

The land for the people, an address by Henry George.

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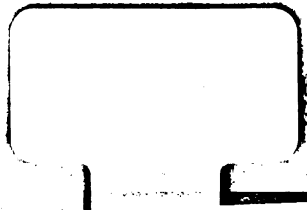
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THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE

*An Address
by Henry George*

Presented as Supplement
to "Land & Liberty," August, 1937.

The text of this Address appeared in our issue of May, 1937. In response to many requests it is now available in pamphlet form, price one penny, published by the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain, 94 Petty France, London, S.W.1.

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THE LAND FOR THE PEOPLE

AN ADDRESS BY HENRY GEORGE

[*Delivered at Toomebridge, in Ireland*]

The Land Question is not merely a question between farmers and the owners of agricultural land. It is a question that affects every man, every woman, and every child. The Land Question is simply another name for the great labour question, and the people who think of the Land Question as having importance simply for farmers forget what land is.

If you would realize what land is, think of what men would be without land. If there were no land, where would be the people? Land is not merely a place to graze cows or sheep upon, to raise corn or raise cabbage. It is the indispensable element necessary to the life of every human being. We are all land animals; our very bodies come from the land, and to the land they return again.

Whether a man dwells in the city or in the country, whether he be a farmer, a labourer, a mechanic, a manufacturer, or a soldier, land is absolutely necessary to his life. No matter what his occupation may be, if he is engaged in productive labour, that productive labour, if you analyse it, is simply the application of human exertion to land, the changing in place or in form of the matter of the universe.

Land and Labour

We speak of productive work. What is productive work? We make things. How do we make them? Man does not create them. Man cannot create something out of nothing. All the things that we call making are producing; bringing forth, not creating.

Men produce coal by going down under the ground, hewing out the coal, and bringing it to the surface of the earth; they produce fish by going to the lough, or river, or ocean and pulling the fish out; they produce

houses by bringing together timber and stones and iron into the shape and form of a house ; they produce cloth by taking the wool of a sheep or the fibres of a plant and bringing them together in a certain connection ; they produce crops by opening the ground and putting in seed and leaving it there for the germinating influences of nature—always a bringing forth, never a creation, so that human exertion—that is to say labour upon land, is the only way that man has of bringing forth those things which his needs require and which are necessary to enable him to sustain life. Land and labour—these are the two necessary and indispensable factors to the production of wealth.

What is Property ?

Now, as to the rights of ownership—as to that principle which enables a man to say of any certain thing—“This is mine; it is my property”—where does that come from ? If you look you will see that it comes from the right of the producer to the thing which he produces. What a man makes he can justly claim to be his. Whatever any individual, by the exercise of his powers, takes from the reservoirs of nature, moulds into shapes fitted to satisfy human needs, that is his ; to that a just and sacred right of property attaches. That is a right based on the right of the individual to improvement, the right to the enjoyment of his own powers, to the possession of the fruits of his exertions. That is a sacred right, to violate which is to violate the sacred command, “Thou shalt not steal.” There is the right of ownership. Now that right, which gives by natural and Divine laws, the thing produced to him whose exertion has produced it, which gives to the man who builds a house the right to that house, to the man who raises a crop the right to that crop, to the man who raises a domestic animal a right to that domestic animal—how can that right attach to the reservoirs of nature ? How can that right attach to the earth itself ?

Equal Rights to Land

We start out with these two principles, which I think are clear and self-evident : that which a man makes belongs to him, and can by him be given or sold to anyone that he pleases. But that which existed before man

came upon the earth, that which was not produced by man, but which was created by God—that belongs equally to all men. As no man made the land, so no man can claim a right of ownership in the land. As God made the land, and as we know both from natural perception and from revealed religion, that God the Creator is no respecter of persons, that in His eyes all men are equal, so also do we know that He made this earth equally for all the human creatures that He has called to dwell upon it. We start out with this clear principle that as all men are here by the equal permission of the Creator, as they are all here under His laws equally requiring the use of land, as they are all here with equal right to live, so they are all here with equal right to the enjoyment of His bounty.

