

"Basic Income for Everyone"

Mr. Thompson's proposal of a basic income for everyone, as laid down in the September HGN, resting on the idea that we are all stockholders in the land of our birth, is quite in line with natural law. It is Georgism in essence and deserves attention and study.

The doubt expressed in the September-October issue of *Land & Liberty*, (page 134, Conference Report) as to the possibility of paying all legitimate government expenses by taxing land values only, can be refuted by the consideration that if the other imposts were abolished the single tax on land values could yield more than the present multitude of taxes, for not only would it cost less to collect, but owing to the fact that it would be perfectly adapted to the given opportunities of work and enterprise it would secure a maximum of national production, i.e. of private and public income. It would also draw a clear dividing line between the two which it would be both unlawful and unwise to transgress. Government expenses beyond the proceeds of land value taxation would then not be considered "legitimate."

The way in which this maximum of public income should be used would of course have to be fixed by the democratic organs of the community, but it is quite conceivable that after providing for the necessary and desirable social needs any surplus could be paid out to citizens. A model of this kind is to be found in certain old villages in Germany where the land was common

property leased out to the peasants. The receipts of the lease — after the expenses of the municipality had been deducted — were distributed among the members of the community. The fear that such a system would create a rent mentality and prevent people from working is not justified, for if the spirit of enterprise would cease there would be no demand for land and no rent, nor profits or wages either.

However, Mr. Thompson's principle that we are all stockholders in the land of our birth needs extension in so far as we are all stockholders in the whole of the earth. This implies of course free migration — not only free trade — to secure the right of free and equal competition for any man in any country all over the world. States which infringe this principle by immigration laws should have to compensate the rest of mankind by adequate payments to a universal administration, for instance the United Nations. It is quite as unjust for a single nation to exclusively enjoy the resources or advantages of a country as it is for a private landholder to appropriate the rent of his territory without indemnifying his community. The equal title to the land and to the natural resources of the earth is not only a civic but a human right. It has so far not been laid down in the charter of the United Nations but the time will come, soon, when it will be recognized as one of the conditions of permanent peace.

— Philipp Knab

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