

Declaration of Principle and Policy

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Having regard to the financial and industrial crisis with which the greater part of the world is faced

WE CONDEMN as infringing personal liberties and menacing the general welfare all plans which involve increased regimentation of the individual by the State; which invoke the arbitrary powers of Government to control or prohibit import and export trade; which make the fiscal policy of one country depend upon the fiscal policies of other countries; which imply the retention and mere management of monopolies instead of their abolition; which use the proceeds of taxes and loans or the manipulation of money to put goods on the market at fictitious prices; or which contemplate the unbalancing of budgets and the expansion of public debts on the pretext that spreading purchasing power by these methods will have beneficial social effects.

WE DECLARE

That the form of land tenure is the great governing fact which ultimately determines the economic, political and consequently the intellectual and moral condition of the people;

That the fundamental cause of involuntary poverty and recurrent periods of unemployment is the private appropriation of the rent of land and the withholding of land from its adequate and proper use;

That the more completely land is thus monopolised in any country, the greater is the insecurity of employment and the nearer are wages driven down to mere subsistence level; and this is true under conditions the most diverse as to forms of government, industries, tariffs, monetary systems and public debts;

That until measures are taken to stop the private appropriation of the rent of land, all remedies currently advocated for improving social conditions are incapable of achieving their purpose.

Declaring further that as everyone has an equal right to life it necessarily follows that everyone has an equal right to land on which alone life can be sustained,

WE ADVOCATE

That the equal right to land be secured by collecting the rent of land and devoting it to the uses of the community and assuring to the producer the full fruits of his efforts by abolishing the imposts, tariffs, taxes on improvements, exchange controls and other burdens and barriers which penalise production and obstruct the free movement of men and goods;

That to attain this end in the simplest, easiest and most practical way, public revenues be obtained by requiring contribution from all landholders according to the value of their land apart from improvements; that such contribution, national and local, be based upon a valuation showing the true value of the land, irrespective of the improvements upon it, the valuation being made public and kept up to date by periodic revision.

AND WE MAINTAIN

That the public collection of all land-values would provide such revenues as would render unnecessary tariffs and taxes which are repressive of industry; it would give the world freedom of trade and remove the main causes of international strife. This also, by making the holding of land profitable only to the user, would make it unprofitable to hold natural resources out of use, and by doing away with the fines and penalties now levied in the shape of taxes on anyone who in any way adds to the general stock of wealth would leave to each the full product of his exertion.

The illimitable field of enterprise which the earth offers to man being thus thrown open, involuntary poverty could be banished, "over-production" would be inconceivable until all human wants are satisfied, labour-saving improvements would be rendered a blessing to all and there would be such production and such distribution of wealth as would enable all to achieve comfort, leisure and participation in the advantages of a progressing civilisation.

Individual and Common Rights in Land

The land is the common heritage of the people and all men have natural and equal rights in land. By the term land is meant all natural resources.

Subject always to these natural and equal rights in land and to this common ownership, there are certain specific rights which the individual can and must enjoy.

These rights properly enjoyed by individuals are:—

1. The right to secure exclusive occupation of land.
2. The right to the exclusive use of land occupied.
3. The right to the free transfer of land according to the laws of the country.
4. The right to transmit land by inheritance.

These individual rights do not include any right to:—

1. Use land in a manner contrary to the common good of all, e.g., in such a manner as to destroy or impair the common heritage.
2. Appropriate what economists call the Economic Rent of land.

The Economic Rent is the annual value attaching to the land alone apart from any improvements thereon created by labour. This value is created by the existence of and the functioning of the whole community and is sometimes called the community value of land. This community value is created by the whole community wherein the individual lives and is in justice the property of the community. To allow this value to be appropriated by individuals enables land to be used not only for the production of wealth but as an instrument of oppression of man by man leading to the gravest social consequences which are everywhere evident.

All men have natural and equal rights in land. Those rights may be exercised in two ways:—

1. By holding land as individuals and/or
2. Sharing in the common use of the economic rent of land.

This community created economic rent (the annual value of land) can be collected for the use of the community by the same machinery by which taxes are now collected. This is what we mean by our policy of Land-Value Taxation. Were this community created land-value collected, the many taxes which now penalise industry, thrift and enterprise and stifle production could be abolished.

To deny the validity of common rights in land—in practice if not in theory—is characteristic of that disorder of natural society commonly called Monopolistic Capitalism. To deny the necessity of individual rights is characteristic of modern Communism.

We assert that the exercise of both common and individual rights in land is essential to a society based on justice. But the rights of individuals in natural resources are limited by the just rights of the community. Those who begin by denying the existence of common rights in land end by creating a condition of society wherein the exercise of individual rights becomes impossible for the great mass of the people.