

ABOLISH RENT

By William L. Garver



PRICE 5 CENTS A COPY
50 cents per hundred; \$3.50 per 1,000
Postage prepaid

Appeal to Reason

GIRARD, KANSAS



Appeal to Reason

GIRARD, KANSAS

Has the largest circulation of any political weekly newspaper in the world.

50 CENTS A YEAR FOUR YEARS FOR \$1

A PAPER that advocates competition in the production of ideas and co-operation in the production of things; a paper that tells the truth about conditions that exist in this country and presents the remedy in words that cannot be misunderstood; a paper that has more loyal friends and more bitter enemies than any other paper in the world; a paper that stands for the rights of man as above the rights of property; a paper that is read by practically every U. S. senator, every congressman and every cabinet official—because they recognize its power with the real people; a paper that kindles hope in the hearts of the downtrodden and inspires fear in the hearts of the labor exploiters.

Socialism Is the Question of the Hour. Read the Appeal to Reason and Find Out Why.

APPEAL TO REASON

GIRARD, KANSAS

Abolish Rent

THE great mass of people have no means of getting wealth, have no means of getting a living or securing property except from the sale of their labor power or the products of their labor. Then if it can be shown that there are a few—a comparatively small number—who have a means of securing wealth and getting their living without labor, then these few constitute a class, a privileged class, that have a privilege that the great mass of workers do not possess.

And if they get their living and wealth without labor, then they get it at the expense of those who do labor.

For it is an axiom, that no intelligent person now denies, that all wealth is produced by labor and should belong in justice to only those who labor, to those who do some useful service either of mind or muscle in the work of production and conservation.

Yet, today, those who work the hardest in real productive and useful labor possess the least, while those who work the least possess the most, which is clearly unjust, and this injustice must have its basis in some special privilege.

But when the statement is made that "all wealth is produced by labor," someone will object and say, No, that is not so. There is the land and natural resources of the earth; they are not produced by labor.

In reply to this objection, we will simply say that the land and the natural resources are the common heritage of all the people, the gift of a beneficent Creator of all mankind; they were not created for any individual or corporation and our forefathers committed a fundamental error when they permitted the common property to become the property of a few. But we again affirm that all property, other than the land and natural wealth, which are the heritage of all and should be common property, is the product of labor and should belong only to those who labor.

Now, what is the first special privilege that enables men to get wealth without labor?

You know what it is; you have felt its burden again and again, your wife and children have gone hungry and poorly clothed to pay it, yet you have never recognized it as a special privilege held by a few, which permitted them to rob and exploit the many. It is nothing other than what is called rent.

Today if a man owns land that he does not use, and owns enough of it, he need never work another day of his life. He can move to the city or county seat and live in comfort, luxury and magnificence, exempted from the necessity of labor and without consuming his original wealth.

He possesses a means of getting wealth without labor, a privilege that the great mass of working people do not possess.

He finds that from the ownership of this land, that he himself does not use, there are hundreds of thousands of landless workingmen, who, in order to get the opportunity of employing their mind and muscle by using the land to earn their living, are dependent upon the use of his land, and before he will permit them to have access to or use what he owns he compels them to pay him from a third to a half of all the wealth they annually produce and turn it over to him as rent; and off this rent, without reducing his original wealth, he lives in comfort and ease.

This is wrong—it is a fundamental injustice. It enables an idler to compel the worker to divide up with him. It is a special privilege that permits the shirker to rob the worker.

If a man lives in magnificence, ease and luxury, without working, from the consumption of what he had accumulated by past labor, such luxury and idleness is his own affair and not subject to criticism; but by taking rent he does not consume his original labor; he consumes the labor of others and renders no equivalent in return for it. He does not produce wealth to exchange for that which he takes as rent. He obtains his rent simply because he owns what the worker depends upon to earn his living and he robs the worker because of his economic dependence. The piece of paper which permits the landlord

to own what he does not use is as surely a club over the landless worker as the club in the hands of the physical giant or the gun in the hands of the highwayman. They differ only in that the former is a mental device and the latter physical, and it is about time that the working people do something to abolish the special privileges that permit robbery with brains as well as robbery with muscle.

