

"Thou Shalt Not Steal"

By C. LeBaron Goeller

In considering Moral natural law in Political Economy it is not necessary to bother us as to its origin, and it does not matter what one's opinions are concerning Moses and Mount Sinai for the moral law was not made at Sinai but at most promulgated there. "Thou Shalt Not Steal" was not a new law but as Saint Paul wrote, the moral law was written "not on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart," (using poetic language, of course). And we can add,

"The Ten Commandments will not budge,
And stealing still continues stealing."

The Moral law, "Thou Shalt Not Steal," is the law involved in the distribution of wealth into Rent, Wages and Interest. And as this natural law is respected or violated, so the life of communities is determined for better or for worse.

Most people have no confusion as to what constitutes private stealing, as of a loaf of bread, or of a pocketbook. But there is much confusion when there is "social" stealing, sanctioned by human law.

The first great social robbery was chattel slavery. Here we find a stronger people enslaving a weaker people. This is done so that the stronger one may appropriate the services and wages of those enslaved. Forcible measures are used to compel such slaves to labor. They are forbidden their personal freedom and they are treated as the property of their masters.

But chattel slavery isn't the only form of slavery — the taking from the worker his wages and his freedom. The ingenuity of man has discovered a more efficient way, and that way is called "industrial slavery."

Under industrial slavery a man has the appearance of being free, but in a round-about way is effectively relieved of most of his natural wages, enough being left to him to keep him in working condition and raise a family. If the worker could not raise a family the system would fail; the exploiters would then kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. As it is, millions are unable to employ or support

themselves and the community has to support them by dole or pension, etc.

In the last final analysis science has shown that workers are robbed of their wages, leaving but a bare living, through our very peculiar system of property in land which allows individuals to collect rent. To own human flesh as though it were wealth (which is a product of labor on land) the chattel slave is robbed of his wages. To own land in the way that wealth is owned allows the "owners" (as owners and not as users) to rob the free workers more effectively than is the case under chattel slavery.

The secret is this: Our antiquated system of allowing land to be held without the owner paying the economic rent for it to the government allows the "owners" to extract tribute from the users (and everybody is a continuous user of land), and this in science is called "rent."

This "ground rent" as it is called, is of three kinds: True or Economic rent; and two forms of false rent called Monopoly and Speculative rent. When individuals are allowed to collect this "ground rent" (three kinds; monopoly rent is really wages extracted from the worker through land monopoly) the workers are robbed and the owner of this privilege of collecting the rent (usually called by other names) becomes rich on the workers' wages.

Therefore the way to stop the economic robbery that makes industrial slavery, is to stop the private appropriation of rent.

The system outlined by Henry George and usually called "Single-Tax" is the scientific method of destroying economic or industrial slavery. Under this system "economic" or true rent would be taken through the tax office, for government expenses, and monopoly and speculative rent would remain in the pockets of the workers as increased wages, and still increasing with every invention. There would then be no army of unemployed. All would have jobs.

For elaboration of this scientific method of raising wages through a simple change in our land-tenure laws we suggest that you read Henry George's books, and in the following order: "The Condition of Labor," "The Land Question," "Property in Land," (usually bound in one volume). Also "Progress and Poverty" which is a "popular" book, i.e., written for those who are unaccustomed to the study of Political Economy, and then "The Science of Political Economy," Mr. George's last and greatest work.