

## A SINGLE TAX PROPOSAL IN 1752

In 1752, Caldwallter Colden, Surveyor-General of the State of New York, a friend of Benjamin Franklin, described the grabbing of land by speculators. He wrote of "public indignation" re land monopoly. People were actually being forced to send their children into other colonies because of the lack of free lands, when at the same time, influential men were counting their acres by the hundred thousand, and scarcely cultivating a hundred.

Colden wrote that the confiscation of corrupt grants was impractical, although "there seems in common justice to be room enough for it." Colden gave the following as his opinion for reform:

"The following proposal seems to me to be more practicable, viz . . . to establish quit-rents on all past grants . . . The quit-rents would in this case be sufficient to support the government, and if they were applied to that purpose, I believe would give a general satisfaction; because it would be as equal a taxation as could well be contrived, and the taxes would not, as they do now, fall only upon the improvements and the industry of the people. It would likewise absolutely remove the complaints of the merchants, so that it would generally please all sorts, excepting the owners of large tracts."