

The Progress Of The Ages

PHENOMENA—the effectual relationships of all being and life—necessarily vary in precise proportion to the total sum of affecting causes. All changes, at least in their material aspects, seem solely consequent to physical and chemical coalescences, modifications and distributions of the inexplicably precreated elemental electrons of the Universe.

Electrons, through Nature's integrating processes, originally composed only the simplest gases, water and solids (or land). From their combined interactions appear planets, and probably at least the beginning of life, and thought. Thence are ever arising progressively the moral, social and economic levels of men, of nations and of the world.

The two previous paragraphs are intended merely to preface and emphasize the universally recognized fact that, regardless of how treated, neither air, water or land are of human creation. Being natural products, they rightfully call for very different treatment than political economy accords to human products.

The dearth of advance in general prosperity appears thus far due chiefly to the ill effects of unsound or dishonest economics. True economic laws, always for the best interests of all, must be logically grounded upon the highest types of ethic-inspired thought. Here lies the stumbling block of all nations.

In every realm of life, dependent upon capability and worth, the trend of all social and economic progress appears unmistakably toward ultimate universal equity. Regardless of inequitable statute enactments, attempted contraventions of the operation of natural laws are, in their ultimate, wholly impossible. As violations unfailingly enforce their own unescapable penalties, neither men nor nations can secure much, or wide, or long continued unfair gains through special privileges.

True and unabridged equality of economic opportunity, for all men in the Universe, must finally become the statute as well as the natural basis of all individual right of property. For every man has always possessed exclusive natural title to all fruits resultant to expenditure of his own physical and mental energies. It is equally as true that just title to all "unearned increment"—the socially-created land values produced solely by communities as a whole, and never by individuals—by like right of production as certainly belongs to the communities or states creating such values.

The foregoing declarations, regardless of all contrary statute laws, are incontrovertably sound fundamentals of both correct political economy and the highest related concepts of moral conduct. Far-reaching in their possibilities, they are supremely wise and altruistically practical. So long as correctly based politico-economic laws are flaunted, maximum general prosperity is impossible and

both domestic and international peace must rest upon a precarious basis.

In proportion as true economic laws are disregarded, as national population pressures increase per square mile, general prosperity must decrease. And, so-called semi-recurring "business cycles," or "economic depressions," will eventually be found to be plainly needless results rather than mysterious unavoidable causes.

Enormous absorptions and wasteful expenditures of the people's farm and factory products, now exalted as taxes chiefly levied upon all productive and distributive interests and applied to public purposes, especially when devoted to roads and streets, advance land values only. All such enhancements in land values constitute a public liability, upon which the prevailing rent and interest rates must be individually met annually by perpetual indirect taxes that are reflected in increased costs of production to every productive interest.

Truly correct as the idea certainly is, all hoped-for general economic gains to the people incident to a state manufacturing and consuming its own raw products, the gain is ultimately absorbed in economic rent, with no possible gain to any productive, distributive, or constructive professional interests.

Herein may be most clearly seen the fundamental cause of unnecessarily high costs of every constructive interest and of living, which must be met finally by consumers.

To tax individually-produced products and business at the same rate as unearned increment (as is the rule under the "general property tax"), is to unfairly augment all costs of living by needlessly burdening individual and corporate production. And, only holders of title to unearned increment can be the gainers. By still further exempting from taxation the relative proportions of communally-produced land values (the rightful earnings of communities and states), all political sub-divisions of government are unwittingly accentuating grave errors of economic folly.

Such land-value tax exemptions, being favorable only to non-producers, necessitate the heaping of additional needless burdens upon production and distribution. These discriminations, by the ever increasing land-values and land rents exclusive of improvements, tend toward artificially advancing the cost of every factor of production and distribution. Every productive business is thus discouraged in exact proportion to the credulousness of a people temporarily permitting such economic injustice.

For communities and states to take by taxation as great proportion of the population-produced increment of land-values as actual costs of government may require, leaving all labor products, productive business, incomes and improvements untaxed, appears to be the only equitable method of deriving adequate, naturally-produced revenues for every sub-division of government.

