

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

RECENT events in this "total" war have jarred us into a realization that it may be lost unless we put forth more effort. No doubt, confidence in ultimate victory is good for our morale, but this cannot dispense with the need for matching, and surpassing, the enemy's efforts. "Give us more tanks, more guns, more planes, more material" cry our men fighting so gallantly against heartbreaking odds in the islands of the Pacific. It is generally agreed that all the reverses suffered by the Allies have been due to insufficient equipment.

TO be sure, the totalitarian nations have been ahead of us for a long time in preparing and producing for war while we have been coping with peace-time problems. Since this is a condition and not a mere theory which confronts us, we must now perforce buckle down and meet the issue. For years the followers of Henry George have been urging a reform that would release the springs of industry. Now that the problem of production has become so urgent, this reform is needed more than ever. "In nothing else is there the slightest hope," said Henry George, and his message can be applied to our war-time as well as our peace-time economy.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT has set before the nation a huge war-production program. There is no doubt that the people would like to carry it out. But it is not enough to demand that material be produced. Our leaders and legislators must also understand how and under what conditions production may be carried on with the least hindrance. Production today is impeded by land monopoly and speculation. Sites needed for defense efforts are held by owners for prices out of all proportion to the plea for "all out" patriotism. While measures are being taken to prevent monetary inflation, no effective remedy has yet been legislated to curb the land value inflation inevitable under present conditions. The

one and only way to end this most deadly of all forms of sabotage is to collect the full rent of land through taxation.

UNFORTUNATELY, landlords will fight any move in the direction of greater land value taxation—indeed, they are campaigning for reduced assessments and lower tax rates. In their stubborn, if thoughtless, attachment to special privilege, they are even now impeding the war effort, thereby subordinating their interests as citizens of a free nation to a shortsighted policy of monopolistic advantage! In this life and death total war, it would be well to contemplate the consequences of defeat. The institution of landlordism might be reminded that it must either be willing to give up its privileges in order to insure the production that will lead to victory, or else risk being engulfed with the rest of us in the cataclysm that will surely follow defeat. Except as some might play the role of Quislings, our landed and landless alike would be slaves of the conqueror. With the life of the nation thus at stake, will our leaders gamble on the continuance of a privilege that jeopardizes our victory?

WE boast that America has the greatest resources and productive power in the world. This is true, but let us not beguile ourselves with a strength more latent than real. Now is the hour to convert our potentialities into actualities—for it is only the latter that will win the war. Of course, it seems reassuring to suppose that we can rely on American initiative and our abundant resources to carry out any war production program. On the other hand, our victory is not assured unless we free our sources of production from land monopoly. Only in that manner can we instil a truly fighting spirit for the preservation of our democratic ideals. Our way of life is facing its supreme test. America must meet the challenge. Let us demonstrate that we can surpass even the totalitarian efficiency in war, without succumbing, however, to fascistic ideals. "Either this, or Liberty withdraws her light!" are the alternatives offered in the Central Truth of Henry George.