

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S IDEAS ON LAND

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

Lincoln was the straightest and one of the most honest thinkers the world ever produced. His name, "Honest Abe," was given to him when a young man, and it was his greatest asset in life. And he had the reputation of possessing more commonsense than any other man in America. This was the point pressed upon the delegates in the Chicago Convention that nominated him, in view of the critical time sure to follow, owing to the repeated threats of the Southern Disunionists to secede in case a Republican were elected President. And the world now knows that he showed himself to be the embodiment of both commonsense and of Moral Sense—a vary rare combination. So it is very interesting to know what such a man thought on the buying and the selling and the speculating in land that was so rampant in his day, and is yet, for that matter. When in Congress in 1847, he voted for a resolution that was tabled, to the effect, that the public lands should be sold to actual settlers for the bare cost of surveying and conveying title. This shows that he saw clearly that the cheaper the land the easier for the people to have homes of their own—and vice versa.

Further, the long agitated for Homestead Bill did not become law till Lincoln became President—as the Southern slave holders, who had controlled the Government, always looked upon the advocates of free land to settlers with the same regard that they looked upon the opponents of Chattel slavery. They could see farther than than many of our so-called Statesmen seem to see now?

Robert H. Brown was a young man during the fifties when Lincoln was becoming active in Illinois to prevent the spread of Slavery all over the Union—North as well as South. Brown was often with Lincoln at meetings—often stayed at the same hotels, slept in the same room, sat on the same bed and talked over politics and progressive reforms. He is the author of the Life of Lincoln in two volumes. He became a practising physician in Illinois, and when a young man, spent some time in a law office. He gives closer up views of Lincoln than most of the other biographers. Here is the gist of what Lincoln told him one night when they both sat in the same bedroom just before retiring.

"On other questions there is ample room for reform when the time comes; but just now it would be folly for us to undertake more than we have now on hand. But when slavery is over and settled, men should never rest contented while oppression, wrongs, and injustices, are in force against them.

"The land, the earth, that God gave to man for his home, his sustenance, and support, should never be the possession of any man, co-operation, or society, or unfriendly government, any more than the air or the water—if so much.

"A company or enterprise needing land, should hold no more than is needed for their home and sustenance, and never more than they have in actual use in the prudest management of their business; and even this much should never be allowed when it creates a monopoly.

"All that is not so used should be held for the free use of every family to make Homesteads, and to hold them so long as they are so occupied.

"A reform like this will be worked out in the future. The idle talk of foolish men that is now so common on Abolitionists, Agitators and Radicals, Disturbers of the Peace, etc., will find its way against it with all the force that it can muster, and as strongly promoted and carried on by all the monopolists, grasping landlords, and the titled and the untitled enemies of mankind everywhere."

Lincoln declared himself to be possessed of second sight, and every one of his prophecies turned out just as he predicted. He could always see the end from the beginning. As a philosopher, not Socrates nor Plato, nor Aristotle, ever approached him. He was a combination of poet, prophet, philosopher, orator, leader, statesman, humanitarian and emancipator, and he never ceased to be a pupil to the day of his death. His mind was always broadening out.

Chicago, Ill.

—W. D. LAMB.

FOR NORMAN THOMAS

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

So you advise us to vote for Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate! Good. "New powers bring new duties." Henry George says so in Chapter XVII of "Social Problems" entitled "The Functions of Government." Here he presents about all the arguments which are urged by present-day socialists in support, not only of the public ownership of railroads, the telegraphs and telephones, electric light, heat, power and gas, but also of *all those businesses that are in their nature monopolies.*

But he goes still further, and says, beyond owning those businesses which in their nature involve monopoly, there is a field in which the state may operate beneficially as the executive of the great co-operative associations into which it is the tendency of true civilization to blend society.

He also tells us in this chapter that the natural progress of social development is unmistakably towards Socialism.

He speaks of the development of species and says, as the powers of conscious co-ordinated action of the whole being must assume greater and greater relative importance to the automatic action of parts, so it is in the development of society. "This is the truth in Socialism", he declares.

During the past summer I visited seven European countries, where I met and discussed social affairs with representative socialists. Nearly all recognized the fundamental doctrine of Henry George that all mankind have an equal right to the use of the earth, and that the way to secure that right is through the collection of economic rent, by the state, for governmental expenses.

I believe in Henry George, but I do not believe that he was infallible. And I think one of the greatest mistakes of his life was when in 1887, at the State convention on the United Labor party he parted company with the socialists, who had supported him in his campaign for Mayor in 1886.

The hostilities then aroused have led many Georgists to always speak slightly of socialism, and often sarcastically of socialists, as if they were enemies in a hostile camp instead of allies.

I hope our joining with the Socialists in support of Mr. Thomas, (as many of us will) may bring about a friendly and co-operative feeling towards socialists, by all land reform advocates.

I said so to a Single Tax friend and he answered "I do not like this mixing up of socialism with the Single Tax."

Well, Henry George started it. In "Progress and Poverty," chapter I of Book VI, he says: "The ideal of socialism is grand and noble, and it is, I am convinced, possible of realization."

And in chapter IV of Book IV he tells us that the revenue arising from the taxation of land values would enable us to establish public baths, museums, libraries, gardens, lecture-rooms, music and dancing rooms, theatres, universities, technical schools, shooting galleries, play grounds, gymnasiums, etc. Heat, light, and motive power as well as water, might be conducted through our streets at public expense; our roads be lined with fruit trees; discoverers and inventors rewarded, scientific investigation supported; and in a thousand ways the public revenue made to foster efforts for the public benefit.

"We should reach the ideal of the socialist, but not through governmental repression. Government would change its character, and become the administration of a great co-operative society."

I am aware that Mr. George said and wrote some things seemingly contradictory of some of the things I have quoted. Walt Whitman said, "Do I contradict myself? It is well, I contain multitudes." Henry George too contained multitudes.

I am aware that Henry George did not believe in the wisdom of abolishing competition. Neither do I. It is the law of life. It is one of the main-springs of progress. It also often produces injustice and cruelty also and so needs to be restrained and guided.