But someone will object and say that if a man rents land he foregoes the use of it himself and denies himself the gain that he would secure from such use, and he should be compensated for what he foregoes for the gain of another, and rent is just such compensation.

But this holds true only for a limited number of acres, and all over and above this limited amount is held, not for use, but in order to compel those who do use it to divide up with the owner. The man who owns land in order to use it may not have a special privilege, and such ownership is not criticised, because the element of rent-taking and exploiting does not exist.

But today there are individuals and corporations that own thousands of acres that they could not possibly use. Under no possible stretch of the imagination could they use it. They own it because the ownership gives them the special privilege, the power to compel the landless, who are dependent upon them, to divide up the fruits of their toil and turn it over to the idle landlords in the name of rent. It is this landlord ownership that is unjust.

Near Butler, Mo., the Scully heirs own 40,000 acres of land; near Beatrice, Neb., they own another 40,000 acres, and around Lincoln, Ill., still 60,000 acres more, a total of 140,000 acres in these three states. Every acre of this land is occupied by a tenant who must pay a cash annual rent, that is sent across the Atlantic in the sum of hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to the Scully heirs, living in a palace in London, England. It is wrong. It is unjust. It compels the landless farmers of these three states to divide up the fruits of their toil and turn it over to these idlers, who have done nothing to earn it—who have done no useful service in return for it.

But I hear some Democrat say that he is opposed to the alien ownership of land. He doesn't believe in permitting dukes and lords over in England to own millions of

acres and rob the tenant farmers of this country every year out of millions of dollars in rent.

But let me ask you the question, What difference does it make to the tenant whether he pays his rent to a landlord living over in London or to one living in New York? Or to one living in St. Louis? Or even here in your local county seat? The burden is just as hard to bear. The rent is not reduced one cent because the landlord is a local man.

But someone still objects: If the rent is paid here at home there is a chance for it being spent among us, and we will get our hands on it again and enjoy some benefit out of it.

But the chances are in favor of the landlord using this rent to buy even more land or monopolize some other opportunities, and thus get the tenant and worker evermore under his control for the purpose of exploitation.

In this connection it is worth while to call your attention to the original principles of land ownership. According to no less an authority than William E. Blackstone, the author of Blackstone's Commentaries, that every student of law is supposed to master before he is qualified to practice law, the original title deeds to land were granted, justified and legalized to protect the user of the land in the ownership of the wealth he produced while using it, and occupancy and use were indispensable to justify the ownership.

It was customary for the person who sold land to cut a limb or twig off some tree or shrub and hand the severed piece over to the purchaser as a visible symbol of his being in possession of and using the land he sought to sell.

The evils growing out of landlordism and land monopoly are fast becoming so intolerable that the day is not far distant when the people will be forced to return again to this original principle as laid down by Blackstone and permit no one to own land other than that which he uses in his own proper person.

But when the Socialist calls your attention to the evils of landlordism, one whose mind has not yet been freed from erroneous conceptions with regard to the Socialist position on the land question will ask the question:

Well, if a farmer has acquired the ownership of a little farm as the result of his toil and economies for

years; if, as the result of his struggles, together with his wife and children, for long hours, he has saved up a little and put it into land, when you Socialists get in, are you going to take these farms away from these workingmen owners?

Certainly not. The Socialist Party is organized to protect the worker, whether man or woman, in the private ownership of all the wealth he has produced, saved or accumulated as the result of his toil and thrift, and if the time ever comes—and remember the word if—if the time ever comes when the Socialists, as the representatives of the working class, secure the powers of government and deem it best to take over the title to all lands, before they do, they will make a careful inquiry to determine whether or not such ownership represents the labor and savings of the owner, and if it does, they will be compensated to the last penny; but if the title has been acquired without the owner giving sufficient consideration in return, by sharp practices, confiscatory foreclosure of mortgages or skinning methods, then compensation, no doubt, will be denied.

