

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

IF President Hoover had not issued regular forecasts of business recovery and the coming of prosperous times, we might acquit him of gentle fooling, though without any serious attempt to deceive. But it is a little exasperating to read these periodical prophecies and realize that our president has no greater means of information than can be gleaned through ordinary channels. He has no sources of information denied to the rest of us.

OF course, it is very unfortunate to have bad times under a Republican administration. It is so "unusual," as the people of Los Angeles say of bad weather. The Democratic party, we have been told, is the party of business depression, unemployment and soup kitchens. We have been told this for so long that some very estimable but stupid people believe it. The pretence has shrunk a little.

BUT it is quite as exasperating, on the other hand, to listen to the abuse of President Hoover for not doing something about it. Mark Twain said of the weather that everybody complained but nothing was ever done. Those who complain about the hard times through which we are passing point to Hoover as in some mysterious way the cause of these conditions. We feel assured that if these complainants will present some plan to the administration Mr. Hoover will listen. But they have none. Palliatives, yes, but nothing more. And Mr. Hoover, and administrations, national and state, have a bag full of these.

THE world is owned; the planet on which we move and have our being is private property. Labor is charged for its use; we pay every minute for being on this planet, though born here without our consent. There is ample provision made for us in the natural economy; legally we are denied that provision. The despairing cry of Jean Paul is the cry of most of us: "We are all orphans, you and I; we have no father."

A WORLD so constituted is a world turned topsyturvy. The natural reservoir from which sustenance is derived, is the property of the few; the source of all wealth is owned by a small portion of the people; all others

must sue for employment as the price asked for the use of the natural opportunity continues to mount. Labor and capital are compelled to yield an ever increasing amount of their earnings for the chance to work at all. Rent charges for the use of the earth continue to increase until they can no longer be paid and yield the most pitiful return to labor. Unemployment begins, and the era of keener competition for jobs. We call it "bad times," but all times have been bad, though not so bad sometimes as at others. At all times there are large numbers of people distressed by want and the fear of want.

WHAT is needed is a remedy for conditions always prevailing, not palliatives only when conditions become acute. A system which gives to the few a constantly increasing income, while leaving little in the hands of the many, is a condition which obtains at all times, and leads finally to the inability of the masses to buy back the goods they have produced, the clogging of the machinery of distribution and a halting of production. We are then said to have "bad times," but this is only because people have grown ignorantly accustomed to conditions in which the great masses of the people are perpetually in a state of moderate poverty. It is only when great numbers are near the starvation point that we say times are bad.

PERHAPS the failure to arrive at any satisfactory solution arises from the fact that the attention of the public and the more thoughtful is directed toward the phenomenon of bad times only when conditions become acute. We submit it to analysis only at the culmination of all its evil effects, and this is true even of those who have the capacity of thought. The patient is now in such a condition that we do not now look for a cure, but, because of actual necessity, for immediate restoratives. And as soon as temporary recovery shows itself we go merrily on our way until the patient is down again with the same disease, when the same treatment must be repeated. We are a wise people, but poor physicians, since we shrink from a real economic diagnosis when the patient is sick but not yet quite upon his back. And all the time we are the willing victims of quacks and quackery.

THE remedy for all these evil conditions is contained or is hinted at, perhaps as boldly as political exigencies

permit, in the King's Message at the opening session of Parliament. Does it mark an economic epoch, and the opening of the final struggle for industrial emancipation, in Great Britain and throughout the world?

**"My ministers propose to introduce legislation to secure for the community its share in the site value of land."**

## The Spiritual Basis of Georgist Economics

Laurie J. Quinby, at the Henry George  
Congress

**W**E live in a universe of law. I speak not of statutes, but of law. Statutes are artificial—a device of man. Law is Natural—the expression of Infinite Power, Intelligence or Mind, as one prefers. Since the Primal Dawn, Natural Law has dominated the affairs of man. Though, in all ages, man has enacted statutes—changing these as suited his whim—Natural Law has remained unaltered. Man has attempted to amend, or vacate the Natural Law. Every effort in that direction has failed.

