

It's Mine. I Own It!

by JOSEPH S. THOMPSON

NO SIR! That looks like gov'ment ownership to me. I'm no socialist. I want to feel sure that little piece of land belongs to me! That nobody can take it away from me!!

And if the government was to take the full rental value every year you'd feel the land didn't belong to you anymore?

How could it? It'd be gov'ment property. I'd only be a renter.

You're not a renter now, eh?

No sir! I own it.

So you don't have to pay anybody anything?

That's right!

You're not telling me you don't pay taxes —

Taxes? I pay plenty taxes! What are you talking about?

Oh then you mean you pay taxes but you don't have to?

Say — would I pay taxes if I didn't have to?

Why? What would happen if you didn't?

Boy! The old sheriff'd be down here and I'd be sold out.

I thought you said the little piece of land belonged to you and nobody could take it away.

Well, I'm all right so long as I pay my taxes of course.

You mean if you pay your taxes on your house, lot, furniture, car and income — don't you?

Well I suppose so.

But you don't think that is socialistic?

I don't think it's as socialistic as it would be to make me a land renter.

You don't feel any smarter than the Rockefeller family do you?

What kind of a crazy question is that?

Well, you know they built Radio City? Rockefeller Centre?

Sure.

Did you know they don't own the land, just rent it?

Are you sure?

Look it up. The land belongs to Columbia University.

They put all those buildings on land they only rent?

It works out fine for them. I'll explain it to you sometime. But to get back to your little piece of land. Rather than just pay land rental, you like having the assessors guess how much your house is worth, and you like lying about the value of your furniture, and having your car tax quadrupled because you bought a new car, and making out an income tax return and being considered guilty until you can prove your innocence, and forking over a percentage on everything you buy, and not being permitted to leave your own property to your family. No socialism there!

You're crazy! I don't like any of them!

But suppose you were to quit paying them all and just paid an annual land rent in lieu of your taxes, that would be socialism eh?

It'd be gov'ment ownership wouldn't it?

No more than now. Haven't you just said that the sheriff could take over if you didn't pay your taxes? What could be more government ownership than that?

Well I wouldn't want the gov'ment managing my property.

But you don't mind them managing your income and expenditures, of course. And suppose they didn't stick their shovel into your affairs at all —

suppose they just collected the rental value?

Well that looks like gov'ment ownership to me, and I'm no socialist. Oh say, I see where they caught the

fellow that robbed old man Hogan. He took \$1,145.

Funny, that happens to be within three dollars of what the government took from me!

Not Over Yet!

In an address on "Henry George, Philadelphia's Evangelist of Social Salvation," Clyde E. Reeves, an Assistant Professor of speech at Temple University, produced a thoroughly documented report which was published in the Pennsylvania Speech Annual in September. Here is his conclusion:

"There can be little doubt that George sincerely believed he had found, by a kind of divine inspiration, the $E=MC^2$ of political economy, the simple, comprehensive formula that explains and points the way for the solution of the enigma of great want in the midst of great wealth. It might turn out that his critics and opponents are right who say there is no simple, understandable formula, that political economy is necessarily infinitely and grotesquely complex and impenetrable—so much so that even the 'experts' cannot begin to see through it and find a solution to George's enigma, but must necessarily keep coming up with more and more longer and longer, trickier and trickier tax bills coupled with more and more inadequate services and pyramiding

deficits *ad infinitum*. If they are right we would seem to have a long, bleak, row to hoe ahead of us.

"It might be that those other somewhat more optimistic people are right who say there may be a simple, comprehensible formula to solve the enigma, but George's was not in, that it will be discovered, when and if it is, by methodical inductive observation and analysis and will not be graven upon a rock by a bolt of lightning. If they are right, let us hope they hurry and get on with it.

"There is of course one more possibility if we want to round them out—the outside chance that perhaps George was right after all. There are a number of sincere, serious people around who believe strongly enough that he was to be doing missionary work for his cause sixty-six years after his death. They have been denied, but they feel that they have never been adequately disproved. At least nobody else has as yet provided a more satisfactory solution for George's enigma. His crusade may not be over yet."

In October we noted in HGN that it was easy for the Auditor of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Ralph J. Perk, to raise the tax he campaigned for, and a recent item in the Cleveland Plain Dealer seems to support this. Mr. Perk said the purpose of raising tax valuations on vacant land would be "to keep land speculators from keeping land out of productive use and thus retarding the orderly growth of Cuyahoga County communities." He asked all mayors in the county to supply his office with information that might support this and the first to reply was the mayor of Beachwood. As a result tax valuations on vacant land in that area have been increased by \$1,314,470. This was on 130 parcels ranging in amount from a few hundred dollars to \$176,940. The auditor has promised the Beachwood school district \$65,000 of this 'easy to raise' and just tax.