But the worker's farm, if acquired, will be bought in order to protect him in the ownership of his accumulated labor, and the purchase price would be deposited in the People's Postal Savings Bank, subject to his check, to buy things with now or in the future. His own private bank account under Socialism, for Socialism does not do away with accumulations. It rather insures the workers' accumulations, the results of their labor over and above consumption. It is true that under Socialism this bank account would have lost any interest-gathering power, its exploiting privilege, but it would be the worker's private bank account.

So if the worker gives up the title to his farm it will be through purchase by the Socialist administration.

And then having bought the workers' farm, we would turn to him and say:

"Mr. Worker, do you know the reason why we have bought your farm? It was because we saw that with each passing year more and more of the farms of this country were passing into the hands of the landlords, lawyers, land speculators and bankers in the county seats and

larger cities, and we saw that the day was not far distant when you would be compelled to place a mortgage on your farm. And thus the day would come when, as the result of crop failure or the monopolization of the market in which you buy or sell, you would not be able to pay the interest on your mortgage, and it would be foreclosed and the title would pass into the hands of a landlord here in the county seat, and from that day on you would be compelled to divide up the fruits of your toil and give one-third or one-half to an idler who performed no useful work.

"In order to protect you, as well as all others like you, from this legalized robbery, called exploitation, we have bought your land, but we, as a working-class state, have bought it, not in order to exclude you from it, but simply to hold as trustee to prevent such as you from being excluded by an idle landlord. We have bought to hold for the use of bona fide workers, and as you are a real worker, you stay on the farm you have sold to us. Go to work and till the soil, and plant seeds, and produce wealth, and all the wealth you produce will be your own private property; and so long as you occupy and use this land in a bona fide manner we will guarantee you possession against all comers. And if, while you occupy this land, you add additional value thereto—permanent improvements that are inseparably attached to it—and then in time you desire to vacate and surrender the use of the land to someone else, why we will compensate you for all the real values you have placed upon our land, for we seek to protect the worker in the ownership of the wealth his labor has produced."

Could any real, genuine farmer object to a land policy of this kind? Assuredly not. Only the landlord who desires to own land, because it gives him the power to exploit the farmer, could object.

Yet no intelligent man can blame the landlord for taking rent. And if there is anyone taking rent and living in ease and comfort off of it, we want to say frankly that we don't blame him. We go to the thousands who pay the rent, far more numerous than those who take it, and say to them: When you once open your eyes to your own interests and free your minds from the prejudices instilled

by politicians, you will vote to abolish the legalized privilege of taking rent, for this privilege is legalized, and by your vote. For every political party in this country, except the Socialist Party, declares that rent is a sacred right. And so long as you vote for the legalization of rent and the conditions that produce it, you are voting for your own exploitation and have no one to blame but yourself. And when you haul that load of wheat, or corn, or oats, or hay to town to turn it over to the idle landlord, living in his fine home or riding in his automobile, and you look at the fruits of your toil and the thought goes through your mind: My labor produced this, my labor, together with that of my wife and children, working sixteen hours per day, and we ought to own the product of our toil. Then remember that every time you have voted, unless you voted the Socialist ticket, you voted to give this wealth to the idle landlord. You voted to rob your wife and children to keep him in luxury. Mr. Workingman, you are to blame; you are thousands, he is few. Your votes can abolish rent. Why not vote for self?

But the abolition of exploitation from the private ownership of land does not necessitate the common or state ownership of all lands. If a man is owning land for the purpose of using it himself, there is no just ground for objection to such ownership. Only when the element of exploitation enters is the state, as the representative of the people, justified in intervening.

Well, conceding the evils of landlordism and the injustice of rent, how do you propose to remedy them? Do you propose to brand them as illegal and confiscate them?

No, not necessarily. But the Socialist certainly has a remedy, and it was clearly expressed in the Socialist platform of 1912, in a demand that no other political party would for a moment consider, for every other political party considers rent and the privileges of the landlord all right and would not question them.

Now, to quote from the Socialist platform, it reads thus: "All land owned by those who do not use it and held for the purpose of speculation and exploitation shall be taxed its full rental value."

