

John C. Lincoln Says

A great many people agree that the government is taking from individuals in taxation wealth to which it has no right. If such is the case, then it follows that a great moral wrong is being committed. The most charitable description that can be made of such confiscatory taxation is to say that it is unethical.

But there is a method by which needed public revenue may be raised that is neither moral nor confiscatory, nor unethical. That is by the appropriation for the public use of the annual rental value of land. Strictly speaking, no tax would be involved.

Moreover, the landlord would receive immediately and directly the highly valuable privilege of holding land as against his fellow men. In addition, he would be relieved in large part, if not entirely, of his share of the taxes which now fall on the products of labor and capital.

It may be interesting to note in passing what some recognized authorities have thought of such a method of raising public revenue. THEODORE ROOSEVELT: "The burden of municipal taxation should be so shifted as to put the weight of taxation upon the unearned rise in the value of the land itself, rather than upon the improvements."

H. J. DAVENPORT, Professor of Economics, Cornell University: "It is obvious that the bare land with its contents and the waters that flow through it and about it, constitute the nature-provided environment of human beings, and are rightly the subject of their equal claims . . ."

ADAM SMITH: "A tax upon ground rent would not raise the rent of houses. It would fall altogether upon the owner of the ground rent, who acts always as monopolist and extracts the greatest rent which can be got for the use of the land."

HENRY GEORGE: "We say that it is a bad policy to tax men for what they add to the common stock of wealth . . . that the man who builds a house is doing something not merely for himself, but for the whole community; that the state should encourage industry, not discourage it; that no tax should be laid upon the industry that produces or the thrift that accumulates; that in this great fund that comes from nothing that the individual does lies the proper, the intended means of supplying all public wants. That fund we propose to take by abolishing our present taxes and laying a single tax upon the value of land irrespective of improvements."

—From the *May Lincoln Letter*