

The Land Speculator

by WILBUR JOHNSON

A LAND speculator is one whose combined taxes are less than that portion of his income which is classed as land rent. By now it should be clear that it is the land speculator who is able, under our taxation present system to exploit both labor and capital. Capital has never and will never exploit labor. Very few people really know explicitly what capital is. Many people think money is capital. It is not! Money is a claim check for capital. Capital is the machinery that enables man to produce many times the amount of wealth he is capable of producing with his bare hands.

Without capital the people in America would be as poor as the people in India or Africa. Capital has been the unrecognized champion of labor down through the ages. Capital destroyed the feudal landlord system and the divine right of kings. It has made the youngest nation, the United States, one of the richest in the world.

The capitalist increases wealth and job opportunities; the land speculator diminishes wealth and job opportunities by extorting high land rents. Man can produce capital but he cannot produce land. Some modern economists make the claim that it is possible to make land even in the face of the pres-

ent threat of overpopulation. If men can make land why the mounting concern over population and land scarcity?

It is a great mystery why labor feels justified in fighting capital. The real issue to be settled is where taxation should fall. At the present time all taxes fall upon labor and capital. This leaves just one untried source upon which to levy taxes . . . *land rent*.

Negroes should be more sensitive to the evils of land speculation since they have been the most recent victims of slavery and sharecropping. It was not the capitalist who enslaved the Negro. It was the land speculator. It was the land speculator who deprived the Negro of his forty acres of land, after the abolition of slavery, but it was the capitalist who provided him with a mule.

It is the land speculator who breaks civilization up into countless pressure groups all seeking land as the first step toward survival. It is the land speculator who acquires more land than he uses thereby creating artificial and premature land scarcity. This scarcity in turn imposes conditions of slavery upon both capital and labor by forcing the price beyond reasonable bounds.

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The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

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