This simple method untaxes all constructive business. Here seems to be the remedy—the only possible construc-

tive cure—for periodic “business depressions” and so-called “profitless profits.” Only in this direction appears to lie the surest pathway to the truest and greatest progress of the ages.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox has aptly said:

“To sit in silence, when we should protest,
Makes cowards out of men. The human race
Has climbed on protest. Had no voice been raised
Against injustice, ignorance and lust,
The Inquisition yet would serve the law
And guillotines decide our least disputes.”

—K. P. ALEXANDER.

Land Values

WHEN Judge Gary's father reached Chicago, landing at Fort Dearborn in 1831, he had \$1,000, but carefully refrained from investing it along the lake front, says the Portland *Realtor*. Someone tried to “unload” a lake front farm on him for \$1,000. But Erastus Gary, father of the steel king, couldn't be caught with that proposition; “the land,” he said, “will never be of value.”

If the old gentleman had invested his thousand dollars in lake front land and kept it, that one farm now would be worth \$100,000,000 and a great deal more.

When you invest in real estate, especially if you intend to keep it for your children, as you should do, remember that the value of your land is created by people; human beings create land value.

A gold mine or an oil well may make land valuable temporarily. But permanent value comes from human life.

If a man asks you what you think such a piece of land is worth, you ask how many people pass by it on foot, the kind of people, rich or poor, what would that land be worth for a house to live in. Ask how much merchandise could be sold in a store on that corner and what kind of merchandise. Land on which you can sell pig iron has one value. Land on which you can sell diamonds or cigars has a higher value.

But human beings give all the real value in the long run.

The little fort built on the edge of Lake Michigan to keep out the Indians becomes a city of millions. The farm that could be bought for a thousand dollars becomes worth a hundred million and three times that.

And the gigantically increased value goes to the man that owns the land, although he may not have added anything to that value.

—Pasadena (Calif.) *Star-News*.

Will Atkinson Abridgements

WILL ATKINSON has placed in our hands a large quantity of his abridgements of “Progress and Poverty” and “The Land Question.” These will be sent while they last at 2 cents each in quantities of fifty or one hundred.

What the Great Have Said of the Land Rights of Men

YOU recently published a letter from a Single Taxer who, discouraged by the slight effect he has seen from his preaching of that Gospel, begins to doubt as to whether he is right and asks your opinion. You tell him that long, human experience has shown the Single Tax to be wrong.

Now, Mr. Editor, I hate to destroy your simple faith in the righteousness of things as they are as to earth-ownership, but I must remind you that many hoary wrongs—slavery for instance—had been just as universally accepted as land-ownership and for a longer period, and yet have gone into the discard as immoral. And to strengthen my compatriot's failing faith allow me to quote a few of the many things notable men have had to say on this subject.

“The earth He hath given to the children of men”

“The land shall not be sold for ever.”—*Holy Writ*.

“The earth is given to mankind in common.”—JOHN LOCKE.

“Those who make private property of the gift of God pretend in vain to be innocent.”—POPE GREGORY THE GREAT.

“The land of every country belongs to the people of that country.”

“No man made the land; it is the original inheritance of the whole species.”—JOHN STUART MILL.

“The earth is the common property of the human race.”—THOMAS PAINE.

“The earth is common to all.”—TOLSTOY.

“The earth is given as common stock for man to labor and live on.”

“The earth belongs in usufruct to the living, the dead have neither power nor right over it.”—THOMAS JEFFERSON.

“The notion of selling the land of the World-Creator is a ridiculous impossibility.”—THOMAS CARLYLE.

“Land is not and cannot be property.”—FROUDE.

“Landlords are the only great body of men whose interest is diametrically opposed to the interest of the nation.”—H. S. BUCKLE.

“Equity does not permit property in land.”

“The right of mankind at large to the earth's surface is still valid, all deeds, customs and laws to the contrary notwithstanding.”—HERBERT SPENCER.

“My reason teaches me the land cannot be sold.”—BLACK HAWK.

“The land belongs to all for the use of each.”—TECUMSEH.

“Every proprietor of land owes to the community a ground rent.”—THOMAS PAINE.

“If all men were tenants to the public it would put an end to taxes and leave never a beggar.”—WM. PENN.

“A tax on ground rent would not raise the rent of houses.”—ADAM SMITH.