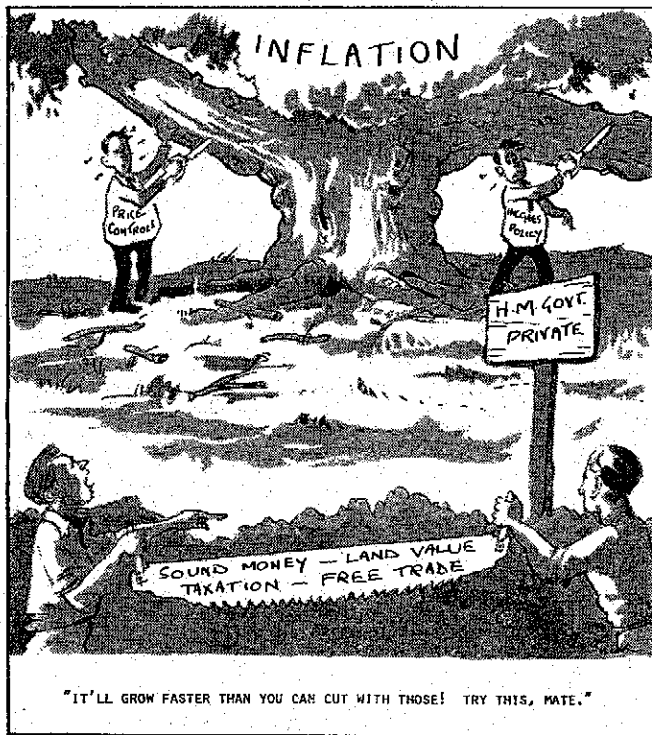


# LAND &

# LIBERTY

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER, 1975



*New York's Fiscal  
Troubles*

*People's Rights and  
State Wrongs*

*The Voice of Richard  
Cobden*

*Land Issues in the U.S.*

*Liberty Calls Again*

*Local Income tax  
No Answer*

*Letters*

## "Land Reform" Blight

THE Community Land Bill continues to drag its weary course through the Committee Stage with amendments, re-draftings, compromises, concessions, patching and all the superficial tarting up processes which such ill-conceived legislation invites.

As was to be expected, the effect of this legislation has already been anticipated. Where the Bill is ambiguous, indefinite and obscure no chances are being taken — the worst is assumed. Few new devel-

opments are being started and development-land transactions are virtually at a standstill.

Hardly anyone has a good word to say for this Bill, and those that have, confine their remarks to platitudes and cliches which reveal how completely out of touch they are with realities.

It is not necessary to repeat here the well-reasoned and unanswerable objections that have come from all quarters—by no means confined to those with a

pecuniary interest in land. But it is of interest to note the conversion, if that is the word, of almost all the Bill's critics, to the idea that "some part of the community created land values should be returned to the community." Hardly a writer on the subject fails to genuflect before this concept for fear he may be condemned as a reactionary. If acceptance of this idea came from conviction, one might expect some supporting arguments, but with a few notable

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exceptions no attempt has been made by political commentators to analyse this concept or to examine the philosophical and economic implications of it.

The general attitude is: "if you cannot beat them—join them", a placid acceptance that "we are all socialists now."

But what exactly is this principle that *some part of the increase in land value belongs to the community?* It either all belongs to the community or it does not. And if it does, then so do past increases in land value now part of the current rent of land. And why only the *increases* in land value? Land has been increasing in value ever since it was first worth taking into private possession. There are of course exceptions where land has decreased in value or where its value has even been obliterated but this has certainly not been the general tendency.

If land is regarded as the rightful property of the freeholder, then it should be "hands off" as it should be with all other types of property. If not and land is regarded as the natural and inalienable inheritance of the people, then all landholders of all land irrespective of use or non-use and irrespective of its state of development, should pay the rest of the community for their privilege of exclusive possession. And of course they should also share in the rent of all land by way of reduced taxation on the proceeds of their productive efforts.

Few people are landowners and nothing else. Many are entrepreneurs, capitalists, productive workers, etc. and suffer economic and personal frustration from the inequities of current taxation which is bleeding industry where it is not killing it and crushing the incentive and initiative of all members of the community.

Land-value taxation distinctly *encourages* industry for it is not a penalty upon production. You could tax away the whole of the rent of land without it affecting adversely any sector of production. And what does this ill-conceived and mischievous Community (Political) Land Bill do to encourage land use and industry generally? Worse than nothing. It is a prescription for general stagnation.