

problem of our time is: *how make the common wealth flow into public channels?* There is no solution to this problem short of abolishing the private ownership in land. The vast social wealth of progress is returned to the land in the form of rent. There is no escaping this conclusion. And once this all-important fact is recognized, there is no way of escaping the further conclusion that *property in land is property in man*. Since private owners of land appropriate the entire common wealth, if it finds its way back to the people, it must be through their hands and at their direction. Verily, a camel can pass through the eye of a needle as readily as the common wealth can find its way back to society through this narrow channel. The Master Fraud which hides behind and shelters all others is but a disguised form of feudalism, which by freeing man and appropriating land secures all the advantages of chattel slavery without its disadvantages, and under the highly respected title of the *private ownership of land*.

The private owners of land who appropriate the common wealth render no service in return for it, and could not, for it is a thing that cannot be bought or sold. If the land were owned by the Man on the Moon, the rent would increase just as rapidly as it does, for it increases irrespective of ownership. He who owns the land reaps without sowing, while society, which creates this wealth, sows without reaping. Those who take the land which nature gives freely to all, and in addition also the richest harvest of social progress, the common wealth—are these God's Middle Men? Is it that their office is so august it entitles them to the luxury of becoming enriched by a life of unproductiveness? These men enjoy supreme Special Privilege. It is in this special privilege, monopoly in land, that all monopoly is grounded. To break the power of monopoly, which is now engaged in breaking the world, we have to abolish the private ownership of land. If we do this, we can achieve at one stroke the death of monopoly of all kinds, the freedom of land, the freedom of man, and the common wealth for the common welfare. We are now engaged in a desperate life-and-death struggle against the rotten ripe fruit of injustice, brute force, and barbarism. A tenth of this energy and determination directed at the root of injustice, land monopoly, would have saved the world long before the maggots of decay had eaten out its heart.

As Henry George has said, "Since the distribution of wealth is an assignment of ownership, the laws of distribution must be the laws which determine property in the thing produced. Or, to put it another way, the principle which gives ownership must be the principle which determines the distribution of wealth" ("The Science of Political Economy"). If this is true, then surely in a just principle of ownership we can find the solution to the problem of the mal-distribution of wealth.

Does it not seem both logical and just that title to property should observe, in George's words, "the real and natural distinction between things which are the products of labor and things which are the gratuitous offering of nature"? If we rec-

ognize that man has just title to nothing except to the fruit of his own toil or exertion, we at a stroke dispose of the right to personal property in land. In doing this, we give man free access to the soil and at the same time return to society the common wealth in full. We found the common wealth to exist because no man could appropriate or lay claim to the entire fruit of his toil. But that he cannot claim it *in toto*, does not in the least preclude his claiming a part of it. Since every man is deeply indebted to society for goods and values he could not create himself, he should not be averse to adding to the common storehouse of wealth while he busies himself with his own affairs. Once the common wealth is set free, then a man cannot increase his personal wealth without at the same time increasing the common wealth. Then will personal gain and the common gain move together hand in hand; but the common gain will always be greater than personal gain, which is fair and just since it is the most important form of wealth.

The present world chaos has an important, though grim, lesson for us. It is this: Freedom, justice, the good, the beautiful, and truth itself—all these must be rooted in economic justice, or be uprooted by economic injustice. The choice lies before us.