

# Natural Law At Work

GROUND RENT, NOT TAXES: The Natural Source of Revenue for the Government, by John C. Lincoln; Exposition Press. \$2.50.

Even great and powerful forces need be revitalized from time to time. It is in this spirit that John C. Lincoln has written his recent economic study.

It might be more properly called a personal approach to the economic ideas and social philosophy of Henry George. For, although Mr. Lincoln has his own attitudes and interpretations and expresses them well, he frequently pays tribute to his intellectual forebear.

Mr. Lincoln's approach is that of the practical man of affairs with a social consciousness. He is concerned not only with the ethical correctness of the community collection of economic or ground rent (as he calls it), but with the adequacy of these collections to meet necessary community services.

In terms of ethics, Mr. Lincoln relies heavily on natural law. "The basic assumption on which the following discussion rests is that we live in a world governed by Natural Law." This is the way he starts his dissertation. From this premise, he builds, step by step, to the conclusion that the community produced and natural ground rent is not the property of any individual or group of individuals, but is the property of all those who make up the community. On this basis, he contends, the rent fund, and it alone, can ethically be used for the community's purposes.

On the practical side, Mr. Lincoln draws on his years of rich experience to illustrate his points. "Over eighty years ago," he tells us, "I was a boy in Illinois and watched the "prairie

schooners" going from Illinois to Iowa to take up government land, practically free. Much of the free land of eighty years ago is now worth \$500 an acre."

In a chapter on the "Amount of Ground Rent Available for Government Support," Mr. Lincoln attempts to estimate the amount of ground rent that arises in the United States. He comes up with a total of \$75 billion a year. Unfortunately there are no statistical compilations available to support or refute his reckoning. More than that, no one has ever devised an acceptable method for determining what part of the total dollar amount involved in our nation's aggregate business is ground rent.

Mr. Lincoln evinces his recognition of this lack of information when he says: "Some readers may not agree with my calculations that ground rent in the United States today amounts to \$75 billion a year. They may think it amounts to a little more than half of this sum. Those who do not believe that ground rent would pay all the reasonable expenses of economic government would have to admit that all ground rent should be collected, and only then should the government have any right to collect any part of the wealth of its citizens."

The author, an engineer and business executive, is president of the Henry George School, and his courage in stating his opinions boldly is well known. If this book does nothing more than to hasten compilation and analysis of the statistics so urgently needed, Mr. Lincoln will have made an invaluable contribution.

*The Henry George News recommends "Ground Rent, Not Taxes" and takes pleasure in making it available at the special price of \$2 a copy. Address orders to 50 East 69th Street, N. Y. 21, N. Y.*