

private property of some man or corporation—that it is the property of those who own it, many of them being not even residents of this country. Do you contend that the 60,000 acres of Illinois land to which the Scullys of England hold title, “belongs to all of us?”

That part of Woodbury county known as its courtyard belongs to the people of that county, to all of them. Certain parks in Sioux City belong to the people of that city, to all of them. But how did these parcels of land become their property? Why, as every school boy knows, they were bought by those people, or received by them as gifts from philanthropic individuals. Just why should “the people of this country” buy the land of this country if it now belongs to them? What does the phrase, “this Country,” signify? (I mean outside of “progressive” literature). Does it not designate the United States? And would not any school boy in the world define the United States as that portion of the earth bounded by the two oceans, the gulf, Canada and Mexico? Certain improvements have been added to parts of it, but if they should all be destroyed, this country would still be here, all of it. And I can scarcely believe that even a progressive would contend that the house Smith builds, or the hat he buys is, or should be the property of all of us. These statements being facts that no one can dispute, just what do you mean when you propose to devote your paper to the championship of those who “believe this country belongs to all of us?”

If you had said that your publication would champion the claim of those who believe this country should belong to all of us, the expression would have had some meaning; men might agree with this contention or they might oppose it, but they could unite in an effort that had some explicable purpose. But it would be interesting to learn just what activities the individual readers of the *Advocate* would expect you to undertake, and how carry them out in the accomplishment of your declared purpose. Does not such obviously inaccurate language necessarily lead to the very want of unity you deplore? Men have no right to juggle with language; they must either employ it in its accepted sense or explain how and why they depart from the common usage.

One has a right to infer that you account the ownership of “this country” as of fundamental importance; for men do not dedicate their lives to what they account unimportant. Evidently, then, you believe that this country *should* belong to all of us, but had not noticed the somewhat minor detail *that it does not*. If you do not believe that this country ought to be the actual property of all of us, I can see no possible object you could have had in writing that statement of purpose, for I do not believe you deliberately attempted to confuse your readers. Now, I am far from being a rich man, but I am going to make you an offer in good faith, and if you will meet the conditions, shall carry it out. If you can demonstrate any

possible method of realizing in actuality what the above demonstrates to exist in your mind as a nebulous fancy, of bringing about such condition that this country will, in fact, belong to all of us, except by the collection of the rent of all land by the community and using it in defraying the expenses of our common activity, which is summed up in the term government; that is, except by what is ordinarily known as *Single Tax*, I shall hold myself bound to contribute, through you, \$100.00 to the progressive cause, to be used by the officers of that organization as they see fit to use it.

Land Not Rightfully Property

WHAT more preposterous than the treatment of land as individual property? In every essential land differs from those things which being the product of human labor are rightfully property. It is the creation of God; they are produced by man. It is fixed in quantity; they may be increased illimitably. It exists, though generations come and go; they in a little while decay and pass again into the elements. What more preposterous than that one tenant for a day of this rolling sphere should collect rent for it from his co-tenants, or sell to them for a price what was here ages before him and will be here ages after him? What more preposterous than that we, living in New York City in this year, 1883, should be working for a lot of landlords who get the authority to live on our labor from some English king, dead and gone these centuries? What more preposterous than that we, the present population of the United States, should presume to grant to our own people or to foreign capitalists the right to strip of their earnings American citizens of the next generation? What more utterly preposterous than these titles to land? Although the whole people of the earth in one generation were to unite, they could no more sell title to land against the next generation than they could sell that generation. It is a self-evident truth, as Thomas Jefferson said, that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living.

Nor can any defense of private property in land be made on the ground of expediency. On the contrary, look where you will, and it is evident that the private ownership of land keeps land out of use; that the speculation it engenders crowds population where it ought to be more diffused, diffuses it where it ought to be closer together; compels those who wish to improve to pay away a large part of their capital, or mortgage their labor for years before they are permitted to improve; prevents men from going to work for themselves who would gladly do so, crowding them into deadly competition with each other for the wages of employers; and enormously restricts the production of wealth while causing the grossest inequality in its distribution.—HENRY GEORGE.

WHEREVER land has a value and it is not used it has potential rent.—HENRY GEORGE.