definition of Socialism. They talk about how wealth should be distributed or well-being procured.

Now, my definition is that a Socialist is one who believes that people can be made better or happier by authority, provided the authorities be either themselves or those who think as they think.

An Individualist, on the other hand, is one who believes in liberty and that free competition will in the end bring the best results under Herbert Spencer's definition of liberty; "So to use your own faculties as not to interfere with the exercise of similar faculties by others."

You will find that most people are Socialists without knowing it. Men like Morgan, Frick, and so on, believe that if the best people were allowed to rule, meaning by the best people people like themselves, they could do better for society than society could do for itself.

To try to regulate others as far as it goes beyond equal liberty, is to set our own wisdom up as superior to that of the creative mind which has been experimenting with mankind for at least some tens of thousands of years, probably for tens of millions. As nothing occurs except as the effect of causes, all things are as they must be.

Of course, I think that to allow persons to charge others in land prices or land rents for living upon the earth is the main infringement of liberty and is also in itself immoral.

N. Y. City. BOLTON HALL.

"IN ITS WISDOM"

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

The Legislature of New Jersey has authorized the commissioner of education to appoint "helping teachers" to aid teachers;

The Legislature of New York has incorporated the Institute for Public Service to "search for strong administrators and for large opportunities that need efficient men;"

The Legislature of New Jersey requires teachers to "read without comment" five verses of the Old Testament each day;

The Federal Legislature has authorized a roll of honor plus $10 per person (monthly for life) for gallant conduct in conflict with the enemy "at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty;"

The Virginia Legislature prohibits the use of common towels "for common use by more than one person without being laundered after such use;"

The Legislature of Kentucky prohibits the "buying and selling of patients by physicians;"

The Legislature of Virginia prohibits shell fishing in polluted areas and a violator may pay the officer who apprehends him a sum to be agreed upon between them, but not less than the minimum fine.

The Legislature of New York authorizes compensation for "serious facial or head disfigurement."

Fall River, Mass. THOMAS N. ASHTON

SUFFICIENCY OF THE RENTAL TAX

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

I was interested in the article by Mr. John F. White in your May-June number. The article was valuable as a contribution to the important questions of the total land values in the country, and to the total probable ground rent that might be derived for public purposes.

I wish, however, to call attention to what seems to be a defect in Mr. White's computation. To illustrate the point I wish to make we may consider his illustration of the State of Indiana in 1930, with assessed land values of $1,845,699,562, which taxed at five per cent would produce only $92,284,978; while the necessary state and local revenues for the year were $150,000,000.

The defect in this computation is that Mr. White has neglected to add the tax actually paid out of ground rent in that year, which is stated to be one-third of the whole or $50,000,000. Adding this to the 92 million gives us 142 million, or nearly the total necessary tax.

If my computation needs any explanation, it is only necessary to call attention to the fact that any tax on land value reduces the assessable value by the capitalized amount of the tax.

While I am not familiar with the Indiana tax system, perhaps I am safe in assuming that there is considerable land value not subject to the general property assessment, such as railroad, interurban and street car rights of way; telegraph, telephone, and other licensee privileges. If these values are also added it might be found that a land value tax would meet amply all the requirements of that State, and perhaps produce a surplus. In addition it might be expected that financial administration of government would be so simplified as to reduce expenses materially.

In this connection attention might be called to the fact that increased taxation of land values would soon reduce the present basis of assessment to such an uncertain state as to make it useless. It will therefore make it necessary at a relatively early stage in Single Tax progress to adopt annual rental value as the basis of taxation, with an increasing rate of 50, 60, 75, 90 per cent, and gradually approaching 100 per cent of the annual rental value of land.

A tax based on rental value, when adopted, will soon appear as simple, natural and as easily understood, as the present tax based on capitalized value.

Oskosh, Wisc. JOHN HARRINGTON.

THE RENTAL TAX AND GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

In the May-June issue of LAND AND FREEDOM, John F. White writes interestingly on the lack of general statistics of land values. The information which Mr. White presents, however—and he cites actual assessment figures of one imprtant state and three large cities—seems on the face of it sufficient to prove that a Single Tax on land values even at the high rate of five per cent, would provide little more than half the amounts actually expended by states and local governments, with no allowance at all for federal requirements.

