

LESSON

VII

IS THERE A TRUE REMEDY?

"The association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times—it is the riddle which the Sphinx of fate puts to our civilization, and which, not to answer, is to be destroyed."—HENRY GEORGE, "Progress and Poverty."

"Whenever there is in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right."—THOMAS JEFFERSON in Ford's "Writings of Jefferson."

WE BEGAN OUR INQUIRY WITH THE QUESTION: "WHY does poverty accompany progress and increasing want come with advancing wealth?" We have shown the answer to be: because, not only does the private appropriation of rent tend to absorb the increased product resulting from material progress, but, at the same time, the privilege of privately appropriating rent, by inducing speculation in land and the consequent holding of valuable opportunities out of use, operates to make this increased production *far* less than it would otherwise be.

What is the remedy?

Tariffs and labor unions, socialism and communism, fascism, nazism, the New Deal, etc., etc. have

been proposed (and some of them tried) as remedies. Even if any of these could solve our economic problem, each includes as a part of its program something which is worse than poverty—a curtailment of the liberty of the individual. An economic system is possible, however, that not only would not curtail the liberty of the individual but that would increase his liberty far beyond anything he now has or has known since very primitive times. At the same time it would make undeserved poverty, low wages and unemployment impossible. To the discussion of this remedy we will now turn our attention.

Carlyle said: "The hell an Englishman fears most is the hell of poverty." Probably this is true not only of Englishmen but of all men. Nowhere in the history of savage tribes do we find a record of such poverty or fear of poverty as we find in our modern civilization. A savage tribe may suffer want because of drought, hurricane, war, or because of ignorance, or from some other general cause; but when there is plenty for all, then every member of the tribe who is willing to work will have plenty. Poverty in civilized countries, however, is worse where wealth is the most abundant. The wealth of New Jersey, for instance, is estimated to equal \$3,415.00 for every man, woman and child in the State; yet in New Jersey, as in other states, there are hundreds of thousands who have nothing of their own with which to buy food, nor places of their own to lay their heads.

Suppose a visitor were to come to the earth from some other planet—someone with a logical mind, unbiased by precedent or prejudice—would he not think it very strange to find, all over the civilized world, that the poor man is a workingman? (Which does not necessarily mean that every workingman is a poor man.) In view of

the fact that all of the wealth in the world is produced by labor, and only by labor, it would seem logical to expect the workingmen to own and to live in the finest of homes and to have the most of everything labor produces. Instead, if we wished to find that section of any city having the largest percentage of homes of working people, we would always look for the poorer sections of that city. We have become so accustomed to seeing others get what Labor produces that, unless the condition is very extreme, it even seems the natural thing to expect.

We have seen that it is not excessive population, nor the use of machinery that makes work scarce, and that neither of these accounts for low wages, unemployment or poverty. We have seen that: (1) man is a land animal—his very life depending on what he produces from the land; (2) that which prevents Labor from producing abundantly is the necessity of working on poor land; and (3) that which takes from Labor much of what it does produce is the price which must be paid for access to land for an opportunity to work.

It is not many years since the man who did not succeed was an exception. He was called a "ne'er do well" and looked on with more or less scorn, because where land is free, poverty is usually the result of laziness or incompetency. Today the man who does succeed is the exception. He is referred to as a "well-to-do" man and is regarded with envy. But a careful examination will show that practically no great fortune consists of wages saved, nor of earnings on capital; practically every one of these vast fortunes is made up of returns received through the ownership of some special privilege, and the greatest of all special privileges is the privilege of owning land.

We have seen: on the average, land in every progres-

sive community tends to rise in value, even though there may be temporary recessions; but while land values progressively increase, the number of land-owners, relatively, progressively decreases: i.e., land gravitates into fewer and fewer hands. This not only causes great wealth amid great poverty, but eventually, if the process be carried far enough, it destroys governments and civilizations as well; for when the land of any country comes to be held by a small percentage of its people, the landless gradually have forced on them the realization that the benefits they receive from the society in which they live are not worth the price they must pay for these benefits; i.e., the return they get for their labor is no true compensation for the energy they must exert and the liberties they have lost.