We claim that the land of Ireland, like the land of every country, cannot justly belong to any class, whether that class be large or small; but that the land of Ireland, like the land of every other country, justly belongs in usufruct to the whole people of that country equally, and that no man and no class of men can have any just right in the land that is not equally shared by all others.

We say that all the social difficulties we see here, all the social difficulties that exist in England or Scotland, all the social difficulties that are growing up in the United States—the lowness of wages the scarcity of employment, the fact that though labour is the producer of wealth, yet everywhere the labouring class is the poor class—are all due to one great primary wrong, that wrong which makes the natural element necessary to all, the natural element that was made by the Creator for the use of all, the property of some of the people, that great wrong that in every civilized country disinherited the mass of men of the bounty of their Creator. What we aim at is not the increase in the number of a privileged class, not making some thousands of earth owners into some more thousands. No, no; what we aim at is to secure the natural and God-given right to the humblest in the community—to secure to every child born in Ireland, or in any other country, his natural right to the equal use of his native land.

How can we secure that? We cannot secure it by dividing the land up equally, by giving each man or

each family an equal piece. That is a device that might suit a rude community, provided that, as under the Mosaic code, those equal pieces be made unalienable, so that they could never be sold away from the family. But under our modern civilization where industry is complex, where land in some places is very valuable and in other places of but little value, where it is constantly changing in relative value, the equal division of the land could not secure equality.

Rent of Land a Common Fund

The way to secure equality is plain. It is not by dividing the land ; it is by calling upon those who are allowed possession of pieces of land giving special advantage to pay to the whole community, the rest of the people, aye, and including themselves—to the whole people, a fair rent or premium for that privilege, and using the fund so obtained for the benefit of the whole people. What we would do would be to make the whole people the general landlord, to have whatever rent is paid for the use of land to go, not into the pockets of individual landlords, but into the treasury of the general community, where it could be used for the common benefit.

Now, rent is a natural and just thing. For instance, if we in this room were to go together to a new country and we were to agree that we should settle in that new country on equal terms, how could we divide the land up in such a way as to insure and to continue equality ? If it were proposed that we should divide it up into equal pieces, there would be in the first place this objection, that in our division we would not fully know the character of the land ; one man would get a more valuable piece than the other. Then as time passed the value of different pieces of land would change, and further than that if we were once to make a division and then allow full and absolute ownership of the land, inequality would come up in the succeeding generation. One man would be thriftless, another man, on the contrary, would be extremely keen in saving and pushing ; one man would be unfortunate and another man more fortunate ; and so on. In a little while many of these people would have parted with their lands to others, so that their children coming after them into the world

EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

IN HIS BOOK, *Social Problems*, Henry George writes : “ Who- ever, laying aside prejudice and self-interest, will honestly and carefully make up his own mind as to the causes and the cure of the social evils that are so apparent, does, in that, the most important thing in his power toward their removal. . . . Social reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting; by complaints and denunciation; by the formation of parties, or the making of revolutions; but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas. Until there be correct thought, there cannot be right action; and when there is correct thought, right action *will* follow.”

The Henry George School of Social Science is an institution established to advance this educational teaching and by a method which is at once simple and attractive. Classes and reading circles are organized locally in any district and the instruction is undertaken by anyone who has a grasp of the principles expounded in the text-book, which is *Progress and Poverty*.

The members of the classes, the students, undergo no tests. The leader of the class, the instructor, needs no special training or ability as a speaker and he is not called on to prepare set lectures. On the contrary, formal lecturing is discouraged, its place being taken by discussion between students and instructor. That is the effectual method of the School, the success of which has been strikingly demonstrated in practice.