Your contributor, who submits that this revelation is disconcerting as indicating inadequacy of a Single Tax on land values, seems nevertheless to feel that it leaves our fundamental principle unshaken. With this, some of us cannot agree. If it is true that total appropriation of ground rent would not suffice for all normal governmental needs, national, state and local, it would seem that our philosophy to that degree is unsound.

However, there is something more to be said about assessment figures and governmental needs. There is a practically universal tendency on the part of tax officials to undervalue land. The writer knows a case where a town paid about $10,000 for land for a public use. The same person, a citizen of the greatest integrity, functioning as appraiser for the town, valued the land at the above figure. Functioning as town tax assessor, he had for years been valuing it at only $1,000. (The owner had been keeping it idle, and therefore had been receiving no income from it.) Just recently an eastern city needed three small plots for a street extension. Functioning as assessor, the city had been valuing them for taxation at $29,400. Functioning as purchaser, the same city appraised the lots at $57,500, and paid that sum for them. In the newspaper discussion of the transaction, there was criticism of the large expenditure, but no one claimed that the lots were worth less than the city paid for them Such instances are so common that it is hardly too much to say that they illustrate the rule and not the exception.

People, such as landowners, against whom direct taxes are assessed, and who cannot shift them to others, naturally will resist stubbornly and generally with considerable success, under present arrangements, the attempts of the authorities to assess their holdings at full value. On the other hand, taxes on improvements are generally of the indirect type, capable of being shifted to tenants and customers, and objection on the part of the original payer to fair assessments is therefore very much weaker in such cases, with the result that there is a powerful tendency in the tax load to gravitate to the shoulders of the indirect tax payers.

This principle operates in other fields. Mechanics know that a drill being driven into a mental non-uniform hardness, instead of following a straight line, will tend to "drift" to one side, toward the softer portions of the mass. In the sinking of deep oil or artesian wells, it is said that the bore will usually drift far to one side of the vertical, because of a preference for softer portions of the rock through which it is being driven. The phenomenon appears in the military field, as in the case of an attack being made along a wide front. Enemy weakness in front of your right flank, for example, may cause your entire force to drift laterally, toward the right, perhaps with disastrous results, instead of advancing straight ahead. It seems to the writer that this drift tendency operates with peculiar effectiveness in the field of tax assessment, and that it accounts to an important extent for the inadequate land value figures found by your contributor.

It may be in order to remark that in the domain of taxation, as well as in that of currency systems, we have a Gresham's Law, which, it will be recalled, states that wherever two types of currency are in concurrent use, a superior and an inferior type, the latter will continue to circulate while the former will tend to disappear. "The bad coin will drive out the good," because people will try to retain the good coins; in trading they will spend only the bad ones, thus keeping them in circulation. Similarly, so long as we have both "good", or direct, and "bad," or indirect taxes,, we shall have a gravitational effect always tending to make the load slide toward the latter.

It may be said in passing that this principle tends to justify the position of those Single Taxers who hold that a step-by-step programme will never get us anywhere. The principle of direct taxation cannot make much progress while the indirect tax payer is legally available and can be exploited with such ease.

It may be asked: Suppose we had Single Tax in operation; would not adequate assessments still meet with strong resistance from land owners, as they do now? No doubt they would, but it could not be effective, in the absence of alternative legal sources of revenue. This resistance might, however, have a valuable corrective effect, as tending toward precision in assessments, a tendency somewhat lacking now, because of the intricacy of present methods of taxation. In particular, it could be of great value as tending to check the destructive progress of what Albert Jay Nock calls the State, towards absorption of all social power, with concomitant degradation of the citizens into subjects; a progress which is closely allied with indirect taxation.

In regard to the figures of governmental expenditure cited by your contributor, it may be said that they have to do largely with the cost, to government, of the intense economic and social order now prevailing. This disorder is a necessary consequence of government's failure to perform its first and most vital function—that of collecting its own natural revenue, economic rent. Discontinue this functional failure of government, with the disorder which it imposes upon the economic system, and an immense reduction in governmental expenditure can be made.