Under a policy of this kind, all monies so taken in by the state could be used to buy land in the name of the

state for the use of every landless or tenant farmer, so that he could have access to state-owned land under conditions where he would not have to pay any rent; that is, the only rent he will pay would be a small sum, just enough to take the place of taxes and pay for keeping a record of who occupied this or that tract of state land. The result would be that every tenant and farm hand would have the opportunity to employ himself under conditions where he would own all the wealth he produced and no longer be compelled by economic dependence to "divide-up" and give from a third to a half of his product to an idle owner. The result would be that the landlord and rent would go out of existence and one of the most basic of special privileges would be abolished.

Under such a policy the Scully heirs would no longer get hundreds of thousands of dollars every year from toiling tenants. It would go as a tax into the state treasury. And when they ceased to get their tribute they would telegraph their superintendent and ask why they did not get any more rent. And he would telegraph back that the state, under the control of the working people, was now taking it in taxes. And further than that, he could no longer secure any more tenants, for the state now owned farms adjoining Scully's, which it was leasing free of rent, and even a tenant was not so foolish as to pay rent to Scully when he could get a state farm free of rent.

Then the Scully heirs would telegraph, Well, if we can't get rent money any more, if the state is taking it all in taxes, we don't desire to own this land any longer. We don't own it in order to use it ourselves. No, we could not possibly use it. We only own it because the ownership gives us the power to compel those who do use it to "divide-up" with us by paying rent, and if the state is now taking all rent in the form of taxes, we don't want to own it any longer. Sell it. Sell it to the state or any old body. And what holds good with regard to the Scullys would hold good with every landlord. He could no longer get wealth without work at the expense of others. He would have to secure it with the sweat of his brow, as the good book says he should.

But you say that under the Socialist land policy a person may own as much land as he can use, and, if he

can employ help, the amount he could hold would be almost unlimited, would it not?

This would be true if the capitalist farmer could get anybody to work for him; but every farm hand having the opportunity to use state-owned land, where he could work for himself, would not work for the capitalist farmer who paid him in wages an amount equal to only a part of the wealth he produced. For every farm hand produces more wealth than he is paid in wages. If he did not, his employer would dispense with him. When he works for himself he would own all he produced. The natural result would be that before any farmer could get another to work for him, he would practically be compelled to give the worker a value equivalent to all he produced, which would make him a co-partner in the industry. The main thing is to provide every worker with an alternative where he can work for himself; then exploitation and economic dependence will die out.

Then, along with the foregoing policy protecting the individual farmer from the landlord and rent, the Socialists would carry out another policy:

Large co-operative state farms would be established, under the superintendence of expert agriculturists; the latest labor-saving machinery, propelled by steam, gas or electric power, would be utilized. Great granaries, warehouses and cold storage plants would be installed, together with packing plants and canneries.

Every farm hand or farmer would have the opportunity to work on these state farms under a co-operative contract, wherein he would receive from the total product in proportion to the amount of labor, time and ability he had put into its production.

With such an alternative always before him, the farmer could work either as an individual or collective agriculturist, and time would demonstrate which was the most suitable for different individuals. There would be no legal compulsion forcing workers to work in different manners; the only compulsion would be economic, and the individual would choose the place in which he worked with the greatest freedom. This land policy of Socialism is inevitable; the monopolization and consequent high price of land is increasing the exploiting power of the

landlord until it is becoming unbearable. Take the boy of today, how much stands between him and the opportunity to work on the land?

Our fathers could get a 160-acre homestead free or buy 80 acres without any difficulty for \$1.25 per acre, or \$100. But now land has increased in price from \$50 to \$150 per acre, and the same 80 acres will cost from \$4,000 to \$12,000. In other words, the barriers between the boy of today, as compared to those encountered by our parents, are from 40 to 120 times as great. Is it any wonder they are leaving the farm for the cities?

A farmer asked me why the boys are leaving the farms and going to the cities, and I replied that when they paid their interest and rent they had nothing left.

If our legislators desire to turn the tide of youth back to the farm, there is only one way to do it—let them abolish the causes that produce interest and rent.