To the student no fee is charged, his only expense being the purchase of the text-book *Progress and Poverty*, unless he has one already or can borrow a copy. To the instructor, whose services are voluntary, the School provides without cost the necessary equipment in the form of a guide to the study called the *Teachers Manual*. This remarkable instrument, based on the notes used by the founder of the School, Mr Oscar Geiger, in his class-room work, makes it possible for anyone having a knowledge of the Henry George philosophy to lead a class in a manner that cannot fail to please if not fascinate both the instructor and the students. The *Manual* contains questions and answers covering each chapter of *Progress and Poverty*, together with suggestions on how to conduct

the class, reading assignments and illustrated charts. Copies of the reading assignments with questions only are distributed to the class-members at the close of each meeting, their attention being thus directed to the most important passages in the text to be read. At the next following meeting the instructor strives to have the members furnish the answers; he merely supplements their efforts, observing the class closely and encouraging the less active members to take part.

The normal course is ten weekly sessions of two hours each, but a shorter course can be taken in eight weeks. The meeting place may be the house of a friend or at his business office and a good class may be as few as six; but it should not be difficult, if that is necessary or more convenient, to procure a room or small hall in the vicinity. The school will help to make such arrangements and will bear any reasonable cost incurred including postages and circulars.

The School is anxious to hear from anyone who will co-operate in this vitally important educational work in any capacity, whether as a secretary or leader of a class or in providing a meeting-place or in securing the names of possible students. *Particularly appreciated will be your decision to volunteer to take a class.* No previous experience as a teacher is necessary. Anyone who has read *Progress and Poverty* with understanding has the *Manual* to help him as a competent instructor.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

The School offers facilities for study by correspondence, each correspondent going through the course at his or her own pace as time can be devoted to it. This course is for the benefit not only of those who cannot join classes locally, but also of any who contemplate forming classes and wish to make themselves thoroughly familiar with the systematic study beforehand. This service is also at command.

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE 94 PETTY FRANCE, LONDON, S.W.1.

Correspondents in the U.S.A. and Canada should communicate with the American National Headquarters, 211 West 79th Street, New York City; in Scandinavia, with the Oekoteknisk Højskole, Huldgaardsvej 20, Copenhagen, F.; in Australia, with the Henry George Foundation, 277 William Street, Melbourne, C.1.

LAND & LIBERTY

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"LAND & LIBERTY" is devoted to the land question showing its fundamental relation to housing, employment and the just source of public revenues. It advocates the Taxation of Land Values and freedom for production and trade by abolition of the taxation now imposed upon useful effort, on the homes of the people and the goods they buy. Its facts, arguments, instances of land monopoly at work, comments, reviews and international reports make it an indispensable magazine for all who "feel the possibility of a higher social state and would strive for its attainment." See over for brief statement of the principle and policy for which "Land & Liberty" stands.

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LAND VALUE POLICY

The object of the Taxation of Land Values is to bring about the equitable distribution of wealth by the recovery of communal property—namely, the economic rent of land—for public purposes, and the abolition of all taxation interfering with or penalising production and exchange.

A tax on Land Values is not a tax on land, but on the value of land. Thus it would not fall on all land, but only on valuable land, and on that not in proportion to the use made of it, but in proportion to its value. It would thus be a tax, not on the use or improvement of land, but on the ownership of land, taking what would otherwise go to the owner as owner, and not as user of the land.

In assessments under the Taxation of Land Values all value created by individual use or improvement would be excluded, and the only value taken into consideration would be the value attaching to the bare land by reason of neighbourhood, public improvements, etc. Thus the farmer would have no more taxes to pay than the speculator who held a similar piece of land idle, and the man who on a city site erected a valuable building would be taxed no more than the man who held a similar site vacant.

The Taxation of Land Values would call upon men to contribute to the public revenues not in proportion to what they produce or accumulate, but in proportion to the value of the natural opportunities they hold. It would compel them to pay just as much for holding land idle as for putting it to the fullest use.

By taking for public uses that value which attaches to land by reason of the growth and improvement of the community, it would make the holding of land unprofitable to the mere owner, and profitable only to the user. It would thus make it impossible for speculators and monopolists to hold natural opportunities—such as valuable land—unused or only half used, and would throw open to labour the illimitable field of employment which the earth offers to man.

would have no land. The only fair way would be this—that any man among us should be at liberty to take up any piece of land, and use it, that no one else wanted to use ; that where more than one man wanted to use the same piece of land, the man who did use it should pay a premium which, going into a common fund and being used for the benefit of all, would put everybody upon a plane of equality. That would be the ideal way of dividing up the land of a new country.

