

Chapter 25

The True Remedy

WE HAVE TRACED the unequal distribution of wealth, the curse and menace of modern civilization, to the institution of private property in land. As long as this institution exists, no increase in production will permanently benefit the masses. On the contrary, any improvements must depress their condition further. We have examined the remedies currently proposed to relieve poverty and improve the distribution of wealth, and found them all ineffective or impractical. Poverty deepens as wealth increases; wages fall while productivity grows. All because land, the source of all wealth and the field of all labor, is monopolized.

Deduction and induction have brought us to the same truth: Unequal ownership of land causes unequal distribution of wealth. And because unequal ownership of land is inseparable from the recognition of individual property in land, it necessarily follows that there is only one remedy for the unjust distribution of wealth:

We must make land common property.

But this is a truth that will arouse the most bitter antagonism, given the present state of society. It must fight its way, inch by inch. It will be necessary to meet the objections of those who, even when forced to admit

this truth, will contend that it cannot be practically applied. In doing this we shall bring our previous reasoning to a new and crucial test. Just as we test addition by subtraction and multiplication by division, so we can we test our conclusions by the adequacy of our remedy. If it is practical, it proves our conclusions are correct.

The laws of the universe are harmonious. If the remedy to which we have been led is the true one, it must be consistent with justice; it must be practical in application; it must accord with the tendencies of social development; and it must harmonize with other reforms.

All this I propose to show.

The laws of the universe do not deny the natural aspirations of the human heart. The progress of society can be toward equality, not inequality. Economic law will prove the perceptions of Marcus Aurelius: "We are made for cooperation—like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth."

Editor's note: In the chapters that follow the bold and controversial statement, "We must make land common property," George shows how his method of doing so would secure to labor and capital the private possession of land and ownership of the improvements thereon.