When that time comes, these landless people become hopeless, and then indifferent or even antagonistic to their government. More and more they come to feel their condition could not be much worse and, possibly, with a changed government it might be better. Then the enemies of that government find the way open for its overthrow. If the disaffection be sufficiently deep and widespread, the existing civilization itself will decline.

The fall of Rome was not caused by barbarians from without, as is generally believed. Her fall was brought about by an economic condition within the Roman State that caused the great majority of its people to feel that what they had was not worth fighting for. In the height of her glory the proudest boast a man could make was that he was a Roman Citizen; shortly before the fall, being a Roman Citizen meant a chance to get free bread and circuses, and even this privilege finally had to be shared with the slaves. What caused this change? A

thousand years ago Pliny answered this question when he wrote: "Great estates ruined Italy."

Historians tell us that when Rome fell her land was owned by 2% of her people; when Greece fell, less than 3% of her people were land-owners; Persia had already gone down when her land was held by 2% of her people; and Egypt perished from the same cause—though in her case not until the land-owning portion of the population had been reduced to 1%. In modern history, we find that before the French Revolution (1789) less than 1% of the people of France owned more than 50% of the land of France. In Russia before the revolution (1916) the Czar owned one-third of the land, and the nobility owned another third. In this world of cause and effect cannot the same cause be expected always to produce the same result? Consider the troublous condition of the whole world today in the light of these figures:

		POPULATION	
1932	England	44,790,485	1/10 of 1% own 3/4 of land, 2% own all, 44,000,000 own none
1932	Scotland	4,842,554	3.6% own all the land, 4,668,000 own none
1932	Ireland	4,390,219	1.4% own all the land, 4,328,000 own none
1932	Italy	43,000,000	4% own 3/4 of the land, 40,000,000 own none
1932	Poland	34,000,000	1/20 of 1% (1800 people) own 40% of the land
1932	Germany	65,306,000	400 people own 1/10 of the country
1932	Spain	24,000,000	(before revolution) 1% owned 51.5% of the land
1936	Japan	91,793,000	1 1/2% own 50% of arable land (figures for city land different) 23,000,000 farm tenants
1910	Mexico		2% own 70% of the land (in State of Morales 2% owned 98% of the land)

Few realize what has taken place and is taking place here in the United States in the gravitation of our lands into fewer and fewer hands. Though exact percentages are not obtainable, the figures shown in the addenda on pages 218 to 222 are both enlightening and ominous.

When we realize how near the whole civilized world is coming to the point at which past civilizations have perished, we may well become alarmed for the safety of our own.

What can we do about it? The only remedy for any evil is to remove the specific cause of that evil. To spend time in trying to relieve symptoms only obscures the issue, wastes our efforts, and does no permanent good. If we wish to eliminate undeserved low wages, unemployment and the bitter struggle for a living, we must destroy private property in land. There is no other way. Until this be done, the greater part of the pecuniary benefits of every improvement in society will go to the land-owners. This *must* be so, if the economic laws as we have worked them out are correct.

When it is proposed to destroy private property in land, two questions are apt to arise:

- 1—would this not be unjust to present owners? and
- 2—is not land ownership necessary in our present day society?

Let us consider the second question first. Whenever any condition or custom has existed for a long time, then this condition or custom seems proper and natural and we hesitate to change it, especially if the change requires a change in our habits of thought. Though reason tells us that producers of wealth would be vastly benefited if

there were no private ownership of land, most of us at first shrink from the thought of abolishing the system. But if the holding of land as private property is the cause of the increasing difficulty to get a living and of the gradual decline in our liberties; if private property in land is detrimental to the welfare of humanity as a whole, and is threatening destruction of our civilization; then, not only should we be willing, we should be anxious to break with it.

