

THE ECONOMICS OF LIBERTY

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I have spent most of my life in support and study of the economic concept of the Single Tax, and one aspect of this gains greater evidence as the years go by: namely, the libertarian one, that provided any one in possession of a piece of land pays the economic rent of a site to a community fund, he could - indeed must - be permitted to put it to whatever uses he in his own judgement decides is best.

I remember occasions in debate with members of the Socialist Party, we had full agreement on land value taxation up to the point where the implementation of such a tax meant the repeal of all state paternalistic legislation and the rejection of trade union domination of labour. I then realised the confrontation involved was the ideological political concept of those who would be Caesar and set themselves up as little tin gods over men.

Of recent years, legislation has been enacted which dictates where and how we should live. In particular the zoning and planning of land use by authoritarian decree, all because some people's ideas are acceptable and others are not. My concern is that under the influence of this belief there appear to be among members of the Single Tax movement some support for the control of land use.

What appears to be overlooked is that given a just economic order of society, the existence of tension between conflicting ideas and outlook will diminish. Indeed, the answer to the problem of racial bias is the ability of the individual to segregate - in other words, the freedom of association.

Of course, authoritarian planning does not prevent a valuation of the economic rent of land for taxation purposes, but neither does it do so under unrestricted private land ownership. I would sooner have the despotism of the latter than the totalitarianism of the former. I can well remember the protest of the late Arthur Madsen (secretary of the United Committee) at a conference introducing the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 in Great Britain. Rising from his seat he proclaimed, "This means the Police State!"