



Mr. Meehan states in his letter (September HGN) that New York City is an exception to the general principle that confiscation of economic rent will extirpate poverty and free the masses now oppressed by the unequal distribution of wealth.

The law of rent is a natural law which operates uniformly under all conditions, consequently the more populous the society is, the greater the production of wealth will be, and the greater will be the amount of wealth which LVT will dispose to society. And this, I am sure, is the only view under which New York City can be considered as an exception. For application of the land value tax in such a city will render to society an enormous amount of wealth now appropriated by a portion of its members. But how will one exempt New York from LVT while considering San Francisco, Chicago, London, Paris and Tokyo as capable of benefiting from it?

As far as land availability is concerned, I disagree with Mr. Meehan's opinion that there will not be any stimulation to it incurred by LVT. Though I have never been in New York, any picture of any part of it convinces me that there is plenty of space. Multi-storied buildings emerge here and there, but the rest of the land is covered with relatively low constructions. Has this latter land reached its highest point of exploitation or will it not be available to anyone willing to construct a multi-storied building? How then will it be possible for the present landowner to afford a tax calculated, not on the revenue that his lot will yield to him, but on the revenue that this same lot will be capable of yielding to anybody else? Today

building height determines the amount of tax. Under LVT the situation will be reversed. The amount of the tax will determine the number of the stories to be built and landowners will tend to raise the greatest possible number to achieve the lowest cost per story. It will be the result of a natural law, with the only "insuperable and complex problem" being one of technique. Is a two-hundred-storied building impossible? Would it have been possible in the early forties, to forecast the release of nuclear energy?

Mr. Meehan believes "rural areas are ideal applications for LVT." But if we agree that LVT aims at the extirpation of poverty, and note that society consists also of towns and cities, are all city dwellers to be condemned to poverty?

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A letter from Noah D. Alper reminds me of a convention in Montreal, Canada, in 1880, where I met Henry George. In the years after 1880 I became an ardent admirer of George and the single tax theory. When George ran for mayor of New York I made speeches for him but I was glad he was not elected. He could not as mayor have done great service for the city. His defeat gave him time to educate the world, re taxation.

In "Meriwether's Weekly," published in Memphis by my brother and me (1880 to 1883) we often published pieces about George and the single tax.

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[*Mr. Meriwether is a neighbor of Noah Alper's in St. Louis, who, in his second century, is writing another book about his experiences and travels. He met many heads of state, and was active in labor organization.*]