

Picking Your Letter-Writing Shots

By William W. Newcomb

Four months ago when this department suggested a letter writing campaign to magazine editors, the response was mixed with good will on the one hand and criticism on the other. Some of you said that writing to newspapers was preferable; and so it is, if all we desire is a (publicity) letter over our signature. But letters to the magazines were suggested as a means of getting editors to realize that there are many, many thousands of Georgists in this country who want truth and science to appear on their pages, in articles by trained writers.

Mr. William Chauvenet, an instructor in C. C. Camp SP-7-N, Tucumcari, New Mexico, suggests that specific articles should be analyzed by Georgist letter writers, and that letters to the editors will probably evoke more interest when the article is torn limb from limb by the rapier-like mind of Economic Scientists.

So I have taken up his suggestion for my column this month, and below appears a letter that I wrote to the editor of "Better Homes and Gardens" in answer to his editorial "Untaxing Homes." If Editor McDonough answers me he has fodder

on which to base an answer. He might not publish an article in answer to my letter: I haven't asked him to. But I have given him some argument. Let's see if he will come back!

Mr. Frank W. McDonough, Editor
Better Homes and Gardens
Des Moines, Iowa

Dear Sir:

In your February "Editor's Desk" page you make the happy suggestion of untaxing homes. Every man who can afford a home is interested in such an idea, but while we are about it why not untax all production? We are penalizing a man for engaging in any kind of labor, for saving up wealth for the purpose of increasing production.

Of course, we demand government services, and such services must be paid for. But, if I, a cliff dweller in New York should want tomorrow to buy a home on the outskirts of this metropolis, and by some legerdemain was able to put a bill through the New York State legislature which untaxed homes in the same way that you would have them untaxed, it merely means, as you yourself suggest, that I must pay taxes in another form that is just as obnoxious.

But if I bought my cottage, and the Belous-Quinn bill, now before the New York City Council, were passed, the story would be different; for in truth I would be untaxed scientifically. My house, being a product of labor, would have its taxes removed entirely, and all I should have to pay is the economic rent of my land, which by all the tenets

of justice it is my duty to pay. God supplied the land for mankind to extract from and build onto. He gave us natural laws, which when related one to another like the laws of physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc., become the laws of the Science of Economics. Man-made laws, fostered by the institution of landlordism, which force man to buy land dear before he can produce or dwell thereon, and then force him again to pay taxes on every conceivable item of purchase have been in force now for years. While labor and capital have been attempting to find outlets for their resources, the land barons have created a condition which makes us pay a collective tax each year to government that is always just EQUAL to what the landlords collect in tribute from us!

All of us want better homes and gardens. But first taxes must be removed from all the products of labor; so that man is not penalized for working; and the ever-rising rent of land, created by the social and business intercourse of humanity, must redound to Government in the place of taxes. Free the earth for the use of ALL mankind, not just those like myself who buy small homes, and houses will be built, factories will hum, war will have no reason for being.

Mississippi's Governor White finds the homestead tax exemption noise a good vote buying proposal; but Governor White knows he will have to increase taxes on other items; he also knows that he has powerful landed interests in his State who would do everything in their power to kill a bill which would require the full payment of ground rent to the State!