

Econo-quiz

By HENRY L. T. TIDEMAN

Question. You assert that land cannot be owned; since all we produce comes from the land how can you defend complete private ownership of products?

Answer. The function of the land is to support life. Hence it must serve as the common property of all. On my allotment grows a tree. I cut it down and of it make a wheelbarrow. A neighbor observing the wheelbarrow says, "I want that barrow." Thanks for the compliment I reply but it is mine, I made it. "What makes you think it is all yours, you made it of a tree which was part of the land and was the common property of all — I surely have the same right in the tree as all mankind and I need a barrow." I reply, there are plenty of trees and there is nothing to prevent you from making a wheelbarrow — however, you can have this one if you will give me as much useful labor as I put into it.

Why is the last remark just? You are free, you may produce as little as you need or as much as you can. But whenever you produce something, you exert your energy — you plan — you endure necessary irksomeness — and you suffer whatever weariness ensues from the effort. The headaches are all yours. About the right of society an illustration is offered.

A woman is sewing buttons on a leather garment. The needle slips and cuts her. She winces, may even cry out and may stop working until the pain eases. Society does not wince nor cry out. All labor and suffering is personal.

When you produce a thing, do you make it just as your neighbor would? You do not. You do it your way. And when it is completed with whose characteristics is it marked? The thing is an extension of yourself as much as are the calouses you raised making it. It belongs to you as much as your bodily and mental powers.

We overwork the word "society." It is only an abbreviated term for "myself and all the neighbors." It is nice to live in society. Nobody could be sorrier than Robinson Crusoe. But society can be troublesome, especially by the taxation it levies on the private property which we work so ambitiously to produce.

In this country, for one hundred years, we had a system where employers guaranteed shelter, food and work. We called it slavery.

—VICTOR ORLANDO
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