

# Land and Freedom

FORMERLY THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

VOL. XXX

JANUARY—FEBRUARY 1930

No. 1

## Comment and Reflection

EMIL LUDWIG, one of the biographers and essayists of the new school who turn out literary products as a factory turns out quick-selling commodities, denies that the Dollar is America's god, and says, "All Americans work." He sees all Americans busy and concludes, in that happy, careless fashion of his, that all are working.

IT is true that no people are so busy as the people of the United States. They may be doing nothing save running around in circles, but they are in a constant feverish state of excitement which Mr. Ludwig mistakes for "work." They may be doing nothing save speculating on the exchanges, selling real estate, buying or exchanging automobiles, entertaining, getting up social functions, receiving and exchanging social calls—all busy, it is true enough, but doing nothing to add to the world's store of wealth.

WE need to remember the real meaning of "work." Work means the production of wealth. It is no exaggeration to say that one quarter of the people in this country who are so desperately busy produce no wealth at all. This is true of the great majority of those engaged in the real estate business; it is true of the young salesmen in stock and bond houses; it is true of more than half of the lawyers; more than half of the politicians; and many other classes who could be named. They do not work at all, in the sense that work is the production of wealth. They do not conserve the production of wealth; they perform no useful service.

SOME of the occupations of these classes, swollen far beyond their due proportions, have their limited field of usefulness. A stenographer, who works for a bookmaker who takes bets on the races, is not idle, but she cannot be said to "work," for what she is doing adds no more to the sum total of wealth than does the layer of odds who pays her at the end of the week. The chauffeur who drives the car of the landlord who derives his income from the land values that other people create does nothing more to increase the wealth of the world than does his employer.

OUR treatment of land as private property stands the whole economic structure on its apex to the degree that certain functions are magnified out of all true proportions, certain other functions suffer dislocations, and instead of the energies of the people being bent to the production of wealth, we witness vast numbers engaged in occupations the aim of which is to divert to their own pockets the wealth already produced. And it is because this diversion is at once more easy and more profitable than actual production that so many shrewd and intelligent men work at it. And superficial thinkers like Herr Ludwig, seeing how busy they are, think that we are a nation of "workers."

IT is curious, the misunderstandings that surround the word "work." Here is a story of a hold-up in Brooklyn reported in the papers. Two slick young bandits enter a store and line up the occupants against the wall. They are forced to yield up their money and valuables. One of them is asked what he does for a living, and replies that he keeps a little tailoring and clothes-pressing establishment across the street. The sixty-five dollars in his possession are immediately transferred to the pockets of the bandits. Two others confess that they are clerks in other parts of the town. The few dollars taken from them are handed back, the bandits explaining that they do not want to take anything from those who "work for a living."

NOW our suspicions are that these young bandits were not bandits at all, but some sort of political economists, or social researchers who pursue their occupations under the guise of hold-up men. For to no other than muddled students of political economy, or labor unionists who think of workers only as those who work for wages, would it occur that the man who runs a tailoring establishment does not work for a living. Robin Hood, Claude Duval, and Jesse James were accustomed to rob the rich and give to the poor, but they did not know of any such fine politico-economic distinctions as these young Brooklyn bandits. Hence our suspicions that they were not what they pretended to be.

WE have but little to add to what we said in our last issue regarding the changing attitude of Socialism

and the inspiring leadership of Norman Thomas, and what it forecasts. In the pages of this issue will be found a number of communications from friends of the movement who have hastened to contribute their voices to the discussion.

LET us insist to those who take issue with us that we are not defending the claims of extreme Socialism. We are only in favor of such Socialism the tendency of which is to conserve individual rights. Where there is no other way of protecting the individual against the extortions of monopoly, then let the government, either by ownership or regulation, exercise those powers for which government is ordained. Under the Single Tax there will be few such emergencies for action by city, state or nation. Nor would we quarrel with temporary expedients while we wait—and work for—the coming of that era of freedom in which natural opportunities are free to industry. Labor laws, factory laws, old age pensions, even if provided for out of current taxes, are legislative expedients with which it is fruitless to quarrel.

THE extreme doctrinaire position has, we are convinced, done us no good. The Single Tax will settle most if not all of these questions, but at a time when certain evils can be ameliorated, we make unnecessary enmity by a narrow antagonism. And after all adjustments must precede settlement. It is well enough to say that nothing is settled until it is settled right—and that is true. But few questions are settled at once. Experiment must precede demonstration. If old age pensions, for example, were the general practice of the states the revenue for their payment would soon cease to be derived from current taxes. Logic would point to the true source of such payment. The same impulse of humanitarianism that had helped to build up such a universal pension system would naturally, we think, turn to those values that are created by the community and attach to land. And our business—and indeed our opportunity—would be to indicate this true source.

OUR brilliant correspondent who appears also as our critic—Mr. Edward White, of Kansas City, Mo., rather misses the point. The argument is largely irrelevant, for we are not arguing for Socialism—certainly not for Marxism. We are as much of an individualist as our clever Kansas City friend. But it is a condition not a theory that confronts us. Here is a great party coming in our direction. The possibility—not at all remote—is that it may, under the new leadership, espouse our cause. What then should be our attitude? Such an advocacy would undoubtedly be to minimize much of what the Socialist party has hitherto stood for. Our question is so transcendently important that it naturally dwarfs every other proposal, mainly because it resolves the difficulties

which these proposals are intended to cure. It will undoubtedly arouse such an army of antagonism that every Socialist speaker and advocate will have all he can do to combat the new opposition. Every other question will take a subordinate position. The party will lose some of its *soi disant* followers but it will gain a host of new adherents, and lose none of those who know their Socialism.

## To the Man in the Street\*

NO doubt you have wondered why wages are low, rents high and men and women unemployed, why people are forced to live in slums and millions are slaughtered in war. Well there's a reason for such evils; they don't just happen, and a man named Henry George who wrote a book entitled "Progress and Poverty," tells us why they happen and the remedy for low wages, high rent, unemployment, slums, war, etc., and it does not require a college education to understand the remedy. Henry George says that it is labor applied to land that produces all wealth including the necessities of life (such as wheat, corn, potatoes, etc.) The following question now arises, Why is it that labor, the producer of all wealth, suffers from poverty and its many attendant evils? Why is it that labor produces all wealth but does not possess it, while many possess wealth that they do not produce?

Henry George in "Progress and Poverty" answers as follows. It is due to the fact that the land (the gift of God from which labor produces the necessities of life) is rented by landlords to the workers for billions of dollars and the landlords exchange the ill-gotten billions of land rent for the labor products of the workers, thereby producing a world of masters and slaves. As the rent of land is due to the presence and productive and inventive powers of man, it therefore follows that the entire rent of land belongs equally to all the people. In fact it is the duty of government to collect all of our land rent for public needs and then abolish all taxation. If the entire rent of land were collected for all of our public needs landlords could not exchange the billions of ill-gotten land rent for the labor products of the workers as they do at present.

Today we hear a great deal of earned and unearned incomes. What is an unearned income? It is an income that some one earned but does not receive, while some one receives an income that they do not earn. Under the present system of "Each one for himself and the devil take the hindmost," a few win and the great majority

\*At the suggestion of our good friend, Erwin Kauffman, St. Louis, Mo., we shall print in each number of LAND AND FREEDOM a simple elementary exposition of our principles. This first article is from the pen of George Lloyd who has had many years experience in explaining the Single Tax to the average man in halls, on street corners, and over the table. His knowledge of how the mind of the average man works fits him for the task assigned him in the present instance.

—Editor LAND AND FREEDOM.