

Equal Rights *Versus* Common Rights

* THE CREATOR WAS WISE indeed in neither issuing land title deeds nor having them registered. He knew, it would seem, that had He done so He would have advantaged some of His children, even to the extent of privileging them to be masters, while those not holding land title deeds would be but slaves. He must have wanted us all to be free, and that is why He arranged it so that we could all have equal access to all the land.

Were there only one man on earth, he would obviously have a right to the whole earth, or any part thereof. When there is more than one man, each of them does not cease to have a right to the use of the earth, but his right becomes limited by the similar rights of all the others and is therefore an equal right. This equality of right cannot

be achieved by dividing up the earth itself; it can only be secured by taking the additional value that one piece of land has, as compared with another, and using it for the common purpose of all men—in other words, by appropriating economic rent by taxation.

Sight must not be lost of the fact that the *use* of land is not a *joint or common* right, but an *equal* right. The joint or common right is to *rent*, in the economic sense of the term. Therefore it is not necessary for the state to take land; it is necessary only for it to take rent. This is natural law, which is God's law and not the man-made variety which is most always based on special privilege and advantage for the few who frame it.

—OSCAR BOELENS