

# Some Important Axioms

By JOHN CROMWELL LINCOLN

**I**N ORDER that mankind could exist, the Creator provided air for the lungs and land from which, by labor, man could produce food, clothing, and shelter. Therefore, everyone has the same equal right to land that he has to air. The word "land", used as above, means everything provided by the Creator or nature for the satisfaction of man's desires, and would include waterfalls, oil, oyster beds, mines, and fishing grounds.

When agriculture and mining arose, it became necessary to have continuous, exclusive, and private possession of land in order to use it to the best advantage. Private property in land arose in this way.

As population increased, the demand for land increased, and land values appeared. It is clear and a matter of common experience that land values are created by the size and activity of the community, and that therefore they belong to the community.

This community-created land value can be measured by the yearly ground rent it will produce. Therefore, it is fair to say that land value is ground rent, actual or expected, capitalized.

At the present time, only a small part of this community-created ground rent is collected by the community as yearly taxes. Most of it is collected by land holders, and this privately collected ground rent, capitalized, is the selling value of the land. For instance, land values in Phoenix, Arizona, where this is being written, have at least doubled in the last three or four years, due to the fact that the population of the city has doubled.

It is evident that if the community collected all the community-created ground rent in yearly installments, land values would tend to sink to zero.

Community expenses increase with the size and activity of the population. Community-created ground rent increases with the size and activity of the population. Therefore, ground rent is the natural source of revenue for the community. Ground rent belongs to the community because the community creates it.

Since land values appear as population increases, population is a measure of land value. If 0.8 of the population of the United States live in villages and cities, 0.8 of the land values are in the villages and cities. Land value and population are related. Land value and land area are not related.

A land-holder is one to whom our man-made laws give the privilege of collecting part of the community-created ground rent. A land-user is one who uses land to produce wealth. A tenant farmer is a land-user, not a land-owner. A tenant in a New York apartment house is a land-user, not a land-owner. There is an increasing proportion of land-users, but not land-owners. In New York and Chicago, probably less than 10 per cent of the land-users are land-owners.

As a land-owner, no one produces wealth; only as a land-user can one produce wealth. Our man-made laws make it legal for the land-owners to take part of the community-created ground rent, thereby enabling him to get something for nothing. Getting something for nothing is stealing, and stealing is wrong, notwithstanding the fact that our man-made laws make

it legal. Slavery was just as wrong a hundred years ago when it was legal as it is today when it is not legal. We live in a world in which moral laws are enforced just as certainly and inevitably as natural laws. In fact, moral law is part of natural law. The amount of community-created ground rent taken by the land-owner from the community is of the order of one hundred billions of dollars per year in the United States. The penalty inflicted by the moral law for this legal stealing is unemployment, poverty, depressions, and the unjust distribution of wealth, for it is impossible for land-owners to get one hundred billion dollars a year they do not produce unless the land-users produce one hundred billion a year they do not get.

Our man-made laws which permit the land-holder to collect most of the community-created ground rent are responsible for high land values. High land values make it possible for the land-holder, a non-producer, to take half of his product from the land-user. This is very apparent on farms where it is the usual practice for the tenant to pay about half of what he raises for the use of the land. In villages and cities, it is harder to trace the amount the land-user pays to the land-owner, but it is probable that the proportion is larger than on the farms.

All wealth is produced by the land-user. All wealth equals land plus labor, assisted by capital. Wealth has a very short life. Wealth in the form of milk has a life of only two or three days. In the form of most food, it has a life of six months to a year. In the form of clothing, not over three or four years. In the form of

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**The assassination of Gandhi is being mourned by the whole world. His death is not only a great loss to India, but to the whole world. Born into a caste Hindu family, Mohandas K. Gandhi broke down the shackles of caste, liberating over 70,000,000 untouchables. He won independence for India without shedding a drop of Hindu or British blood. He practiced what he preached, namely non-violence. He was a friend of the rich and the poor, Hindus, Moslems and British. His was a life dedicated to simplicity, renunciation and service to humanity. He was a champion of freedom and equality for women. He traveled third class, worked long hours and ate the meagrest of food so as to share the poverty of the masses for he did not believe in enjoying luxury and comfort if his fellow beings could not have the same things.**

**Gandhi shares honors with Abraham Lincoln as an emancipator, with Henry George as a breaker-down of monopolies, with St. Francis of Assisi as a saint, with Jesus Christ as a lover of God, and with Buddha as the teacher of truth.**

**He had an indomitable will power, which became even stronger through a life of fasting and prayer. He courted imprisonment and confinement to make others free. At one time the masses mocked him and the British feared him, but the world at last revered him. This was Gandhi who won the title of Mahatma, or great soul. He represented the supreme moral force of our time for peace and unity.**

**When Dr. Sant Ram Mandal, who has been since 1930 a follower of Gandhi, appeared at the school on the evening of January 30th prepared to teach his trade class, he was asked instead to conduct an extemporaneous memorial service. The above tribute is a brief excerpt from his address. Dr. Mandal, who recently became an American citizen, is the author of "Gandhi and World Peace" and other books.**

houses, thirty to forty years, provided labor is used quite frequently to make repairs. Land is the source and sepulchre of all wealth. Labor has to be continually applied to land or its products in order to make up for the decay of wealth, if the amount of existing wealth is to remain constant.

Wealth producing employment is impossible without access to land or its products. The truth of this proposition is obvious in the primary industries of agriculture, mining, fishing, and lumbering. Transportation moves the products of primary industry to the factories and mills. The products of the factories and mills go to the warehouses and stores, which serve the people directly. It is clear that employment is decreased by anything that makes it more difficult to get land from which to produce wealth. As land increases in price, land is more difficult to get. If the price of land gets high enough, it does not pay the land-user to pay the price the land-owner demands, and production stops, employment stops, and we have a depression.

Experience shows that as the rate of wealth production increases, people tend to gather together in villages and cities. It may be difficult to persuade a city man who lives in an apartment house and works in an office building, and who never touches the ground except on his trips from one place to the other, that land is necessary for his existence. Nevertheless, the extremely high land values in cities demonstrates that the city office worker is just as dependent on land as is the country farmer. There was a time when the land values in New York City were equal to the land values of all the southern states that fought in the Civil War.

If land is to be used to the best advantage, it must be possible for an individual to have private, continuous, and exclusive use of certain land. The size and activity of the community creates ground rent in the land the individual wants to use. At present, a small part of this community created ground rent is collected as yearly property taxes. Most of it is collected by the land-owner and, when capitalized, equals land value. Does not justice require that the community collect and the land-holder pay all the community created ground rent yearly to the community? If this were done, land values would go to zero and the land-user would not have to pay half his product to the land-holder for the privilege of using land and producing wealth by providing employment.

The community has a right to community-created wealth (that is, ground rent) but has no right to individually produced wealth. At present, because the community refuses to collect more than a small portion of community-created ground rent and allows the land-owner to collect it (from a moral standpoint, to steal most of it), the community takes from the individual privately produced wealth to support the community. In other words, the community allows the land-owner to steal most of the community-created ground rent, and therefore has to steal enough from the members of the community to make up what the land-owner steals. All this is from a moral, not a legal, standpoint.

(To be continued next month)