

## Cuba

**E**VARISTO MONTALVO, of Cienfuegos, Cuba, has circulated in Spanish the article below which is translated into English for readers of LAND AND FREEDOM.

### LAND AND FATHERLAND. A DISCUSSION OF A NATIONAL PROBLEM

The question of the sovereignty of the Isle of Pines is again before us. According to the information we have at hand, on that island about ninety per cent of the land holders are American citizens, also ninety per cent of the inhabitants. The land owners of the Isle of Pines are anxious that this territory become a part of the United States. Why? For sentimental reasons? Do they believe that the government of the United States will give them better protection than the Cuban government? We think not. The Americans of the Isle of Pines realize that under the American sovereignty their lands will double in value principally because the products of the island will then enter free of customs duties into the great market of the United States. Here we clearly see a case where a social benefit is reflected in an increase in land values. With a change of government these landlords would become rapidly rich. But would this addition to wealth be the result of any effort on their part? No. This wealth would constitute what some economists call "unearned increment."

The problem brought forth now with respect to the Isle of Pines is the same as will be presented relative to the whole Cuban Republic in the near future. Rapidly, landed property is passing into foreign hands, and likewise, although perhaps in another form, the day will come when a change of sovereignty will be urged by those interested in appropriating that "unearned increment."

With a slight effort of the imagination let us suppose that all of the land of the Cuban Republic belonged to a great and powerful American corporation. According to our laws would such a corporation, as a land owner, have the right to expel the inhabitants? Probably a wise corporation would not commit an act so violent as it would operate perhaps against its own interests, but it could, and probably would, compel the Cubans to vote for such laws as might be to its interest, for the reason that the non-land owners would of necessity have to beg permission to use the land, the only means of obtaining their subsistence. In order to live at all, they could be forced to sell their patrimony for a mess of pottage.

The sovereignty of the Isle of Pines, or of the whole Island of Cuba, as long as private property in land is tolerated, will be a hollow sovereignty, uncertain and full of dangers for the people. In order to secure and preserve true sovereignty we must consider the land as the inalienable property of the community. At this point our readers will exclaim, "a proposition socialistic and revolutionary."

On the contrary. The methods proposed to gain this end are neither revolutionary nor socialistic, but conservative and individualistic.

Have we been so fortunate as to arouse the attention of our readers? We hope so. For this reason we will try to bring before you more extensively a doctrine, although an old one, perhaps little known by our legislators and economists.

EVARISTO MONTALVO Y LEBLANC.

In a communication to LAND AND FREEDOM Mr. Montalvo writes:

"The Cuban people, chiefly for patriotic and sentimental reasons, are deeply interested in maintaining Cuban sovereignty over their little island, and I have taken advantage of these circumstances to write a series of articles which attempt to bring before the public the Single Tax Philosophy in connection with the integrity of the sovereignty of small and weak nationalities.

In Cuba during the Spanish regime when titles to land were more widely distributed among the people in small parcels, the social and economic effects of private land tenure were not so readily felt or perceived as at present where large holdings are operated or held idle for speculation in the interests of huge corporations and in a country inhabited by a race long accustomed to gaining a livelihood by tilling the soil.

The native "guajire" or Cuban peasant, once owner of his little farm cultivated by himself and family and upon which he erected his humble thatch hut or "bohio," is rapidly disappearing, to be replaced by the "peon," a sort of wandering Bedouin without a home, family or ambition.

The Cubans fought and bled for many years to gain their independence, but the advantages won by political freedom have all tended towards an increase in the value of land, which is mostly all held in large tracts by foreign corporations.

If there is a country that needs a revision of land laws it is Cuba."

### BUT IT IS TRUE, IS IT NOT?

Which reminds us that the State of New York is talking of building a new armory so that it can abandon the Seventh Avenue Arsenal in New York City.

The Arsenal site has become so valuable that State officials feel they cannot afford to use it. The land cost \$20,000 when bought about 35 years ago. Today it is worth \$750,000.

(We almost regret having said anything about real estate, because we know we'll receive letters from a score of Single Taxers asking us if we don't know these valuations are social creations and not due to anything done by the owners; that the people as a whole must pay the interest, and so forth ad infinitum.)—*Cleveland Press*.