If private property in land had always existed, even that would not make it necessary, or wise, or just, to continue the system after we had found it to be an evil. But as a matter of fact, the belief that all men have an equal right to the use of the earth is by far the older conception. It is only as civilizations reach a certain stage in their existence that they introduce the custom of permitting land to be held as private property—a custom which, in time, must destroy any and every nation that adopts it.

Up to the end of the fifteenth century practically all of the land of England was held in common, such enclosures as were made being admittedly temporary. Then the enclosing of great amounts of land began. It was this which started the waves of emigration toward America. When the white people reached America they found that the Indian tribes here held their land as common property—a custom still followed by the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest.

In both English and American law, to a greater or less extent, it is recognized that property in land differs from property in labor products, and that the land belongs to the people as a whole. For instance: the Constitution of the State of New York says (Article 1, Section 10):

"The people of this State are deemed to possess the original and ultimate property in and to all the lands within the jurisdiction of this State; and all lands, the title of which shall fail from defect of heirs shall revert and escheat to the people."

We have our laws of eminent domain, by which, if it be decided that the community needs land held by any individual, he can be compelled to give it up to the community whether he wishes to do so or not. Blackstone, the father of English law, wrote:

"Accurately and strictly speaking, there is no foundation in nature or in natural law, why a set of words upon parchment should convey dominion to land." (COMMENTARIES, Book 2, Chapter 1.)

Actually today no one has a good title to the land he holds. All land titles trace back to force or fraud. The first man to sell land was selling something to which he had no valid title—no just claim. Subsequent owners may have bought in good faith, but no one can buy a better title than the seller has to sell. A stolen watch may have been sold many times, but it would still belong to its original owner and he could claim it when found, though returning it to him might work a hardship on its latest purchaser.

Fundamentally, a title to land is only a franchise, granted by government, for the temporary holding of a piece of land by its owner, on terms specified by the government. This is all any government can grant, and the government retains the power to revoke this franchise, as is shown by our laws of eminent domain. A title to land can be perpetual only in the sense that it will continue in effect as long as the government which grants

it may continue. The land itself will survive the life of any government, but a title to land disappears with the government which granted it. The new government may or may not recognize grants made by the old one, as it may see fit. When California and the Southwest were annexed to the United States, our government refused to recognize many of the old Mexican land grants. The changing governments in Europe have wiped out many existing land titles, often many times.

Private property in land, then, is not so solidly built into our modern life as is commonly believed; but the harm it does is none the less real, and it must be abolished.

There is, however, a great, fundamental and vital difference between private *ownership* of land and private and exclusive *possession* of land. Without exclusive possession—security of tenure—its user could not be certain of getting the benefits of the improvements he made on that land, or the wealth there produced, and therefore he would not attempt to put the land to its best use. But, given security of tenure (and this can easily be done by lease or in some other way, without private ownership), the man who wishes to *use* land (not speculate in it) will not need to own it in the sense that he owns the improvements made on it or the wealth produced from it. Today many of our largest buildings are built on leased land. Radio City in New York City covers 12½ acres. Rockefeller, who erected and owns the buildings, owns but one of these acres, the other 11½ being owned by Columbia University; the land under the Chrysler Building is owned by Cooper Union; that under the Waldorf Astoria Hotel is owned by the New York Central Railroad; Wanamaker in 1937 signed a 99 year

lease with Sailors Snug Harbor for the land under his New York store. Similar instances abound in both city and country; many oil wells are drilled on leased land.

Those who speculate in land must own it if they are to get the profits land speculation may bring, but those whose wish to USE land do NOT need to own it if they are given a secure tenure. And it is land use which society should encourage, not land speculation.

Private ownership of land, then, is not necessary in our modern society.

Now let us consider the other question: Would it not be an injustice to present land-owners to abolish private property in land? This is the form in which the question is usually phrased, but actually the thought in the mind of the questioner usually is: Would it not be a *hardship* to present owners to abolish private property in land?

The answer to this latter phrasing is a decided No! Not only would it be no hardship to the great majority of land-holders—it would be a great benefit to them. Those who own the land of any country constitute only a small minority of the people of that country, and among this small minority the only ones (if, indeed, there be any at all) who would suffer any hardship because of such a change would be that extremely small percentage whose interests as land-owners were very much greater than their individual interests as capitalists or as laborers, or as a combination of these two.

