

## Econo-quiz

By HENRY T. L. TIDEMAN

*Question.* Do you consider it just to take away the income of people who have acquired land through government grant or purchase?

*Answer.* Sovereignty is arbitrary. It has the power to do right and it has the power to do wrong; but it has not the right to do wrong; and those who exercise the sovereignty have the duty to do right.

What is "the government?" In our land we blithely say: "the government is the people." In the ultimate that is true. Their physical and moral force is such that once a consensus on any matter has been developed, it will usually prevail. But when discussing matters of detail that meaning no longer prevails. We sort out our ideas. The government becomes a group of people selected to cause, so far as currently can be ascertained, the common will on public matters to prevail.

Our legislature meets periodically. What for? To question the acts of previous legislatures and the administration of the laws passed by them. So we come to the gist of our question.

A land grant either by gift or purchase has been made. Let us assume a most difficult case. The grant is made with a provision for perpetual exemption from taxation. History records such grants.

If we think of government as "the people," have they made the grant? Most of them never heard of it and would be shocked if they did. Who did make the grant? It was made by hired help—those who have been chosen to legislate for the conservation of the common estate. Is the present legislature to be bound by the acts of a previous? If so, what is the present legislature for?

Fundamentally, no such thing as private ownership of land ever did or ever can exist. Land cannot be owned, either by government, by society or by persons. All that exists in this relation, is a common equal right to the use of the earth. Tenure we must have if we wish for a high civilization, and a secure tenure conditioned only upon the equal right of all.

Is not the essence of this equal right that each shall enjoy the freedom to use the earth as well as he can and enjoy the fruits of his labor? If by reason land grants and land policy the fruits of labor inure to others than the producers of them, is not the justice invoked by our questioner violated?

*No one has the right to an unearned income.*