

The Pressure of Truth

The Honorable A. W. Roebuck, writing from The Senate, Ottawa, Canada, sent the following message to be read at the 75th anniversary banquet in New York on May fifteenth:

WE have reached the seventy-fifth anniversary of the publication of *Progress and Poverty*, and what have we to show in the practical application of the principles advocated to demonstrate the truth of Mr. George's economic philosophy? We have tremendous things to show!

The Continent of North America is the greatest producing country in the world, with the highest standard of living. While much is left to be desired, the people of North America are well fed, well clothed and housed, and are individually bold, independent and free.

The Continent of Asia is a low producer and, generally speaking, the masses of the people are in abject poverty.

Both continents are fertile and enjoy the same sunshine and rich natural resources. Why, then, the difference in the well being of the people? Much might be said an answer, but let me tell you the outstanding explanation. In America, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Circle, wherever there is municipal organization, land is assessed on the basis of its selling *value* and is taxed irrespective of whether it is improved or vacant and whether it is used or unused at anywhere from three to five per cent annually. Thus natural resources located within municipal boundaries cannot be held idle and unproductive indefinitely, and is thus continually urged into productive use.

The Continent of Asia is a landlord's paradise, in which there is no such universal system of land taxation. The landlords are very generally tax free. Without the compelling urge of an annually recurring land value tax, the land holder is under no compulsion to make profitable use of his natural resources. Competition among owners for users is little or no factor in holding down prices and rents and, in consequence, poverty-stricken tenants are rack-rented to within an inch of their lives.

New Zealand is a land of happy homes. No unemployment and a high standard of living. Egypt is a land of hovels and palaces, in which the workers live and die in poverty. New Zealand collects a considerable portion of her municipal and national budget from land values. In Egypt only the poor pay taxes.

I could continue to give illustrations; the world is full of them. They prove beyond question that human welfare in civilized communities is dependent on land value taxation, as is so clearly taught in *Progress and Poverty*. Mr. George's teachings have been a powerful force throughout these seventy-five years in promoting the taking of economic rent for public purposes and the pressure of his truth will continue to grow in the coming years as knowledge and experience broadens.