To see why this is true we must remember that the granting of private property rights in land can and does operate to oppress producers in two ways: first, by taking from them much of what they produce without giving

anything in return, and, second (which is of far greater import), by preventing them from producing—either by forcing them to use lower grades of land than they otherwise would or by excluding them from land of any grade that will yield a living. To illustrate: suppose, as shown in diagram 19, seven men constitute a given com-

$$\text{Wages } 7 \times 5 = 35$$

	in use	in use	in use	in use	in use	in use	in use
	100	80	60	40	20	10	5
Rent	95	+ 75	+ 55	+ 35	+ 15	+ 5	= 280
							Wages 7×5 = 35
							Product (wages plus rent) = 315

No. 19

munity; suppose also that three times as many people could make a living from each of the seven grades of land as now do so; that two-thirds of each grade is held out of use, and that the 5 land is the poorest land in use. The wealth there produced would amount to 315, of which 35 would be wages, the rest going as rent.

Suppose, however, we were to abolish the system which permits the holding of land out of use or but partially used (which is the same thing to a lesser degree), those working the poorer grades of land then could move up to the better grades now idle. The expenditure of the same amount of labor as before but on the better grades of land, would almost double total production, and wages would be twelve times what they were before, with an actual decrease in the portion of the product going as rent as in diagram 20.

At first these figures may seem fantastic, but actually

they offer only a mild suggestion of the benefits which would follow if workers could use our more productive, but now idle lands. In diagram 19, only two-thirds of the land is supposed to be held out of use. Figures showing the actual amount of unused land in the United States are not available, but the following data are sig-

Wages $7 \times 60 = 420$

100	80	60				
100	80					
100	80					

Rent $(3 \times 40) + (3 \times 20) = 180$

Wages $7 \times 60 = 420$

Product (rent plus wages) = $\frac{600}{}$

No. 20

nificant, and indicate that the percentage is vastly greater than in the above illustration. First, compare our population of 41 to the square mile with that of 742 to the square mile in England (even in England one finds vast areas of unused land); and since our natural resources per square mile cannot average less than those of England, these figures alone indicate that much more than two-thirds of our land is held out of use. But consider the question from another angle: Wayne Heydecker, Director of State Planning for the State of New York, wrote in "The Freeman," Feb. 1938:

"The combined areas of all the municipalities of the United States scarcely exceed one per cent of the area of the country; and of the area of the average municipality, approximately 40% is entirely vacant. The remaining 60% includes areas devoted to streets, parks and other public uses, as well as the areas used for

privately owned structures." (These figures are corroborated by Harvard investigators.)

This does not take into account however, the lands in towns and cities which are but partially used, many of them occupied only by "taxpayers," built to produce approximately enough revenue to pay the carrying charges. In our municipalities, then, three-fifths of one per cent of the land of the nation is in use to some extent. The 1930 census gave the population of the United States as 122,775,046, but of this total, the number living "outside incorporated places" was 44,637,188, or about 35%. This means that 65% of the people in the United States live and do their business on three-fifths of one per cent of the land. This gives a vague idea of the percentage of our land that is held idle.

In estimating the difference in product as between two given grades of land we must, of course, consider the difference between the respective amounts of labor expended. Also (see p. 80n), this same factor must be considered in estimating the relation between wages and rent. Total product, less rent, divided among workers, equals average wages per worker. In No. 20 it is supposed that as much labor would be expended as in No. 19. But, if the comparison be made between, in one instance, farm land on which a given number work and, in the other instance, city land where more persons work on a given acre, results would be different as to *wages per worker*. On the farm one worker per acre might suffice while in the city several thousand might work on a given acre. Thus, it is obvious that *wages per worker* on land with rental value of a million dollars would not be a million times as much as on the one dollar land.

