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# GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

The Seeds of War

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Part 16

It is in the nature of man to transgress and then in the stern hour of retribution to call upon the Almighty and beg compassion. But when society breaks the commandment "Thou shalt not steal," there is a penalty to be exacted in blood and misery—a penalty that we call WAR. If we would prevent war we must stop breaking the commandments, and in order not to break them we must hunt down the factors that lead to domestic, national and international injustice and rectify them, else this war is but a prelude to more terrible days to come. Nor should we think that our little effort does not count. It is the attitude of "Let Joe do it!" that has brought us to this sorry state.

If each man will pull his weight we can in our small community have a more just form of society and to that degree alone will we be pressing back the forces of destruction. Until each man will do his part we must see our life's blood fertilize foreign soils.

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In past articles I have exposed the protective theory as a seed of war and have shown how while free trade is intended to lessen strife, free trade alone may only deepen the misery of the havenots and actually intensify the conditions that culminate in war.

This has brought us to the consideration of the land question. No matter how much politicians tell you that the land question is not the issue, it must of necessity be the underlying problem that confronts every man who would relegate war and its horrors to history. What is the land question?

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Mark Twain said, "Give me title to the land and I'll make slaves of the people," and what he said is true. If I have title to the land all who recognize my title must pay me for the privilege of using it, and if they have nowhere else to go they become my virtual slaves, as surely as were the free Scots, who, impoverished by rack rents, were told by their landlord, "God Almighty may have the land, but I own it. And if you don't do as I say, off you go!"

Off to where? This is always the question that society puts to the poor. Where can they go? They must stay and be industrial slaves, for there is no place for them to go.

As long as my title is recognized no one can use my land without my consent, no one can labor on it or live on it without my consent, and, where the holdings are great this simple truth stands out clearly.

In the Southwest great ranches are held by a few families. Land that could support a European na-

tion is fenced in and men are denied the use of it. And by the degree to which they are denied by just that degree must men fight each other and die for room to live.

If I owned an island in the middle of the ocean and informed my tenants that they must do as I say or leave, I would be informing them that they must be my slaves or die, for how could they depart save with ships extracted from my land, and without my consent this would be impossible. I would be the landlord and would be held in more awe than any deity, for through the power of my title I could cut them off from the essentials of life. Under these conditions no increase in wealth, trade, or invention could possibly enable these "free men" to claim more than a bare living. Every discovery and advance would simply increase the amount that I could charge for the privilege of allowing them to live on my land and could never increase what the laborer, who has only his body to sell, could demand.

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If you pray to the Almighty, and ask that he make the soil more productive, or the minerals more accessible or the inventive genius yet more fertile it will do you no good, for by my iron law of title will I extract all but the barest subsistence from you.

And by being discerning in whom I allow to work on my land I can have those who have come late fighting among themselves for the privilege of working. They will combine and form labor unions which will fight among themselves as to how to make nine places do for ten men, but as long as they recognize my sacred title I need not worry, for they will institute laws to collect my rents for me, they will punish those who default and they will keep an ever-pressing labor market that will compel men to exert themselves to their limit in order to survive.

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And when invention has attained the unattainable, when it can produce wealth without labor, what effect will it have on those who have only their labor to sell? Life will be untenable for them. Thus we must recognize that as science advances, as labor-saving devices come forward, as two blades grow where one sprang we but deepen the misery of those among us who could not buy some man's title to God's green earth, and so must go through life as serfs while the few who "sow not, neither do they spin," reap the benefits of free trade, invention and all human effort.

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Can there be a question as to the somber future of mankind when we prattle about crime, and yet, by statute and precedent, violate the immutable commandment, that commandment which, when broken, spells war and ruin?