

# No Contradictions, Please

by J. J. POT

HENRY GEORGE taught us to take nothing for granted. So the best way for us to honor him is to think for ourselves—not to follow blindly but to examine his works critically if we wish to further the cause.

When we speak of "common ownership" (confiscation of rent) and "leaving a percentage"—a contradiction occurs. If you argue that the economic rent belongs to the community and then suggest leaving a percentage to the landowners, your argument loses validity.

Taxation of rent must be increased just as we abolish other taxes, wrote Henry George. As long as you leave a diminishing part of the rent to the landowners you renounce your principle and defeat your case. The rent belongs to the people—not a part, but the whole. Not in the future, but now.

Today's constitution is wrong. Whose fault is this? Henry George said, good faith gives no right or claim whatever. But this is no argument. Without good faith a society "living together" is impossible. But even this is beside the point. Buying land for money is legal, and has been for centuries. It is the law that sanctions the conversion of money into land, and vice versa. It's the law that is wrong. This has nothing to do with good faith.

And who made the law — government, parliament, the people? Who then has to pay for the mistake? Not the legal landowner, not the poor widow, but the people who voted for

it. So the state has to convert the land into money (or bonds), that is, it has to buy the land from the landowners.

At this moment the benefit for the landowner and the community is zero. The landowner who wishes to continue owning his land has to pay a rent that equals the interest, and the community has to pay interest that equals the rent. But at the same instant our goal is attained. The land is "common property," the rent goes to the common treasury, and all the benefits summed up by Henry George are at once realized.

Now the people have to suffer payment of the debt! For years they will be fined to pay taxes (as usual) to pay for their mistake — to pay the interest and redemption of the bonds until, with the increased prosperity of the community and increased rents, the bonds will be paid off.

The price which the community will pay for the land is easy to ascertain. Ask the owner what rent he is willing to pay after conversion, and give him a bond with interest equaling this rent. Notice that switching land for bonds under this condition is not inflationary. The land is taken out of circulation, without dislocation or shock — it can be done at once or little by little, and no change of law is needed.

If Henry George had not written *Progress and Poverty* we would today not have had the opportunity of thinking on these things and contributing to community betterment through the application of his principles.

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irresponsible, prolific breeding, which is often the result of despair. Equally far from exploding in numbers and

from dying out, mankind would have established a harmony between its growth and its economic and social evolution.