But this does not vitiate the basic truth illustrated, that wages would be enormously increased if producers had access to the better lands now idle. These benefits would inure to every producer, whether capitalist or laborer, and whether or not he was also a land-holder.

Does this not substantiate our answer to the question as to whether or not it would be a hardship to present land-owners to abolish private property in land? Almost universally a man's ability to earn would be so greatly increased that the advantage to him of this change would far exceed any benefit he may be able to get as a land-owner under our present system.

The proposed change could work a hardship only to those very few whose interests are overwhelmingly those of land-owners. It would bring untold benefits to practically everyone in society, including the great majority of those who themselves own land.

But the fact that a change will bring benefits to a portion of the people, however great that portion may be, does not make that change, of itself, a just one; nor is a change which brings hardship necessarily an unjust change. (The destruction of the ships and hide-outs of the old pirates was a great hardship to the pirates themselves, but this destruction was not unjust.) Therefore we come back to the question as originally phrased: "Would this change be an *injustice* to the land-owners?"

What is it that gives the holder a good title to what he holds? On what does one base one's claim when one says: "This is mine"?

Our Constitution assumes, and the great majority of our people believe, that an individual belongs to himself. His energies and all his powers belong to him, and only to him, just as truly as do his hands and feet, be-

cause they are a part of him. We have seen that in order for a man to live, his energies must be exerted on land, for however productive a given location may be, potentially, a man can get nothing from it without labor. "By the sweat of the brow shalt thou earn thy bread" was not a curse put on man but a simple statement of a natural order.

When John Smith has taken something from the land and worked it up into something to satisfy some human desire, that thing which he has made is no longer just land. It is land to which John Smith's energy has been applied. He has put into the making of that object a part of himself, and this differentiates that object from everything else in the world—and makes it logically the property of John Smith. Unless John Smith belongs to some one else, that which John Smith makes by the expenditure of his energy must properly belong to him.

This expenditure of energy in producing an object is the only basis for a just claim to the ownership of that object. In order to have a just title to anything one must have produced it, or obtained it in exchange for something one did produce or for services rendered, or must have received it as a gift from one having just title.

Who is there, or what is there, that can give a just title to land? Man never produced land, nor could he, by the utmost exertion of his energies. Land exists regardless of man and would continue to exist even if mankind were destroyed.

Nor does any one individual create land value. Land value comes as the result of men forming themselves into communities, and it arises automatically, without anyone giving any thought to it. Land value is a by-product of social life, and its amount will be fixed by the relation

between the demand for any given kind of land and the amount of that particular kind of land that is available. Every newcomer into a community increases the potential demand for land in that community, and hence tends to increase its value. If the people were all to leave a given locality, its land value would decrease, or disappear entirely.

If land is not produced by man, if land value arises solely because of the presence and activities of the community as a whole, and if property rights are not to exceed their just limits, then neither land nor land value can properly belong to any individual or to any group of individuals.

Everyone comes into this world willy-nilly and brings with him, from an economic point of view, just one thing—the ability to labor. He finds here a world upon which he can, and upon which he must, work to satisfy his desires. It inevitably follows, then, that every man has a just claim and an equal claim with every other man to the use of as much of this world as may be necessary for him to use to make his living.

The remark is often heard that “the world owes every man a living.” This is not correctly stated. If truly worded, the phrase would be: “the world owes everyone an opportunity to work for his living; and no individual is entitled to have a better opportunity to earn a living than has any of his fellows.”

Equality of opportunity to earn a living is impossible so long as private property in land is permitted; because, if man can justly own land in the same way that he can own labor products, he can justly demand from another payment for permission to use the land. This would mean that the land-owner could get wealth without pro-

ducing it, and that, consequently, the other would produce wealth only to have some of it taken from him without receiving anything in return. In such a transaction one would benefit at the expense of the other; certainly this would not be compatible with equal opportunity.

If, justly, one portion of the earth's surface can become the property of one individual, there is no logical reason why other portions also cannot be owned by the same or by other individuals. This would mean that there would be no injustice if the whole of the earth's surface were owned by one or by a few individuals, though this would mean that only the land-owners would have any legal, or just, right on the earth at all. The landless would all be trespassers, and if the land-owners saw fit, they could deny them standing room on the earth.