Why, according to B. F. Yoakum, a capitalist with a salary of \$75,000 per year, the farmers of this country pay annually as interest on borrowed money 510 millions of dollars. Mr. Yoakum was arguing in favor of lower interest charges, so that what the farmers saved in interest the railroads could get in profits. Now, do you know what the value of the entire wheat crop of the country was that year? Only 542 millions of dollars. In other words, it took nearly the entire wheat crop of the farmers to pay the interest on their mortgages and borrowed money, and this doesn't take into consideration the amount paid as rent. If it took nearly the entire wheat crop to pay the farmers' interest, it took nearly the entire corn crop to pay his rent, and he had very little left. Those who cry that the farmer is prosperous are superficial. He is not prosperous because of his labor or the wealth he produces. The farmer who has become wealthy is the one who bought land when it was cheap and held it until the present time, when it is dear. He has made his money as a speculator and not as a worker. He is wealthy because of the unearned increment that the people collectively have made.

This in brief is the Socialist position on the land question. It is fundamental and cannot be avoided. They are the first to distinguish between ownership of land for

use and ownership for exploitation. They are the first to demand that exploitation be taxed out of existence.

And when the cry is made that this is confiscation, they reply: That if the owner cannot show that he has labored and produced an equivalent which he gave for the land then he confiscated it, and his criticism falls to the ground. If he can show that he labored and gave an equal value for it, then he will be compensated, and every just man will agree to this policy.

In closing let us say that while rent is not the only form of exploitation, it is the most basic, and only when it is abolished will the way be cleared for the highest civilization.

Let all who believe in the upward destiny of man join hands and build up the organization to accomplish this great work—the Socialist Party.



A Vision of the Future

BY ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

I SEE a world where thrones have crumbled and where kings are dust. The aristocracy of idleness has perished from the earth. I see a world without a slave. Man at last is free. Nature's forces have by science been enslaved. Lightning and light, wind and wave, frost and flame, and all the subtle powers of the earth and air are the tireless toilers for the human race.

I see a world at peace, adorned with every form of art, with music's myriad voices thrilled, while lips are rich with words of love and truth; a world in which no exile sighs, no prisoner mourns; a world on which the gibbet's shadow does not fall; a world where work and worth go hand in hand, where the poor girl, trying to win bread with a needle—the needle that has been called "the asp for the breast of the poor"—is not driven to the desperate choice of crime or death, of suicide or shame.

I see a world without the beggar's outstretched palm, the miser's heartless, stony stare, the piteous wail of want, the livid lip of lies, the cruel eyes of scorn.

I see a race without disease of flesh or brain—shapely and fair, married harmony of form and function—and, as I look, life lengthens, joy deepens, love canopies the earth; and over all in the great dome shines the eternal star of human hope.



Let the Appeal Do Your Job Printing

YOUR patronage of this department will go a long way toward supporting your paper. It will enable us to give you a better paper with which to reach the men and women who must be reached before Socialism can prevail. Most of you need some kind of job printing at some time. Whoever does the work for you will make a profit from the work; they cannot exist without it. Why not let this profit go to the paper that is fighting your battles 365 days of the year? We will do you good work—the very best that skill and experience can turn out—and at reasonable prices. You get what you want and must have and at the same time you add to the strength of the little old Appeal.

Send for samples and prices. They are yours for the asking

SPECIAL OFFER

100 noteheds and 100 envelopes with name and address or business neatly printed on them, sent prepaid for

\$1

Appeal Job Printing Dept.
Girard, Kansas

BOOKS ON SOCIALISM

THE Appeal's Book Department is fully prepared to supply you with books, pamphlets and leaflets on Socialism. We print many Socialist works ourselves and we also are agents for all books on Socialism produced by other publishers. We also handle books on science, literature and history. In fact, we can supply you with any book on the market.

Our prices are the same as charged by other publishers and in many cases they are lower. Write us when in need of books and our Book Man will give your letter his personal attention. No matter how large or small the order it will be greatly appreciated.

Write for our free catalog of Socialist books and pamphlets. Do this today.

Address

Appeal Book Department

Girard, Kansas