

"BUY A LOT IN NORTH HOLLYWOOD NOW. DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO WORK FOR YOU? THEN INVEST IN OUR LOTS AND GET THE REFLECTED VALUE OF ALL THE COMMUNITY DOES FOR US. DO YOU WANT TO SHARE IN THE WAGES OF ALL NORTH HOLLYWOOD WORKMEN? THE PROFITS OF ITS STORE KEEPERS? EVEN THE CAR FARES PAID BY THE SHOP GIRLS ON THEIR WAY TO AND FROM WORK? YOU WON'T HAVE TO DO A THING. BY AND BY YOU WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE ON WHAT OTHER PEOPLE DO. NOW IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE A LIFE OF EASE AND PERHAPS EVEN OF LUXURY, AND, WITHOUT CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROSPERITY OF THE COMMUNITY, GET MOST OR ALL OF THIS PROSPERITY."

SUCH an advertisement is only a little more frank and candid than the one that lies before us. We have merely reduced its terms, and it is capable of further *reductio ad absurdum*. Concealed in its insidious appeal to avarice and ignorance is the element of indifference to a great social wrong that takes from those who labor the wealth they create for the benefit of the idlers. Can civilization be anything but what it is when, rooted in laws and custom, this great wrong persists?

PROF. LEE BIDGOOD, of the Department of Political Economy in the University of Alabama, is the author of a book used in his classes, and in it (page 152) he says: "Again Single Taxers are incorrect in supposing that increase in value without the effort of the owner—the unearned increment—is peculiar to land. We see such increase going on everywhere in respect to all sorts of property. The ethical basis of the Single Tax is therefore fallacious."

SO that ends it. If there is any species of property that increases in value outside of old books, old violins, old wines, and old paintings, the Professor fails to indicate them. "All sorts of property," says the Professor. That is pretty inclusive. Yet "all sorts of property" tend to disintegration and decay. Houses built thirty years if not constantly renovated have arrived at their hour of dissolution. Machinery is shorter lived. Clothes shorter yet. Foods shorter still, unless we except plum pudding. Ah, plum pudding! The unearned increment in plum pudding has eluded the Professor. Yet it supplies another fine excuse for not taking for public purposes the socially created land values of the community!

BUT even plum pudding is a product of labor. It can, unlike land, be produced *ad libitum*. That is the reason why labor products do not increase in value. To urge the increase in value that comes to a few things which

are not commodities and owe their value—always fluctuating and uncertain—to the vanity and wealth of collectors—looks like a joke or an evasion. And it is a joke. It is a joke on the Professor. Delivered with the air of an oracle it may have an effect on some of the youthful minds Prof. Bidgood teaches. But we call on his students to challenge this contention. He is teaching economics—the values he no doubt has in mind, values only to the virtuoso, are not the values which enter into the science of economics.

Concerning Land Ownership

ALTHOUGH Henry George is a master of the art of lucid exposition of economic subjects, it would be idle to deny that there has been some misunderstanding of the meaning to be attached to certain phrases which he uses in describing the evil which he finds to lie at the root of social injustice and which paralyzes all attempts to ameliorate social conditions as long as the fundamental error lies unremedied. This evil he finds to be "private property in land," or "private ownership of land," because such property or ownership, if carried to its logical conclusion, permits the exclusion of all persons not owning land from their natural right to live by the application of their labor to land. Many people jump to the conclusion that the only alternatives to private ownership of land are public ownership of land or common ownership of land, and are disposed to believe that so far as land is concerned Henry George was a communist. Others interpret his language to imply that he approved a limited socialism, making land the property of the State. That he meant neither of these things has always been clear to Single Taxers, who have combatted these economic errors for half a century.

Perhaps the question will be asked, if ownership does not vest in the individual, in the State or in Society (here understood as the community in its non-political aspect) to whom then does it belong? If one answers that question in the strict sense, it can not belong at all, in the same sense that personal property belongs to its producer, one is suspected of being visionary or metaphysical.

