

LETTER FROM KOREA

By REV. ARCHER TORREY (Hwangji, Korea)

The development of South Korea is nothing short of fantastic. One of the most obvious Georgist bits about it is that if this country were not so "over" populated there wouldn't be the human resources to exploit the natural resources. Korea already had one of the world's densest populations at 526 per square mile before the Korean War, but at the end of the war the number of refugees was 10 million, increasing the population by 50%. It has further increased another 10% since then, so the density is now 868 per square mile, exceeded only by Holland and Bangladesh. But Bangladesh is 80% arable and has 3 crops a year; Korea is 20% arable and has 1 crop a year except in the extreme south. (Holland, I believe, is more than 50% arable.)

So what do we do with the refugees? Put them in camps, tell the U.N. to feed them and create a world-destroying human cancer? No, we accept them as our brethren and integrate them into the life of the country and they become our most valuable resource and the reason for the fantastic economic development this country has made.

Another important factor in Korean life is the land reform that took place soon after World War II, eliminating landlordism completely. There can be no real estate speculation in farm land, although there is no limit on forest or other non-farm land. This means that the land is farmed by those who own it and there is no attraction to communism for the rural population. This makes Korea an entirely different case from Vietnam.

On the other hand, our District is mostly forest, very mountainous and generally well managed, and our population density is only 56 per square mile. But our District gets only 10% of its income from local taxes; 90% is from the County, Provincial or National government. I prefer the collection of taxes locally and feeding them up instead of collecting them nationally and feeding them down.