

## John C. Lincoln Says

The writings of few, if any, American philosophers and economists have been more widely discussed, more critically analyzed, more enthusiastically acclaimed or more bitterly opposed than have those of Henry George. Since the publication of *Progress and Poverty* in 1879, books and articles on the George philosophy have been coming forth in an almost unbroken stream. And the end is not in sight.

George opposed the nationalization of land. He said that under the appropriation of ground rent for public purposes land titles would continue in private names, and owners would remain in exclusive possession of their land. He always insisted that only with the assurance of continued and exclusive possession of the soil and with the unqualified right of the producer to the fruits of his toil would land be put to its best use. Only for non-payment of ground rent would land be subject to forfeiture.

There has recently come to my attention a two-page mimeographed circular bearing the notation, "NAM Government Finance Department H. L. Lutz—8/7/51," and captioned "The Single Tax." Perhaps the most astounding statement to be found in the circular is this: "George assumed that landowners fixed their rents."

Any literate and conscientious truth seeker could have ascertained in five minutes that George assumed nothing of the kind. On the contrary, George held that ground rent was a socially created value resulting from the presence and activity of people, and that the individual landowner had no more to do with giving value to his land than had any other member of the community.

The author of the circular gets on the right road again when he says, "Rent is a social product, it is true. It is the differential return that can be gotten from one piece of land over some other piece . . . But it is not the landlord who determines the differential."

The circular tells us that "the proper way to cover the cost (of government) is by spreading the burden across the board." If ground rent is a social product, as the writer of the pamphlet concedes, then it must, in simple logic, belong to society as a whole. Such being the case, the use of ground rent for the public expense would be the widest possible "spreading of the burden."

—From the June *Lincoln Letter*