

An International Declaration On Individual and Common Rights in Land

The land is the common heritage of the people and all men have natural and equal rights in land. By the term land is meant all natural resources.

Subject always to these natural and equal rights in land and to this common ownership, individuals can and *must* enjoy certain subsidiary rights in land.

These rights properly enjoyed by individuals are:—

1. The right to secure exclusive occupation of land.
2. The right to the exclusive use of land occupied.
3. The right to the free transfer of land according to the laws of the country.
4. The right to transmit land by inheritance.

These individual rights do *not* include:—

1. The right to use land in a manner contrary to the common good of all, *e.g.*, in such a manner as to destroy or impair the common heritage.
2. The right to appropriate what economists call the Economic Rent of land.

The Economic Rent is the annual value attaching to the land alone apart from any improvements thereon created by labour. This value is created by the existence of and the functioning of the whole community and is sometimes called the community value of land. This community value is created by the whole community wherein the individual lives and is in justice the property of the community. To allow this value to be appropriated by individuals enables land to be used not only for the production of wealth but as an instrument of oppression of man by man leading to the gravest social consequences which are everywhere evident.

All men have natural and equal rights in land. Those rights may be exercised in two ways:—

1. By holding land as individuals and/or
2. Sharing in the common use of the economic rent of land.

This community created land value can be collected for the use of the community by the same machinery by which taxes are now collected. That is what is meant by the policy of Land Value Taxation. Were this community created land value collected, the many taxes which now penalise industry, thrift and enterprise and stifle production could be abolished.

To deny the validity of common rights in land—in practice if not in theory—is characteristic of that disorder of natural society commonly called Monopolistic Capitalism. To deny the necessity of individual rights is characteristic of modern Communism.

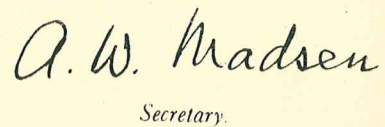
The exercise of both common and individual rights in land is essential to a society based on justice. But the rights of individuals in natural resources are limited by the just rights of the community. Those who begin by denying the existence of common rights in land end by creating a condition of society wherein the exercise of individual rights becomes impossible for the great mass of the people.

Declaration of the Seventh International Conference of followers of Henry George convened by the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade and meeting at Swanwick, Derbyshire, England, August 14—21, 1949.



President of the Conference.

BUE BJÖRNER.



Secretary.

A. W. MADSEN.