

An Appeal and a Petition

[George T. Tideman of Chicago drew up the following document and received a number of signatures among Chicago Georgists. The petition is addressed to the people and law makers of our state and nation.]

THE world is divided between those who like and want communism and those who abhor and fear it. While we are fighting communists abroad and baiting them at home, what good is it if we neglect to make firm the foundation of capitalism?

The cold fact is that communism has risen to its present position of power and advantage because there are, inherent in the social fabric of every nation, economic forces which tend irresistably to spawn evils: poverty marching along with our amazing material progress. While we stand aghast at the horrors of the Communist State we close our eyes or are blind to the decay in our own way of life which is the very cause of the rise of communism. To avoid facing up to this circumstance is inviting fate to come and destroy us. The Communists know this. Perhaps that is why they gladly bide their time.

The evil of land monopoly is being demonstrated by the U. S. S. R. There the state owns all the land and the people are divested even of the prerogative of protest. To protest in Russia is a capital offense. The strike of the worker is put down with artillery and the bayonet. Elections are so conducted as to be a fraud and an insult to the electorate. Having refined land monopoly to the ultimate of a single owner the tyranny of the Kremlin is the perfect demonstration of the iniquity of land monopoly.

Those who enjoy the privilege of land holding owe society something for that privilege and ought to pay to society the full market value of that privilege . . . This would put all on equal terms with respect to land use and give us the earth itself as a foundation for a competitive capitalism. On the other hand, measures to alleviate and palliate the condition of the unprivileged, as said John Stuart Mill, do not merely produce small effects; they produce no effect at all. Their effect is to cause the state to invade the private affairs of the people and this leads to a long line of usurpations up the road to state control, again the Communists' heaven.

To abandon freedom is to invite slavery and the only contention left then is to determine who shall be master; Remember Beria?

Whereas the only possible solution of this problem is to be made in the separate economies of each nation, we the undersigned solemnly appeal to the people and petition the law makers of our state and nation to consider ways and means to restore to all their equal rights to the use of the surface of the earth. We would call attention to the method proposed by the economist Henry George, namely the taxation of land values to absorb the economic rent of land which would in principle be charging the holders of land the full market value of the privilege they hold. The blessings of democracy we may expect from this measure spring from the fact that land could be held only by those who make productive use of it and with unhindered access to the earth free competition would keep open to each generation the opportunities God and Nature intended for them.