Make Rent Public Revenue

The problem is how to apply that to an old country. True, we are confronted with this fact all over the civilized world, that a certain class have got possession of the land, and want to hold it. Now one of your distinguished leaders, Mr Parnell in his Drogheda speech some years ago, said there were only two ways of getting the land for the people. One way was to buy it, the other was to fight for it. I do not think that is true. I think that Mr Parnell overlooked at that time a most important third way, and that is the way we advocate. Besides getting rid of the landlords by buying them out, or getting rid of them by fighting them out, there is a third and peaceable way, and that is getting rid of them by taxing them out.

That is what we propose by what we call the single tax. We propose to abolish all taxes for revenue. In place of all the taxes that are now levied, to impose one single tax, and that a tax upon the value of land. Mark me, upon the value of land alone—not upon the value of improvements, not upon the value of what the exercise of labour has done to make land valuable, that belongs to the individual ; but upon the value of the land itself, irrespective of the improvements, so that an acre of land that has not been improved will pay as much tax as an acre of like land that has been improved. So that in a town a house site on which there is no building shall be called upon to pay just as much tax as a house site on which there is a house.

I said that rent is a natural thing. So it is. Where one man, all rights being equal, has a piece of land of better quality than another man, it is only fair to all

that he should pay the difference. Where one man has a piece of land and others have none, it gives him a special advantage ; it is only fair that he should pay into the common fund the value of that special privilege granted him by the community. That is what is called economic rent.

The Power of Monopoly

But over and above the economic rent there is the power that comes by monopoly, there is the power to extract a rent, which may be called monopoly rent. On this island that I have supposed we go and settle on, under the plan we have proposed each man should pay annually to the special fund in accordance with the special privilege the peculiar value of the piece of land he held, and those who had land of no peculiar value should pay nothing. That rent that would be payable by the individual to the community would only amount to the value of the special privilege that he enjoyed from the community. But if one man owned the island, and if we went there and you people were fools enough to allow me to lay claim to the ownership of the island and say it belonged to me, then I could charge a monopoly rent ; I could make you pay me every penny that you earned, save just enough for you to live ; and the reason I could not make you pay more is simply this, that if you would pay more you would die.

How to End the Monopoly

The power to exact that monopoly rent comes from the power to hold land idle—comes from the power to keep labour off the land. Tax up land to its full value and that power would be gone ; the richest landowners could not afford to hold valuable land idle. Everywhere that simple plan would compel the landowner either to use his land or to sell out to some one who would ; and the rent of land would then fall to its true economic rate—the value of the special privilege it gave would go not to individuals, but to the general community, to be used for the benefit of the whole community.

I cannot pass on without mentioning the name of one of the distinguished Irishmen who have declared for the principle long before they heard of me. I refer to

only one name. Many of you know, and doubtless all of you have heard, of Dr Nulty,

The Bishop of Meath

In 1881, before I had ever been in Ireland or Dr Nulty had ever heard of me, he wrote a letter on the Land Question to the clergy and laity of the diocese of Meath. Dr Nulty lays down precisely the principle that I have endeavoured to lay down here before you briefly, that there is a right of ownership that comes from work, from production ; that it is the law of nature the law of God, that all men should work ; that what a man produces by his labour belongs to him ; that the reservoir from which everything must come—the land itself—can belong to no man, and that its proper treatment is just as I have proposed to let there be security of possession, and to let those who have special privileges pay into the common fund for those privileges, and to use that fund for the benefit of all. Dr Nulty goes on to say what every man who has studied this subject will cordially endorse, that the natural law of rent—that law by which population increases the value of land in certain places and makes it grow higher and higher—that principle by which, as the city grows, land becomes more valuable—that that is to his mind the clearest and best proof, not merely of the intelligence but of the beneficence of the Creator. For he shows clearly that that is the natural provision by virtue of which, if men would only obey God's law of justice, if men would only obey the fundamental maxim of Christianity to do to others as they would be done to them : that by virtue of that provision, as the advance of civilization went on, it would be towards a greater and greater equality among men—not as now to a more and more monstrous inequality.

