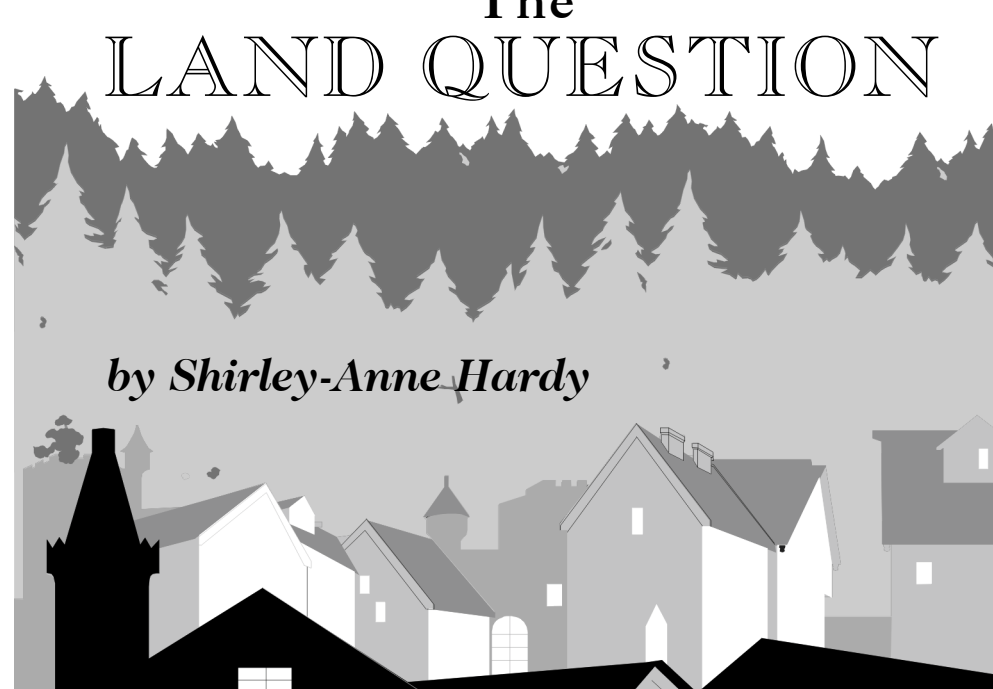




The
LAND QUESTION

by Shirley-Anne Hardy



(SECOND EDITION)

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“You make the laws and own the currency, but give
me the land and I will absorb your wealth
and render your legislation null and void.
Give heed to the land question”.

*From a speech exposing the power of land monopoly.
Quoted from “Henry George : Citizen of the World”,
by Anna George de Mille*



Dedicated to my many mentors and inspirers on this pathway -
most of whom will never know the part they have played

The Land Question

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The Land Question

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FOREWORD - 2001

THE AUTHOR, who is Scottish, returned to her roots in Scotland in 1975, following a long sojourn south of the Border.

An honours degree in Russian at London University in 1968 gave entry to the field of Liberal Studies lecturing; and here she dedicated herself to spreading the knowledge, among the youth of today, of the essential law of social justice, known as the Law of (Land) Rent. The great exponent for our time of this Law was the American, Henry George - whose work numbered among its foremost admirers the renowned Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy.

This Law of Rent (pictorially presented here on page 26) is a natural law of social living. That is - it cannot be subverted except to the disaster of a society. This Law of Rent reveals that society possesses a natural fund for its social needs - namely, the rental value of its land; and that that value, which is community-created, must be collected from every occupant of the land as society's natural revenue, in lieu of its false substitute - taxation.

The society which fails to collect these rental values each year, as its natural revenue, falls under the spell of land monopoly, which not only turns the people dispossessed from the land into virtual slaves, but like all 'good' spells, imprisons their thinking as well - to such an extent that they no longer see from whence their imprisonment and powerlessness arises. It then requires a most arduous mental effort to break that spell!

At the time of writing *The Land Question*, the Author was unaware of Scotland's remarkable heritage of knowledge in this matter (taboo in our schools and colleges being that knowledge which might topple a monopoly-based Establishment). Her new book (1999) now sets that record straight, including in its pages the work of two of Scotland's foremost thinkers on this subject, William Ogilvie and Patrick Edward Dove.