In 1536 Henry VIII enclosed much of the common land of England in order to make estates for his favorites. Those who had been using these commons were driven off, and were hung and branded by the thousands for being vagrants and beggars. One historian* speaks of "the enormous increase in petty crimes during the reign of Henry VIII." He tells of 72,000 who were hung as great or petty thieves; of 60,000 thrown into jail for debt; and of "numbers impossible to count" who were punished for begging. One punishment for begging was to be branded by burning through the ear. Begging, debt and stealing were "grievous burdens of the State"; but how were these thousands of people to live after being

*Hon. Justice Stephens, quoted in *The Evolution of Landlordism* by James Philpott (London: Co-op Printing Society, 1899), pp. 35, 42-3.

driven from the lands they had been using—lands which were taken from them to give to the king's favorites! Some of these same lands now constitute the center of London and form the basis of England's greatest fortunes.

We think: "How terrible!" Yet today we have our own millions who likewise have been excluded from the land. Their exodus does not seem so dramatic here where it has come about gradually as when it was brought about by a king's decree and enforced by armies which could be seen and hated; but the resulting suffering is just as real. Thus far, we have been feeding our dispossessed peoples by taxing those who produce, but when this can no longer be done because of the limits of taxation having been reached—what then?

History consistently tells us that any nation that permits inequality of opportunity among its citizens must, if for no other reason, sooner or later perish. Private appropriation of rent spells inequality of opportunity. Therefore, any nation that permits private appropriation of rent must, if for no other reason, sooner or later perish. Self-interest, aside from all else, demands justice.

For men to live, wealth must be produced; to produce wealth, men must use land; therefore, in order for all men to have equal opportunity to live, all men must have equal opportunity of access to land, from which to make a living. Opportunity of access to the earth is as essential for life as is access to air.

Few, though, realize that if one cannot use land without paying another for permission to do so, one is no longer a free man. If A can compel B to give him 50% of all B produces to get access to land upon which to work (which really means for an opportunity to live) then 50% of B's time and energy belong to A. To that

extent, B is as truly compelled to work for the benefit of A as if he were, in the eye of the law, A's slave for one-half the time.

✓ If chattel slavery is unjust, then is private property in land unjust; for so long as we permit private ownership of land, the fact that Labor must use land in order to live, will tend to give mastery by the land-owner on the one hand, and to cause a corresponding helplessness of the landless on the other. As we have seen, wages fall while rents rise, and when even the poorer lands become difficult or impossible to secure at a price which will ✓ leave Labor a decent living, then competition for jobs among producers will force them to give up all but the bare necessities in return for permission to use the land. Their condition, then, is often worse than that of a chattel slave, though they are called free men.

The essence of chattel slavery lies in the power it gives the master to take from the slave everything he produces. But even the worst master will not take everything the slave produces because he will want the slave and his children to work for him in the future. Though the master has power to take all the slave produces, even the most degraded slave under the hardest of masters would have left to him the necessities of life. A similar power arises from allowing private property in land, and it is no exaggeration to call the resulting condition of the worker one of economic slavery. If we were again to legalize chattel slavery, who would now buy slaves when men can be hired so cheaply and without responsibility for their upkeep while they are growing, or when they are old, or sick, or, for any reason, unable to work? We did not need the Civil War to destroy chattel slavery. Our changing economic conditions would have de-

stroyed it and replaced it with economic slavery, for it soon would have become cheaper to hire men than to breed and support them.

We assume that we are a free people, each free to work as he likes and to enjoy what he earns. But are we? To drop a man in the middle of the ocean and then tell him he is free to swim ashore in any direction he likes would be no less ironic than it is to tell him he is free to work at what he likes and that his success depends on his own efforts, when he has no place to work. That a people can be enslaved just as effectually by taking their lands away from them, as by making property of their bodies, is a truth which has been recognized by the conquerors of all ages.