Land Value Taxation

These are the plain, simple principles for which we contend, and our practical measure for restoring to all men of any country their equal rights in the land of that country is simply to abolish other taxes, to put a tax upon the value of land, irrespective of the improvements, to carry that tax up as fast as we can, until we absorb the full value of the land, and we say that that

would utterly destroy the monopoly of land, and create a fund for the benefit of the entire community. How easy a way that is to go from an unjust situation like the present to an ideally just situation may be seen among other things in this. Where you propose to take land for the benefit of the whole people you are at once met by the demands of the landlords for compensation. Now, if you tax them, no one ever heard of such an idea as to compensate a people for imposing tax.

In that easy way the land can again be made the property in usufruct of the whole people, by a gentle and gradual process. Instead of fighting the landlords out, instead of buying them out, what we propose is to tax them out. (Cheers, and a Voice, "The Government will not do it.") The Government will not do it until the great people of the three kingdoms demand that they should, and then they will do it fast enough.

The Freedom of Mankind

What I ask you here to-night is as far as you can to join in this general movement and push on the cause. It is not a local matter, it is a world-wide matter. It is not a matter that interests merely the people of Ireland, the people of England and Scotland or of any other country in particular, but it is a matter that interests the whole world. What we are battling for is the freedom of mankind; what we are struggling for is for the abolition of that industrial slavery which as much enslaves men as did chattel slavery. (Cheers and a voice—"It would take the sword to win it.") No, it will not take the sword to win it. There is a power far stronger than the sword and that is the power of public opinion. When the masses of men know what hurts them and how it can be cured when they know what to demand, and to make their demand heard and felt, they will have it and no power on earth can prevent them. What enslaves men everywhere is ignorance and prejudice.

If we were to go to that island that we imagined, and if you were fools enough to admit that the land belonged to me, I would be your master, and you would be my slaves just as thoroughly, just as completely, as if I owned your bodies, for all I would have to do to send you out of existence would be to say to you "get off

my property." That is the cause of the industrial slavery that exists all over the world, that is the cause of the low wages, that is the cause of the unemployed labour.

The Remedy—and the Answer to Land Purchase

How can you remedy it? Only by going to first principles, only by asserting the natural rights of man. You cannot do it by any such scheme as is proposed here of buying out the landlords and selling again to the tenant farmers. What good is that going to do to the labourers? What benefit is it to be to the artizans of the city? (A voice—"It would make them worse.") And what benefit is it going to be to the farming class in the long run? For just as certain as you do that, just as certain will you see going on here what we have seen going on in the United States, and by the vicissitudes of life, by the changes of fortune, by the differences among men—some men selling and mortgaging, some men acquiring wealth and others becoming poorer—in a little while you will have the re-establishment of the old system. But it is not just in any consideration. What better right has an agricultural tenant to receive any special advantage from the community than any other man? If farms are to be bought for the agricultural tenant, why should not boots for the artizans, shops for the clerks, boats for the fishermen—why should not the Government step in to furnish everyone with capital? And consider this with regard to the buying out of the landlords. Why, in Heaven's name, should they be bought out? Bought out of what? Bought out of the privilege of imposing a tax upon their fellow-citizens; bought out of the privilege of appropriating what belongs to all. That is not justice. If when the people regain their rights compensation is due to anybody it is due to those who have suffered injustice, not to those who have caused it and profited by it.

(Address delivered at the meeting in Toomebridge, Ireland, on 11th July, 1889, organized by Mr Joseph Davison, of Bellaghy, in association with the late Mr Richard McGhee, M.P. The present text is taken from the pamphlet originally published by the Scottish Land Restoration League, now the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values, 9 Woodside Crescent, Glasgow, C.3.—7m/7/37.)

