, and economic freedom for all be for all time assured.

To take the full rent of land for public purposes is to put all land to its full and best use. In cities, this would mean more homes and more places to do business, and therefore lower rents. In rural communities it would mean the freedom of the farmer from land mortgages, and would guarantee him full possession of his entire product at a small land rental to the government and without the payment of any taxes. It would prevent the holding of mines idle for the purpose of monopoly and would immensely increase the production, and therefore greatly lower the price of mine products.

Land can be used only by the employment of labor. Putting land to its fullest and best use would create an unlimited demand for labor. With an unlimited demand for labor, the job would seek the man, not the man seek the job, and labor would receive its full share of the product.

All labor and industry depend basically on land, and only in the measure that land is attainable can labor and industry be prosperous.

The taking of the full rent of land for public purposes would put and keep all land forever in use to the fullest extent of the people's needs, and so would insure real and permanent prosperity for all.

As a result of the increased production that would

follow the freeing of the Earth to the use of man, there would be more food, more clothing and more shelter. But normal man needs more than these, and as all will then be prosperous and able to indulge their wants, men's efforts would naturally turn to supplying comforts, education, recreation, and those things which are now termed the luxuries of life.

The freeing from taxation of all buildings, machinery, implements and improvements on land, all industry, thrift and enterprise, all wages, salaries, incomes, and every product of labor and intellect, will encourage men to build and to produce, will reward them for their efforts to improve the land, to create wealth, and to render the services that the people need, instead of penalizing them for these services as taxation does now.

It will put an end to legalized robbery on the part of the government, which now pries into men's private affairs and exacts fines and penalties in the shape of tolls and taxes on every evidence of man's industry and thrift.

If the full rent of land were taken for public expenses, the sum now taken for Federal, State and local taxes, amounting approximately to \$7,500,000,000 annually, would for the most part remain in the possession of the people, as would also the value of the then enormously increased production—many times that amount—and which together would constitute the fund out of which will come the increased return to labor and to industry.

Real and permanent prosperity assured to all, and unearned fortunes denied to all, the evils due to present unjust economic conditions would disappear. Man would then express the better and higher qualities within him; good would take the place of evil; learning and culture would replace ignorance and crime; health would supplant disease; vice would vanish, and early and healthy marriages would make possible happy and contented homes.

War and strife, now and always due to economic maladjustment, would disappear with the elimination of private ownership of land, which has ever been the basis and the cause of all the world's economic troubles.

Out of the darkness of the past, the mate of the bludgeon and the spear, a product of the power of might and the rule of the sword, born of greed, nurtured by robbery and murder throughout the ages, and carrying ever in its wake the ravaging and plunder of the people, the devastation of their countries and the impoverishment of the race, came the private ownership of land—the fount of all evil, the destroyer of mankind.

No structure built in violation of natural law can stand; civilization built in such violation must fall; other civilizations have gone down; the foundations of this civilization are crumbling.

If civilization is to live, private ownership of land must go. If private ownership of land continues, this civilization is doomed.

Resolutions Adopted by the Convention

THE INCOME TAX

RESOLVED: That the Income Tax is founded on the communistic principle of equalizing wealth by taxation. It is false in principle and iniquitous in practice, and the Income Tax Law should be repealed. In lieu thereof the rent of land should be collected by the government and used for public expenses and public improvements.

RESOLUTION PRESENTED BY MR. SCHOALES

RESOLVED: That the honor and integrity of our government are being sacrificed in the neglect to recompense our soldiers of the World War;

That they are in fairness and justice entitled to adjustment of wages, salaries and incomes that were lost to them because of the services rendered to their country;

That the taking of the full rent of land for public purposes would leave a surplus available not merely for public improvements and public benefits, but sufficient as well to meet the proposed adjusted compensation, without adding a penny to the tax burdens of the people.

TEAPOT DOME

RESOLVED: That the scandals recently uncovered in regard to the Teapot Dome Oil reserve and the Elk Hill Oil reserve involving men in high places in our government, is but the natural outcome of the accepted idea that the earth and all its natural resources are the proper objects of prey to be exploited by the mighty for their private purposes;

That not until the common right of all men to the full rental value of all land, all Mineral, Coal and Oil deposits and every land franchise is acknowledged, and the full rent of land taken for public use, can such temptations be avoided and the people protected from the robbery of their common heritage.

Monopolizing the Earth and its Resources

YESTERDAY, in a college laboratory, an engine driven by the heat of the sun was demonstrated by Bernard Grossman, inventor.

Will future promoters succeed in getting exclusive rights to use the sun's heat when the thing works well?

That would be no more preposterous than *allowing individuals to monopolize the earth's surface* or the coal under it.—ARTHUR BRISBANE.

Is This a Merited Reproach?

THE trouble with most Single Taxers is that they want to "free the land"—about an inch a century, say.

The American Vanguard.