

increased. That which goes to rent, though, has not been diminished, so the increase in wages evidently comes out of interest.

If this conclusion is justifiable, then the assertion of the Oregon professor takes on new value. It would be interesting if, after all these years, the Henry George theory would come in for serious thought on part of those who teach taxation at the schools.

At present a change has been worked in one phase of land value. A few years ago bankers discovered that land is not a liquid asset, and far more serious, that the value of land is subject to violent fluctuation, and consequently not the dependable basis for credit it had been held. Along with which goes the revolt of the land owner, especially the farmer, against the burden now laid on the land in the form of taxation. Seligman's dictum, that the tax should be laid where it can be most certainly collected, with due regard to ability to pay, marked land as the primal object of the tax gatherer.

Now, with an effort general to shift some of the burden of taxation from land to other forms of property, and particularly to income, the statement of Dr. Wilcox adds importantly to the discussion.

—Editorial, Omaha *Bee-News*.

IT is unendurable that great increments, great additions, that have not been earned by those to whom they accrue, and have been formed by the industry of others, should be absorbed by people who have not contributed to that increase.—JOHN MORLEY.

CORRESPONDENCE

VALUE AND PRICE

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

Your issue for Sept-Oct. contains a letter from George White in criticism of James R. Brown's booklet, "Pyramiding Land Values." Mr. White's apparent position is so curious that I must be cautious in assuming that I have understood it rightly. His thesis seems to be as there is no way of escaping the payment of economic rent it may as well be paid to landowners as to the community treasury; in other words, that it makes no difference to the worker whether he pays economic rent in addition to taxes, or instead of taxes. If I am wrong in my interpretation I may be doing an injustice to Mr. White, but if I have correctly stated his position, then I must distrust his mental processes.

I think Mr. Brown's pamphlet is open to one criticism, but upon an entirely different basis. He calls it *Pyramiding Land Values*. I know of no way in which this can be done; but speculators can and do pyramid *land prices* to the incalculable damage of labor and industry. The confusion of these two terms is a common and serious obstacle to the understanding, and hence to the progress of our cause; and I am surprised that a veteran expounder like Mr. Brown should have been guilty of it.

New York City.

CHARLES T. ROOT.

KIND WORDS FROM AUSTRALIA

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

I look forward to every issue of *LAND AND FREEDOM*. The record of your activities is an inspiration to us here as no doubt it is to colleagues

all over the globe. Here, as never before within my memory, we are getting a hearing. The request for information and literature continually grows.

Our delirious protectionist policy has landed us in acute difficulties. The promised land of the protectionists recedes with every wild rush we have made towards it. While the great mass, unfortunately, is still wedded to its idols, an increasing number of dupes are awakening to the absurdity of the superstition.

The world generally exhibits the bankruptcy of the politicians and again supplies irrefutable evidence of the futility of trying to disregard natural economic laws.

May you long be spared to carry on the valuable educative work in which you have been engaged for so many years.

Homebush, N.S.W., Australia.

STANLEY V. LARKIN.

HOW INGERSOLL WOBBLED

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

A little while ago, I came across a lecture delivered by that great agnostic, Robert G. Ingersoll, in 1886. Here are some of the things he said. They are interesting in view of the conclusion that he reached.

"No man should be allowed to own any land that he does not use."

"I have owned a great deal of land, but I know just as well as I know I am living that I should not be allowed to have it unless I use it."

"Now, the land belongs to the children of Nature. Nature invites into this world every babe that is born."

"What would you think of me, for instance, tonight, if I had invited you here and when you got here you had found one man pretending to occupy a hundred seats, another fifty, and another seventy-five and thereupon you were compelled to stand—what would you think of the invitation?"

"Every child of Nature is entitled to his share of the land, and he should not be compelled to beg the privilege to work the soil of a babe that happened to be born before him."

"It is not to our interest to have a few landlords and millions of tenants."

And then he says:—

"I would not take an inch of land from any human being that belongs to him. If we ever take it, we must pay for it—condemn it and take it—do not rob anybody. When a man advocates justice, and robbery as the means, I suspect him."

Here is a strange mingling of thought and thoughtlessness. What he said in substance is this: Every one is entitled to his share of the land provided he buys it at the market price from a fictitious owner. "Don't rob anybody" may be good advice, but the present owners of land trace their titles to men who were not so particular.

Whoever advocated taking land away from the ones it belongs to? The question is, "To whom does the land rightfully belong?"—land that Nature created and that the presence of people made valuable.

Thomas Paine was regarded by Ingersoll as a most profound thinker, but apparently Ingersoll is not willing to follow in his views on the land question. Paine, at least, was consistent. He trod the path that reason lit and was not frightened because it led to a conclusion that run counter to the prevailing prejudice.

Here is what he said:—

"The Deity created the earth. . . and any one who would show good title to land must trace his title to the Deity."

And then he added,

"So far as I know, the Deity never opened a land office from which title deeds were issued."

The fact of the matter is that no one wants to take any land away from anyone. All we say is that payment of a so-called purchase price to an illegitimate owner is no reason for failure to pay legitimate owner—the community—the fair rental value of the land used.

Cleveland, Ohio.

JAMES EUGENE OLIVER.