HENRY GEORGE

(1839-1897)

THE AUTHOR of *Progress and Poverty* (1s.), *Social Problems* (1s.), *Protection or Free Trade* (1s.), *The Condition of Labour* (1s.), *A Perplexed Philosopher* (2s.), *The Science of Political Economy* (2s. 6d.), and other works. The prices given relate to the new editions in red cloth published by the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain, these being all complete editions excepting in the case of *Protection or Free Trade* which is abridged and can be had also in stiff paper covers at the price of 6d.

A number of Henry George's public

addresses have been published by the Foundation in attractive penny pamphlets. These include: *The Crime of Poverty, Thou Shalt not Steal, Thy Kingdom Come, Scotland and Scotsmen, Moses, Justice the Object: Taxation the Means, Land and Taxation, The Study of Political Economy and The Land for the People.*

Publishers of Henry George's works in America: The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 11 Park Place, New York City; in Australia: The Henry George Foundation, Australia, 277 William Street, Melbourne, C.1.

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THIS FOUNDATION was established in January, 1929, to administer a Trust Fund for spreading a wider knowledge of the social and economic teaching of Henry George by publishing and circulating his works and allied literature.

The Motive for establishing the Foundation is the conviction that the principles expounded by Henry George offer the only true basis of Economic Freedom and Social Justice, and that their application will remove involuntary poverty, promote industrial and international peace, make all other reforms easier of accomplishment, and generally contribute to the welfare of humanity. THE FOUNDATION is endowed by a terminable annuity for a period of ten years only; but the founder, animated by the hope that others would

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The Foundation has published to date (July 1937) books and pamphlets to the number of 328,000 and its list of publications on sale, copy on application, comprises more than sixty titles.

The Trustees of the Foundation are the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, Ltd., 94 Petty France, London, S.W.1, whose aim and object is to promote Land Value Taxation and Free Trade with the abolition of all taxes and privileges that obstruct the production of wealth and prevent its just distribution. The United Committee cordially invite the co-operation of all who are interested in this policy.

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MONTHLY JOURNAL devoted to the land question and its fundamental relation to housing, employment and the just source of public revenues. *Land & Liberty* advocates Land Value Taxation and freedom for production and trade by abolition of the taxation now imposed upon useful effort, on the homes of the people and the goods they buy. Its facts, argu-

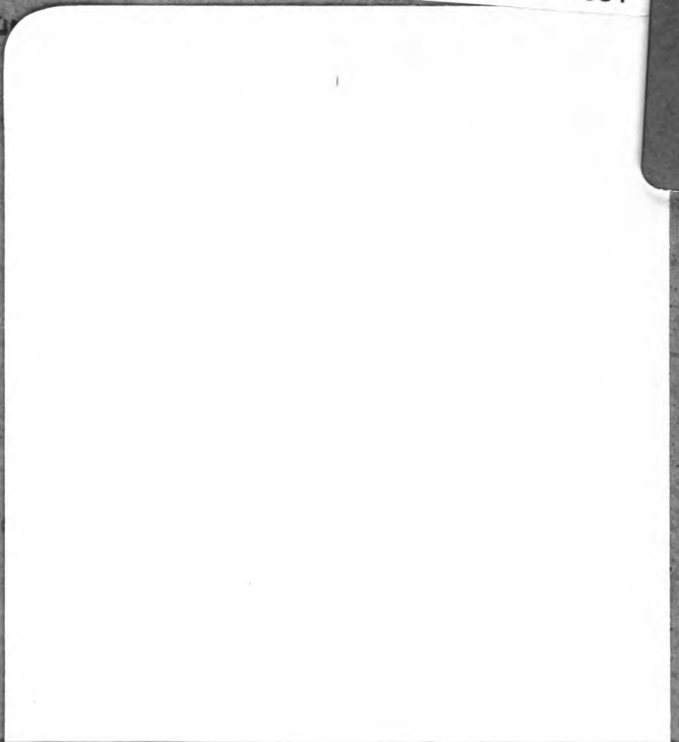
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