

# Some Important Axioms By JOHN CROMWELL LINCOLN

**O**UR PRESENT method of taxation taxes, or fines, people for producing employment and doing those things everyone wants to have done. This is being written in Arizona. In this state, there are many prospective mines that are held by the owners for high prices. They are assessed at nominal prices and contribute practically nothing to the revenue of the state. However, if someone opens up one of these mines and starts to give employment, the county assesses taxes, the school district assesses taxes, the state puts on more taxes, and if the enterprise is really successful, the Federal Government takes nearly half of the profits. All of these taxes act as fines to prevent an increase of employment. In 1935 and 1936, I put up Camelback Inn on the desert in Arizona, thereby giving employment to about 200 people for a year. The operation of the inn gives employment to many people, from year to year. For doing this, we are taxed over \$50,000 a year. The high cost of living demonstrates that a large part of these taxes are passed on and paid by the consumer.

In the United States, we have political, religious, and personal freedom and, a hundred years ago, a large measure of economic freedom; and we all know how much better this country is to live in than most European countries. A hundred years ago, there was free land in the United States, and therefore, a greater measure of economic freedom than we have now. The Creator provided land for the benefit of all. Our land system has made it practically impossible for over 90 per cent of our people to own land. Land values are so high that only a privileged few can afford to own what the Creator provided for everyone. The chief cause of unemployment, poverty, depressions, and the unjust distribution of wealth is that our land-holding system enables land-owners (non-producers) to appropriate half the product of the land-users for the privilege of using the land. This is wrong. This is stealing on a gigantic scale, and the penalty of the moral law is eventual destruction for every society that permits it. Obedience to moral law demands that society provide religious, political, personal, and economic freedom for the individual. The United States has provided the first three, and a comparison between the United States and Russia shows that the rewards of obeying the moral law are great. Unless we provide economic freedom in the United States, it is probable that we will not have the other freedoms we now possess for long. For many hundreds of years, England has been a freedom-loving country; but the English people are permitting a bureaucratic government to try to control the distribution of wealth, which cannot be done without a dictatorship. The community has a right to control the distribution of its land, because it is, by its nature, common property. The community has no right to control the distribution of wealth, because it is, by its nature, private property.

All of us are land-users. Life is not possible without the use of land. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, the automobiles we travel in, came from land a short time ago, and will decay into land very quickly. Only a few of us are land-owners. When a few

of us own what all of us must use, most of us are "over a barrel" and have to turn over to the land-owner a substantial part of what we produce in order to live.

When the Creator made the world, he provided a job for everyone that came into the world. That job was to provide food, clothing, shelter, and all the other things that men live for from land, which the Creator provided for everyone.

A man has economic freedom when he can get enough land in order to produce what is necessary to keep him and his family alive. As long as there was good, free land in the United States, we had a considerable measure of economic freedom.

Economic freedom is denied when a land-user is compelled to pay the land-owner half of what he produces for the use of the land.

Economic freedom exists only when the selling value of land is zero. In civilized countries with a considerable population, the price of land can be zero only when the community collects all the community-created ground rent.

The United States has religious, political, and personal freedom, and that makes the United States a better place to live in than Russia, where they are denied. But if the United States would grant economic freedom, which is the freedom to earn a living, the United States would be a much better place in which to live than it is now.

Other things being equal, an able general always defeats one less able because he uses his men and materials to better advantage than his opponent. For the same reason, an able man at the head of a business can produce goods or wealth cheaper than his competitors and therefore gets the business.

The capitalistic system of conducting business is better than the socialistic or communistic systems because the capitalistic system automatically puts the most able man at the head of the business. In the capitalistic system, the less ably conducted businesses go broke and

disappear. Competition permits only the more ably conducted businesses to live, and therefore the public gets what it buys at the lowest possible prices. To see that this is true, one has only to compare the standard of living in capitalistic countries with that of socialistic or communistic countries.

The standard of living in the United States is the highest of any large country in the world because there is more freedom for the production of wealth in the United States than there is in England, for instance. Also the laws of the United States interfere less and clog the production of wealth less than the laws of any large country in the world.

The laws of the United States deny complete freedom in the production of wealth. If the laws did not interfere in any degree with the production of wealth, the income of the average family would probably be five times what it is now. Our tariff laws greatly retard the exchange of wealth between people in the United States and foreign countries, thereby raising prices in the United States from 10 to 25 per cent. The greatest decrease in the production of wealth is caused by the injustice of the laws which permit land values to arise, thereby preventing 90 per cent of the people born in the United States from being able to get at the land the Creator provided for them, and from which all food, clothing, and shelter must come, together with everything else that man uses.

The man-made laws which made slavery legal were unjust because they permitted the slave-owner to appropriate most of the wealth the slave produced.

The man-made laws which permit land values to arise are unjust because high land values enable the land-owner to appropriate a large part of the wealth produced by the land-user. By the nature of things, no one can live without being a land-user. Land values arise because the land-owner is permitted to collect most of the community-created ground rent.

(THE END)

## How I First Became Interested in Henry George

In the middle eighties, when I was about eight or nine years old, a boy companion, a few years older than I, explained the basic principles of single tax to me.

It all seemed very self evident to me then. As I became older (and more civilized) I learned much about economics that is not true, and that had to be unlearned later.

In 1914 I read some socialist literature, given me by the state secretary of the Socialist Party. I am a park gardener by occupation, and studied economics, strictly from the land angle. The result was that I rejected all collectivist and planned economy as contrary to the natural order of economics and democratic principles.

After hearing a speech on the Georgist philosophy, I was induced to read *Progress and Poverty*. In the course of reading I bitterly resented the reasoning which virtually accused me of robbing society by appropriating the increment of land value in land speculation; but when I came to the part where Mr. George explained how single tax would cause population to spread out where it is too dense, and gather together where it is too sparse, I was convinced.

(Signed) WM. BURGNER.

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