

of every exploiting capitalist within reach. Idle land means idle men, idle men means wage slavery. This is the core of our colonial problems, just as it is of the problem of poverty everywhere. Before order, progress and social justice can become anything more than hollow sounding words it is necessary that landlordism, which so cripples and deforms the growth of society, should be destroyed.

Fortunately, this is not a difficult matter. All that need be done would be to collect the annual rental value of every piece of privately owned land whether in use or not, and utilise the proceeds in place of present commodity and income taxes, tariffs and so on. In this way all would share equally in that socially created value which is called rent. At the same time no one would be able to restrict the use of valuable land without paying the community for the privilege. Once the monopoly value of idle land has been removed, (in fact converted into a heavy financial liability) it requires little imagination to see that the main barrier now preventing so many men, white and coloured, from exercising their right to produce freely and at will, would disappear virtually overnight. With the opportunity for all to live decently and with dignity the prospect of a world undisfigured by constant strife and dissension would be immeasurably closer than it is to-day.

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THE PORCUPINE

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UNREST IN THE COLONIES Riots, bloodshed, looting, confiscation of property; wholesale transportation of communities in blind attempts to eliminate a lawless few; brother fighting brother in futile civil war - these are a few pointers to the tragic state of affairs in two of our major overseas possessions, Kenya and Malaya. A large section of the British press covers up injustices committed in the past against the peoples of these territories by whipping up a hysteria of mass hatred against the Mau Mau in Kenya and the communists in Malaya, who are accused of being the prime cause of present discontent. The Mau Mau, we are told, has forced thousands into its ranks by using the still powerful influence of witch doctors, and has stirred up a flame of fanatical and unreasoning hatred towards the British. The communists in Malaya have, supposedly, won over many of the ordinary people with promises of untold plenty under the new regime. It is not hard to see that these explanations for the prevailing unrest are, in themselves, totally inadequate. Even under the influence of witch doctors it is difficult to imagine large numbers of the native population taking much interest in killing Europeans for killing's sake - particularly since they know perfectly well that crime of any sort carries with it the very real risk of appropriate punishment. While in Malaya, if the man in the street was well fed, well clothed and well housed he would scarcely put himself in danger of losing these things for the sake of a Utopian political idea.

Natives of any country - regardless of creed or colour - are usually found to have a practical approach to problems of immediate concern, and are not likely to court severe and indiscriminate penalty without good reason. The reason here is not hard to find. Hatred felt by colonial peoples for their white masters arises, not out of superstition, witchcraft or ignorance, but from simple fact that their most vital (often their only) possession - their land - has been taken from them. A man without land is virtually a man without life, he is the immediate servant of all who own land. In effect a beggar he is dependent entirely, for all his material

needs, on the mercy of those who employ or govern him. The man who owns land is free. He need not sleep in the gutter while he owns a site to build on; nor starve in the streets if he has a plot upon which to grow food. He feels the joy of creation in satisfying his wants in the way of his choice. But a landless man is a soulless man - a frustrated and despondent slave.

The crime of the British (among others) in all their colonies has been in depriving the inhabitants of their rightful inheritance - their land, and for this they are now paying dearly. Accusations of land grabbing are not merely blind assertions, but cold, inescapable facts. In 1893 British East Africa was made a Protectorate, and the "protected" subjects were promptly given marching orders. The nomadic, cattle-raising Masai were largely confined to certain semi-sterile areas, while the Kikuyu were crowded on to a mere fraction of their former homeland, which was given the euphemistic title 'Reserve'. A few managed to stay on their old grounds, but only as squatters, without rights of any kind. During the present century alone 16,700 square miles of Kenyan land has been taken over by white men. 40% of the population of the Kiambu district of the Kikuyu Reserve are landless, and of the remainder 90,000 are in danger of expropriation within a short time. When the Uganda Railway was built, with the object of developing the country, vast estates, up to 350,000 acres in extent, were granted to European settlers. This tale of rapacious land appropriation can be applied equally to every other colony.

Having grasped this fundamental cause of inter-racial strife and bitterness the obvious remedy, at first glance, may seem simply to restore the land to its previous owners. But further reflection will show that such a plan, apart from being an administrative impossibility, would create as many problems as it might solve. Detribalisation, following the continuous drift of landless labourers to the towns in search of work; absence of title deeds and other evidence supporting claims to ownership; these are only two of a score or more insuperable difficulties which would have to be faced. And there are other, more telling, objections. First, a scheme along these lines would do nothing to relieve the condition of the many thousands of urban families for whom there was no land available. For them, as for those of their rural cousins unlucky enough to have been allotted land of poor fertility or no land at all, life would go on as before, all poverty, meanness and squalor - but with a new, coloured plutocracy filling the shoes of the present detested white skins. Some would no doubt benefit, many more would not - the inevitable result of any system which permits the monopolisation of land by private persons, black or white.

The reversion of landownership into coloured hands may be considered satisfactory by many on nationalistic or political grounds. Economically its effect would be negligible. What is probably the greatest evil of all; one which has existed from earliest colonial times and which is making its retrograde influence felt more and more strongly - the private monopolisation of land upon which towns and cities are built - would continue unimpeded. In Africa, the last fifty years or so have seen a sharp increase in all forms of productive activity. Mining and plantation farming have expanded rapidly, industries have been and are being developed to serve a wide variety of needs. The consequent desire for better marketing and industrial facilities has led to considerable increases in the size of existing towns, ports, railheads, etc., and new ones have been created. All these are growing steadily. The indications are that Africa is progressively harnessing its vast resources and that the road to undreamed prosperity is wide open. So it is - for some. Each rise in the production of wealth has been reflected (as it must be) in a corresponding rise in the value of land, particularly in and around towns and cities. One example of this is the city of Casablanca which two years ago became the centre of a tremendous boom in the Moroccan sardine fishing industry. A French journalist was driven to comment, with some surprise! that land values there had been driven up to four times those in central Paris. Johannesburg is another instructive case. The site upon which this city stands was bought in the late seventies for £350. Its present estimated value is £188 millions, a figure which does not include buildings and other improvements.

Now since nearly all colonial town land is privately owned it is the owners, and they alone, who derive benefit from these enormous land values. This is why, in spite of great strides forward in industrial technique and commercial efficiency, poverty in the colonies is as deep rooted and abject as it was fifty years ago. In many respects more so, seeing that the chasm between richest and poorest is far wider now than it was then. Every new house, road, factory or mine represents, not an improvement in the living standard of the worker but an increase in the rent that a landlord can charge for the use of his ground. This evil of urban land monopoly does not end with the collection of land rent skimming off the cream of production. It extends also, and with perhaps far more damaging results, to the withholding of land from use altogether in the expectation of higher rents to come. With land lying idle unemployment and consequent wage-slavery follow as a matter of course. Enterprising men with little capital cannot afford to meet the landlords' exorbitant demands. Unable to gain access to land ideas and energies go for nothing, capital lies dormant, and labour which otherwise would have found employment is transformed into an army of job hunters, the prey