

## CORRESPONDENCE

## A WORD FROM BRAZIL

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

It is for me a pleasure and an honor to be designated Brazilian correspondent of LAND AND FREEDOM. I love liberty as a supreme good of human dignity; and the Georgeist doctrine draws my greatest sympathies. But I ought to confess to you: economics is not my "line"; I am only a historian of literature.

My sojourn in Brazil will be short. I shall return to Portugal, where I should be glad to continue at your disposition. Prof. Mathieu Alonso visited me once at Lisbon and gave me some very interesting literature on the Georgeist movement. But since the Spanish civil war I heard no word from him. At Buenos Aires, Villalobos Dominguez visited me in 1936. I have been reading his articles in the journal *Nosotros*. I would like very much to establish contact with the Argentine Georgeists. It seems to me that conditions there are very favorable to the Georgeist movement, on account of the tradition of Rivadavia.

I have written a new book, "Dernieres Aventures," in which I make some reference to Henry George. I am also associate editor of two American periodicals—*Books Abroad*, and *Hispanic-American Historical Review*.

Please be assured of my best sentiments, and my Georgeist solidarity.

Sao Paulo, Brazil

PROF. FIDELINO DE FIGUEIREDO

## MR. BENJAMIN ANSWERS MR. WILLCOX

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

Mr. W. R. B. Willcox's article, "A Challenge to Pessimism," I gather, was partially intended as a refutation of my article, "The Price of Freedom." It is not. It is but an example of the confused thinking one falls into when a distinction between "landowners" on the one hand and the "power to collect economic rent" on the other hand is attempted. Actually, the two terms are identical, because whoever collects the economic rent is the landowner, whether it be the community or an individual. Thus Georgeists are a body of land reformers, are a minority fighting landlordism.

The gist of Mr. Willcox's argument, however, is to be found in the following statements, after each of which I append my answer.

1—"Why do Georgeists antagonize, or want to fight landlords? Will there not of necessity always be landlords to administer the land to which they hold titles?" If Mr. Willcox means by "fighting" the landlords, the teaching of the philosophy of Henry George, then the answer is self-evident. If he means physical force, my answer is this: I have no objection to that course—provided the people want to take it because the landlords block peaceful reform. As to the landlords being indispensable to the collection of rent, as agents of the community, they certainly are not. True, George said they *might* be used in that function—but so might anybody else. As a matter of fact, landowners of huge estates employ agents to administer their investments. Thus, to argue, as Mr. Willcox does, that titles to land will pacify landowners, is to say the exiled aristocracy of past monarchies revel in their titles—when the truth of the matter is they are hopeful of regaining their confiscated lands, of which their titles are "legal" recognition.

2—"Georgeists should know that the . . . landowner's claim . . . weak as it is, is far stronger than that of the public. He usually can submit a title deed in legal evidence of ownership, which in most instances is more than the public can do." Mr. Willcox might be interested to know that the Constitution of the State of New York vests the land in the people's ownership, which is not a bad

start from a legal point of view. However, for a Georgeist to admit the legality of a perpetuated fraud—which is all the legal aspect of the situation is—is to acknowledge the right of private property in land, for how else is landlordism justified?

3—"If force is to be the arbiter in this case, Georgeists should know that the decision will go to the landowners, who have all of the legal, educational, financial and military power in their hands; and that to oppose this power means persecution and civil war." Mr. Willcox, who claims to challenge the pessimists, should challenge himself at this point, because if his statement is true we might just as well tear up "Progress and Poverty" and deny that the people desire to better their existence. Many influential colonists held Mr. Willcox's view when debating the issue of independence or continued subservience to England. The Tories—who were the landowners—opposed independence, aided England in the struggle, and were deported to Canada for their truculence—their lands confiscated after the war. I do not wish to imply that civil war is the only way to attain the single tax society, but if that day should come—if it will prove to be the only efficacious manner of gaining our objective because the landlords will have contrived a way to block peaceful reform—it is logical to believe the people will fight. In a sense, Mr. Willcox answers the question himself when he says later on, "So desperately do men want land that down through the ages, if not otherwise to be had—men have fought—and still fight—to possess the land." Exactly. And I might add that men will continue to fight until they realize that the single tax society is the only society in which they will not have to fight in order to gain access to the land.

4—"Is it possible that . . . Georgeists are becoming merely another group such as socialists or communists—blindly, fanatically adhering to still another 'ism,' hypocritically denouncing the evil doctrine of Karl Marx of the inevitability of a class war between Labor and Capital, while . . . propounding a doctrine no less evil, the inevitability of a class war between landlords and non-landlords. . . ?" Is it the *method of achievement* which interests Mr. Willcox, or the *validity* of the Georgeist philosophy? Lastly I must take issue with Mr. Willcox's implication that landlords are not at war with non-landlords. Of course they are! If this were not so, what other issues could be ascribed to the present war or any past war? (This is not to justify Hitler's attempt to displace England as No. 1 landowner; his idea is displacement, not common property.) Why are there depressions and poverty throughout the world if not for the wars the landlords are constantly waging against the rest of mankind? Certainly Georgeists are adhering "fanatically to still another 'ism'—free-ism.

New York, N. Y.

SANFORD J. BENJAMIN

## A FREE TRADER SPEAKS

EDITORS LAND AND FREEDOM:

I have plenty of friends to educate to the Georgeist doctrine, but the name of your valued journal is a little too strong for simple souls. Henry George once said that people will understand the land question when the free trade question is opened. Free trade is the pathfinder.

I therefore suggest that you change the name of your journal to FREE TRADE. You could perform your present function just the same, and even enlarge your field. You would attract the interest of a great many merchants.

There are innumerable examples, with a free trade moral, that could be used to direct attention to the economic problem. I mention a few of them: The City of Vatican is in Rome proper. In the Vatican City, a pound of sugar costs three cents. On the Italian