

Rights of property

THE EDITOR Sir:—So the "rights of property" has been entrenched in the Constitution, without any attempt to define what "rightful property" really is. What a victory for vested interest? They can continue to rob their less fortunate fellow-men, secure in the knowledge that "the land, which the Lord thy God giveth them" cannot be given back to the people without first paying "the dogs-in-the manger", who'd held it out of use and caused them to be poor.

I'm all in favour of entrenching the rights of property—since a man is entitled to himself—and by extension, to all that his labour produces; but I deny most emphatically that land is rightfully "private property" as it is not a product of labour, cannot be produced by man, is fixed in quantity and is indispensable to the life and well-being of all.

Land is God's gift to all men, for their sustenance, support and habitation, therefore, it should not more be bought than air and water. The law is unjust when it allows a few of their number to charge others for permission to use the natural elements freely provided by nature for all; it's a violation of their equal right to life.

Every man is born with the inherent right to live—and consequently to apply his labour directly to nature for the satisfaction of his desires, i.e., produce wealth—without depending on others for permission to live and work. Governments were created to enforce and protect these rights, but have consistently violated them—aided by those who profit from the robbery of the masses which it entails and the acquiescence of the ignorant, poverty-stricken populace, who understand little and care less.

Private land monopoly robs the workers of the fruits of their labour, forcing them to give up most of their earnings for the privilege of using land. The Bible says: "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," and again "If a man does not work, neither should he eat."

What work does the landowner do, or what does he contribute to production? Not land—that was here before he came and will be long after he's gone! He's therefore allowed to flout God's command to work for his living—while robbing the workers of the wealth their labour has created. How else could he roll in luxury—while the workers lack even the necessities of life?

I'm warning Jamaica: if land is included in the rights of property which are entrenched in the Constitution, we're headed for a Latin-American type of economy—with the masses restless—poverty-stricken and illiterate—and the few rich struggling desperately to retain their power, riches and privilege. Hate and want, greed and wealth will then be arrayed against each other, with volcanic results. Private land monopoly is the main cause of poverty, and to perpetuate it, is to condemn the masses to soul-destroying, life-long poverty.

Can we build a better independent Jamaica by institutionalizing poverty and perpetuating gross inequalities in the distribution of wealth?

"Where there's no vision, the people perish." "There's a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Since only one member of the committee felt that property rights should be entrenched, why bow to the wishes of a vocal and influential minority?

I say be forewarned, and don't include private land monopoly in the entrenched rights of property. It will wreck the new nation like it did Rome!

I am etc.
P. WALLACE

3 Bygrave Ave.,
Kingston 3.
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F. George Smith Purpose of Government

THE EDITOR, Sir:—In your issue of September 13, the Minister of Agriculture Hon. J. P. Gyles was reported as saying that "the main purpose of Government was to see that our natural wealth was developed along natural lines—suitable to our development."

Your Editorial, "Factors of Production" in today's Gleaner (17. 9. 63) said in its opening paragraph: "The statement by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands that the main aim of Government was to see that natural wealth was developed along natural lines (suitable to Jamaica's development) is a lesson in elementary economics that is sometimes overlooked or not stressed."

I categorically deny that Governments were created to see that our "natural wealth is developed along natural lines"—whatever that might mean. What is meant by the term "natural wealth" anyhow? Who's to decide what is "natural lines"?

Since wealth is "all material products created by labour for the satisfaction of human desires, and having exchange value", what does "natural wealth" mean?

The truth is, Governments were formed to protect people's freedom to act against encroachment by others—within and without. Instead, Governments have become the greatest violators of human rights ever, insidiously whittling away the rights of its citizens until they're almost nonexistent. These specious arguments and ambiguous cant are attempts to explain away or justify Governments extension of power and denial of human rights.

I am, etc.

P. E. WALLACE

Kingston,
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