We did not abolish slavery when we adopted the Fourteenth Amendment; we only abolished one of its cruder forms. To truly abolish slavery we must abolish private property in land. ✓

No, there would be no injustice in the abolition of private property in land. To the contrary, the whole human race must suffer injustice until it is abolished. ✓

But, as before stated, it is not the land-owners, as such, who are responsible for the results of the system of private property in land. Our ills must be charged to land-owning as an institution. Land titles are not based on justice, through production of the thing owned, as is a title to labor products. The land-owner can hold his title only so long as his claim is upheld by the government. Land titles in the beginning were based only on force; and today they are continued only by force. But force can be applied in any society only so long as public opinion assents or is indifferent. Therefore it is the public which supports a government in granting and upholding

the privilege of private property in land that is responsible for its resulting ills.

The poor as well as the wealthy, the unemployed as well as the employed, the landless as well as the land-owners, all must share the blame for the growing keenness of the struggle to make a living, for the undeserved poverty around us, and for the growing infringement upon our liberties. No one can escape his share of the responsibility.

The question is sometimes asked: "If private property in land were abolished, should land-owners be paid for their land holdings?" Compensation to land-owners might be considered with propriety if land-owners on their part would surrender all of the benefits they, as land-owners, have received, plus compensation for the wealth they have prevented Labor from earning through the land being held out of use. Certainly if we are to consider compensation at all, it is only proper to consider compensation for the respective losses of both parties. Or, if but one party is to be compensated, should it be the party who has suffered because of an unjust institution or the one who has benefited from it?

But since, if land-owners were to give up all the wealth they possess—even if they owned all the wealth in the world—they could not make restitution for the harm which has been done by the private ownership of land; and since they, individually, have not been responsible for the harm done by the system, it would be wiser for both parties to forget their losses—better for both sides to ignore the question of compensation and to wipe the slate clean for a new start.

Those who insist that compensation is necessary to satisfy justice should recall the words of Lowell, written

when there was much discussion regarding possible compensation for the slaves about to be freed:

*"Pay ransom to the owner?
Aye, fill the cup to the brim!
But who is the owner?
The slave is the owner,
And ever was! Pay him!"*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1—If an exceptionally good school were established in a town, would this raise wages there? Would it affect rents?
- 2—If a philanthropist were to set up a trust fund in some mill town, providing that each family in that town should receive each year thereafter a Christmas present of \$1,000 would his generosity improve the living conditions in that town? Would the effect be any different if the \$1,000 gift were made as a surprise for one year only? If there would be any difference, what is it and why?
- 3—If a more efficient government in a city made it possible to reduce all taxes there by one-half, would this reduction benefit any one portion of the taxpayers more than any other? Why?
- 4—Chicago once was known as a gangster city. By more efficient police methods her reputation was redeemed. Did this improvement have any effect on wages in Chicago? Did it have any effect on land values?
- 5—If a large enterprise were about to open a branch in a small town, would Labor, the business men, or the land-owners receive any benefit from this expected change before it took place? Which of them would benefit the most after the enterprise had become established?

- 6—Sometimes a town tries to pull itself out of a depression by a “buy in your own city” campaign. Will the result of these campaigns improve economic conditions in these towns? If so, how? If not, what will be the result?
- 7—Does the charging of tolls for the use of a road affect production, consumption, or employment? If so, how and why?
- 8—Why is it that as land values rise, poverty increases? Need it be so?
- 9—Would a division of land equally among all the people (either according to acreage or value), remedy or improve economic conditions, either temporarily or permanently? If so, how? If not, why not?
- 10—If a division of existing wealth were made equally among all the people, and it were known that this was to be followed by a redivision as often as holdings became unequal, what would be the result on production?
- 11—When one buys land, does one buy a material thing? What would be the nature of the land-owner’s loss if the government should adopt the practice of collecting all ground rents?
- 12—Can you find any justification, acceptable to yourself, for private ownership of land? If so, what is it? Can you find any justification for the abolition of private ownership of things, other than the land? If so, what is it?