

RENT, NOT, LAND By J.J. POT (Slikkerveer, Netherlands).

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Land is a gift of nature. Is rent of land also a gift of nature? No, of course it is not. Rent is a sum of money, man-made, not grown in nature. Land without man produces no rent at all. So because the presence of man is necessary for rent to come into existence, rent is labor.

The first man who occupied a site was not aware of a notion called rent. Then a second man came, who for one reason or another wished to occupy exactly the same site as the first man. He expressed his desire in an amount of money that he declared to be willing to pay to occupy that site. For what reason? Because on every other spot he has to exert more labour for the same result. The saving of labor is balanced by the money he pays.

So rent is labor. But not the labor of the owner of the land but the labor of the other man, of all other men. That's the reason why rent belongs to the community as a whole, and not to the owner of the land. The rent of land can in some instances be calculated by the saving of labor called excess of productivity over that of marginal land. But the rent of land is determined by competition, for whatever reasons.

Therefore paying rent is not a burden. It is not a tax nor a burden on labor or thrift. By its nature it belongs to the community and every penny of it collected by a private owner is plunder.

Rent cannot be shifted, for it is not a tax.

Rent does not discourage, for it is not a tax.

Rent does not deteriorate buildings, for it is not a tax.

Rent is not a burden upon labor and capital, for it is not a tax.

The "selling value of land" is a misnomer. Land is a gift of nature. What is meant is selling value of rent, for the amount of money referred to is the capitalisation of rent. And "taxation of land values" is a double misnomer. What is meant is collecting the rent. And collecting the rent makes land no longer payable with money.