Perhaps the best comprehension of Henry George's meaning may be attained by a parable. A certain man, having land which he wished to use for the benefit of his children, decides during his life-time, to create a trust for its management in their interest, they themselves having the power to choose the trustees. Clearly the heirs do not own the property, for the father still lives and may revoke the trust. The heirs have a clear right to bargain among themselves for possession of such parts of the estate as each may think he can manage to the best advantage, subject to the approval of the trustees, who in the common interests exact from the possessor as much annual rent as any other heir will give for the exclusive possession of the

same piece of property. The trustees have clearly the duty of expending the annual rental for the common expenses of the management of the estate, and if a surplus remains after all expenses are paid, then such surplus shall be distributed, not pro-rata among the heirs according to their holdings or rentals paid, but equally, in recognition of the equal right of all men to an equal share of their father's bounty.

Having thus stated in parable Henry George's concept of the manner in which ownership of land should be dealt with, it seems worth while to deal with the negative side and to set down what he clearly did not intend. He did not intend that land should be owned by the state and doled out to citizens according to the will of officials. He did not intend that it should be held by all the people in common ownership and that the produce should be distributed according to the arbitrary decisions of autocratic or democratic officials. He did not intend what is called land nationalization, beginning with a policy of land purchase. He did not intend that any now existing title of a person to land should be disturbed or abolished as long as the person holding such title paid annually as much rental for the bare land exclusive of improvements as the generality of persons holding similar allotments would and did pay. The determination of rentals to be paid under such a system is really a form of valuation of sites by common consent.

Such a system now exists in parts of the State of New York under the following circumstances. Certain towns located on the South Shore of Long Island front on Great South Bay, which bay is formed by sand bars extending along its outer edge, which is about five miles out to sea. In the course of time the beaches developed vegetation and became habitable, and the State of New York conferred the ownership of them on the towns of the mainland of the island fronting them. Certain persons tried to acquire ownership of strips of these beaches and some were sold, until finally some one raised the point that the towns could only lease and not sell. The result is that these beaches are being built up by citizens who if they have no titles, on the other hand had no purchase price to pay for land. The only limitation upon their right to indefinite use is that they must, within two years, build bungalows or cottages, worth not less than a stated sum and pay an annual rental. Even this requirement is not rigidly enforced, but if any person has taken a plot and has not built upon it and if a new-comer makes a bid and shows a willingness and ability to build, the previous tenant will be given notice that if he does not comply with his agreement with the town at once, his plot will be turned over to the new bidder. An arbitrary price applicable to all similarly situated lots is charged, and the money applied to the construction of board-walks, which are the only highways on the islands and beaches.

It must be clear to all persons who really desire to understand Henry George's proposal, that under his plan every element of ownership which now inheres in home or farm-owning would persist, except the ability to appropriate such increases in value as might arise from public need or public expenditure.

There is practically no such thing as absolute ownership of land now. All governments assert the right to levy some form of tax on land, which if not duly paid, entitles the government to seize and sell the land of the delinquent owner. Such a person would be in an improved position under the Henry George plan because he would not be liable to be sold out for an unpaid tax on his improvements, which in most cases, would be more than the tax on the lot.

Dr. S. Parkes Cadman Fully Redeems Himself

WE have had occasion to comment adversely, perhaps too harshly, on Dr. Cadman's answers to Single Tax inquiries. We wish now to commend him for his admirable reply to the following inquiry from Winston-Salem, N. C.

Will you not briefly state for the benefit of many who do not understand them the fundamental principles of the single tax theory and why it is so called?

To this Dr. Cadman replies as follows:

Its author, the late Henry George, proposed to abolish all taxes save one levied on the value of land, which he named the Single Tax. It was not to be a tax on real estate nor on all land, but only on land having a value irrespective of its improvements, and one levied in proportion to that value.

The basis of this proposal may be condensed as follows: The land of every country belongs of right to all the people of that country, nor can it be alienated by one generation so as to affect the title of the next, any more than men can sell their yet unborn children for slaves.

Private ownership of land is no more legitimate in morality or reason than private ownership of air or sunlight. But private occupancy and use of land is right and indispensable. Since it is impossible to divide land into equal shares, it should be divided into parcels convenient for private use among those who are willing to pay the highest price for the use of each parcel.

This price is now paid periodically to some owners and is called rent. By applying the rent of land, exclusive of all improvements to the equal benefit of the whole community absolute justice would be done to all.

The idea of thus concentrating all taxes upon ground has secured many disciples in Great Britain, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Mr. George was a really great American, and, although a private citizen, he ex-