As a means for meeting the present swollen costs of government, existing taxation is grossly inadequate. Government in its various forms is spending two dollars for every dollar it takes in. And we can afford to admit that Single Tax would not currently yield enough revenue to meet the current, normal expenditures of government in all its forms, plus the enormous load of relief and emergency costs. Does this admit any doubt as to the essential soundness of our Single Tax claims? No. If government would take all the income to which ethically it is entitled, and that income only, ceasing its destructive raids upon the earnings of labor and capital, the resulting good order in the economic field should enable it to reduce its expenditures greatly. Moreover, the substitution of economic good order for the disorder inseparable from present taxation methods would of itself cause an increase of economic rent—that is, an increase in the revenue of government.

Norfolk, Conn. JOSEPH R. CARROLL.

IS THIS PRACTICAL OR EVEN DESIRABLE?

EDITOR LAND AND FREEDOM:

It is quite interesting to note Landlord Roosevelt's efforts at decentralization. Someone should suggest to him that Henry George over fifty years ago demonstrated quite logically that the adoption of a land ~~value~~ tax which would take economic rent for public use would effect the decentralization of population. Not that Mr. Roosevelt or his friend Vincent Astor could ever be brought to favor the adoption of Henry George's Single Tax, but it might occur to him, or some of his "Brain Trust," that rules have the peculiar characteristic of working both ways; that decentralization of population would tend to bring land value socialization upon us; and that the favored progeny of our old Dutch Landed Aristocracy would no longer find it possible to live in idle luxury. If the suggestion would have the effect of frightening them into a discontinuance of the wasteful, foolhardy attempts at decentralization through colonization, it would be worthwhile, but it is more than likely that the President and his advisers have heard of Joseph Fels and are familiar with Fels' futile attempt to colonize London's poor in rural areas. It is interesting to note that Mr. Fels recognized its futility. Well, in that case all this talk of the Administration about the necessity of ruralization of our surplus workers is merely for political effect.

To sum up the situation: they are not going anywhere, whether they know it or not. Every person who has learned the lesson that Henry George taught, knows that, so long as the value which is created by improvements, whether of public or private origin, may be appropriated by individuals other than those responsible for such improvements, there can be no permanent improvement in the economic welfare of the masses. Henry George told us how in a simple and efficient manner we could stop this misappropriation of wealth—the Gypsy solved the problem for himself generations ago. Perhaps it was only a partial solution. Nevertheless, did we all live as does the Gypsy, there would be scant opportunity for speculation in land values. The Gypsy's tent adds no value to the land upon which it rests or to surrounding locations, while his nomad type of domicile lends no promise of permanence of population in the neighborhood where he chooses to settle. Land speculation under such conditions would be the height of folly. Of course, modern society can never adopt the tent of the Gypsy, but it can avail itself of the paramount advantage which mobility gives to these wanderers—freedom in a large measure from the toll which the landlord collects from each of us for the privilege of living on his earth. This relief can be effected without the necessity of giving up any of the conveniences of modern life. In fact it can be done in a manner which will make it possible for the great masses of mankind to partake in the fullest of the benefits which science and the arts have given us.

To accomplish this, it is only necessary that our homes, our factories, our commercial structures, etc., be constructed in a manner which will permit of their being easily dismantled and removed to another site whenever the owner finds it expendient to do so. It is not necessary that there be a large percentage of such removals from one site to another, nor that our people become a more mobile race than they are today, in order to achieve this freedom from the extortion which the landlord imposes upon us. The mere fact that we can move; that under adverse conditions we do move; and that there exists a plethora of sites to which we may move, will suffice to curb the power of land-monopoly.

It is said, "There is more than one way to skin a cat." And the Single Taxer who can "see the cat" should know this better than those who are blind to economic phenomena. Therefore, if we cannot educate the brute to go in the direction which we wish him to go, why not coax him to follow us by the offer of immediate tangible re-