

**SHARING THE WEALTH**

By John Rustgard

Nickar Book Co., \$2.25

"He takes the hide off . . . Henry George's theory of rents," said the Baltimore Sunday Sun of Mr. Rustgard.

The author of "Sharing the Wealth" is a 1936 Republican. For him, Henry George and Karl Marx are fish out of the same kettle. Both, in his opinion, try to upset the natural system of distribution, and they share the odious responsibility for the "liberal" government under which we are prospering today.

He upholds private property in land by the simple device of substituting one definition for another. What we may call Rustgard's "Land 1" is the whole universe except man and his products. "Land 2" includes improvements which are difficult to distinguish from the soil, and even excludes "Land 1." He shows that private property in "Land 2" is just, and easily concludes that "Land 1"

should not be made common property.

Rustgard writes in a readable, lucid idiom which is at the same time a source of strength and a weakness. A reader tends to trust a writer who states his case in plain language (like our own Henry George) but, on the other hand, if a treatise is easy to understand it cannot hope to conceal its faults. For this reason it is unusual to find an author like Rustgard who does not cover the rough spots in his argument with a putty of indefinables and spiritual values.

Rustgard's ace in the hole is his "Law of Secondary Distribution." "But let us ask," says he, "what becomes of the rent and interest thus abstracted? Is it thrown into the sea or buried in the ground?"

Perish the thought. "Every penny of it is given to other laborers by purchase of their products, thus increasing the demand for labor."

From an ethical standpoint, this reasoning would justify highway robbery. What if the brigand slugs the working man and takes his money away? Every bit of it will be "given to other laborers by purchase of their products." The point, of course, is adequately covered by George himself (Protection or Free Trade, chap. X, 15th paragraph).

For our economic ills, Rustgard has a simple solution. Taxes on "property" discourage building. Taxes on "capital goods" discourage saving. Ergo, we must shift most of our taxes onto "consumer goods." The sales tax doesn't discourage anything except consumption, and this will be made up for by ditching the other taxes.

Many students of George, after having studied his works with some care, still feel that there must be a catch somewhere. For such students there is one course of treatment guaranteed to get results: read every "refutation" of George you can lay your hands on. Rustgard's will do for a starter. The pity is that most of Rustgard's readers will believe him. If I hadn't read "Progress and Poverty" first, I might have done it myself.

MASON GAFFNEY