The greatest obligation any man owes to life—or to himself—is to be intelligent. His primal debt to the Infinite is to understand Natural Law which, being obeyed, brings him into harmonious relationship with God. If Natural Law is the Will of God, then the most reverential prayer ever uttered is, "Thy Will be done."

When we see that, from inevitable necessity, like follows like, that love breeds love, while hate engenders hate, we are forced to the conclusion that deep within the heart of Nature there is Law which executes itself. In every relation of life, the careful observer will find this truth. Law allows no exceptions. A saint falling from a tower will pay the same price to the law of gravity that will be paid by the most erring. Wrote the great Emerson: "If one could, in the least particular, derange the order of Nature, who would accept the gift of life."

As it is with the individual life, so it has always been in the relations of man in communities. Nations are no more exempt from the operation of Natural Law than are the meanest of creatures. Obey or pay is as true of nations as of persons. The history of the world is the story of the rise and fall of nations. That they should rise and evolve to greatness is natural. For, in rising, they conform to the Natural Law of Growth. An expression of the Law of Growth is that all things follow the line of least resistance. In human society that simply means that the wants of man shall be satisfied with the least possible effort. There is philosophy in laziness, if you please. All the progress man has made has been due to his effort to achieve his desires—to satisfy his wants—with the greatest economy of time and energy. All modern improvements in every field of activity display this. Then, since self-preservation is the first law of Nature, individuals in society learn

to satisfy their wants with as little effort as possible. To a certain extent they make a study of Natural Law. They see how they may, through the power of organized society, convert to their personal uses the wealth produced by all. First they discover the law through their observation of its action, then they enact statutes to limit the operation of that law in their personal interests. Were all the people intelligent that wrong could not be permitted.

I say to a certain extent, they become intelligent. If only they were to pursue the study of Natural Law to its conclusion, they would discover that it is also a Law of Nature that any course in human conduct which interferes with the equal rights of others, ultimately must result in an unhealthy reaction against all who are guilty of that infraction. Nature hates monopolies and exceptions, and finally destroys all of them. So we see how any course which is not naturally good for the most humble cannot be good for the great. For injustice it is that brings about the decay of nations. That nations should fall, therefore, is natural only in the sense that they have violated the basic of law of life—that is, Justice. No nation ever fell where Justice prevailed. No civilization ever declined so long as the people were intelligent, just, happy and unafraid.

In pointing out the true basis of statute law, Blackstone showed that happiness is the only justification for human enactments. He emphasized the truth that the pursuit of happiness was a Natural Right—inherent through our very nature and from the fact of our existence. It follows that it is unalienable because it is bestowed by a Power beyond our understanding or control. Then he demonstrated that all the validity which any human statute could possess rested solely on that Infinite foundation.

I once knew a cripple of exceptionally active mind. His condition led him into morbid and rebellious thinking with respect to Nature or to Nature's God. He said to me, "When I see human misery all about me; when I observe that wealth and the good things of life gravitate to underserved places, and that men, without demerit, are poor and miserable, then I am rebellious. If there is a Supreme Being—having omnipotent power—so long as I see that he tolerates these conditions, then I declare him to be a monster, unworthy the worship of mankind." He had overlooked the fact of history that God does not tolerate the things of which he complained—as the fall of all empires eloquently shows.

One day I went to my friend with a book, I said to him: "Here is a book I would like to have you read." Looking at it he said: "Well, that looks like it deals with problems of this life, unmixed with visions of a chimerical hereafter. I'll read it." For a long time he studied that book. One morning he brought it to me, saying: "Well, Quinby, I've gone through this and it has gone through me. And do you know?" he added, "I must confess that Henry George has done for me what I have always denied any man could do—he has proved to me that there is a God."