

His Holiness on a number of occasions, including his recent trip to Latin America has made clear this connection between landlessness and poverty. It is worthwhile to note the fervor of some of his remarks:

" It is not just because it is not according to God's design to use this gift in the way that its benefits favor only a few people, leaving the others, the great majority excluded. More serious is the disorder and more insulting the injustice... Land is a gift of God which he gives to all human beings."

In his excellent monograph, "The Dispossessed of the Earth" Eric Eckholm of the World Watch Institute makes the case also very plainly.

" Throughout history patterns of landownership have shaped patterns of human relations in nearly all societies. They have also helped determine the possibility and pace of economic change.

" Whatever land tenure patterns prevails in a given area, it is the landless and the near landless who are at the bottom. Hundreds of families are struggling to improve their lives but they lack secure access to the basic of all agricultural life - land."

And in his final key paragraph Eckholm concludes:

" Many of the international community's widely shared goals - the elimination of hunger, the provision of jobs for all, the slowing of runaway rural-urban migration, the protection of productive soils and ecologically vital forests are not likely to be achieved without radical changes in the ownership and control of land."

The paradox that HENRY GEORGE saw when he wrote PROGRESS AND POVERTY in San Francisco in 1879 is still with us. As George says, " the tramp comes with the locomotive and the almshouses and prisons are surely the marks of 'material progress' as are costly dwellings, rich warehouses and magnificent churches. "

After America declared war on poverty in 1960's the Church reminds us again that the issue of progress and poverty remains and the number of poor grows again in the world's most prosperous society.

The Bishops need to focus on the land issue in the production and distribution of wealth. They cannot relegate the land question to the unfinished section on agriculture. We are all land animals. Finally they need to examine more fully George's peaceful solution for equitable distribution of wealth by tapping the enormous value of land which is now appropriated by the landholders of every society. Until this is attempted the distributive proposals of the Bishops will just assure that our current economic production will be more fairly shared among Americans but would not have the greater economic opportunity for economic justice which is to be gained by giving equal access to the land directly or the use of the land value tax to tap the unearned increment for the good of all society.

JUSTICE THE OBJECT, TAXATION THE MEANS.

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