But 'Birthright in Land, by William Ogilvie - and the State of Scotland Today' goes well beyond that. It focusses on how the loss of our land, involving the loss of our soil, holds the direst consequences for the health of the individual, as also of the Planet.

Similarly is the health of society imperilled. For the loss of liberty which is involved in land dispossession creates social disempowerment on a scale so massive as to ensure the build-up (however blind and uncomprehending) of frustration, resentment and anger - to such an extent that these *must*, in turn, explode in drugs, crime, suicide, etc. - all the marks of a fully degenerate society.

Such a society, for too long fatally attuned to its own decadence, now believes itself to be feverishly at work dealing with all these 'social ills'! Thus it dreams on its fevered dreams, whilst still in fact lying drowned in the old apathy - at rest under the great unbroken spell of land monopoly.

But the trumpets of Ogilvie, Dove, and many others in the Author's new book, now sound the call - ***time to awaken!***

'Birthright in Land, by William Ogilvie - and The State of Scotland Today' - ISBN: 0 9535426 0 2

Uncivilised

'No man-tricks can be played on monkeys ...'

An ancient ape, once on a time,
Disliked exceedingly to climb,
And so he picked him out a tree
And said, "Now this belongs to me.
I have a hunch that monks are mutts
And I can make them gather nuts
And bring the bulk of them to me,
By claiming title to this tree."

He took a green leaf and a reed
And wrote himself a title deed,
Proclaiming pompously and slow:
"All monkeys by these presents know" -
Next morning when the monkeys came
To gather nuts, he made his claim:
"All monkeys climbing on this tree
Must bring their gathered nuts to me.
Cracking the same on equal shares;
The meats are mine, the shells are theirs."

"But by what right?" they cried, amazed.
Thinking the ape was surely crazed.
"By this", he answered; "if you'll read
You'll find it is a title deed,
Made in precise and formal shape
And sworn before a fellow ape.
Exactly on the legal plan
Used by that wondrous creature, man.
In London, Tokyo, New York,
Glengarry, Kalamazoo and Cork.

Unless my deed is recognised,
It proves you quite uncivilised."
"But", said one monkey, "You'll agree
It was not you who made this tree."
"Nor", said the ape, serene and bland
"Does any owner make his land.
Yet all of its hereditaments
Are his and figure in the rents."

The puzzled monkeys sat about:
They could not make the question out.
Plainly, by precedent and law,
The ape's procedure showed no flaw;
And yet, no matter what he said,
The stomach still denied the head.

Up spoke one sprightly monkey then:
"Monkeys are monkeys, men are men;
The ape should try his legal capers
On men who may respect his papers.
We don't know deeds; we do know nuts
And spite of 'ifs' and 'ands' and 'buts'
We know who gathers and unmeats 'em.
By monkey practice also eats 'em.
So tell the ape and all his flunkies
No man tricks can be played on monkeys
Thus, apes still climb to get their food
Since monkeys' minds are crass and crude
And monkeys, all so ill-advised,
Still eat their nuts, uncivilised.

Edmund Vance (1866-1932)



Our boasted freedom necessarily involves slavery, so long as we recognise private property in land...The truth is, and from this truth there can be no escape, that there is and can be no just title to an exclusive possession of the soil, and that private property in land is a bold, bare, enormous wrong, like that of chattel slavery.
Henry George (1839-1897)

What is a great man who has made his mark upon history?
Every time, if we think far enough, he is a man who has looked through the confusion of the moment and has seen the moral issue involved...
Jane Addams

The Land Question

Introduction

Why is the land question so intractable? Why is there so little public knowledge of the only real answer to it? And in fact - why are the vast majority of us not even aware that there *is* a land question?

Much light can be thrown on all these three questions by the simple title of a book - "The effective answer to Communism and why you don't get it in college". The point is that the "effective answer to Communism" is also the effective answer to the multi-nationals. Therefore, there are the strongest possible vested interests on both sides in hiding up the roots of our common human situation.

As Tolstoy put it - (ardent champion of the great land reformer, Henry George, but with all the publicity on Tolstoy when do we ever hear that?): when a true teaching appears on earth its opposers invariably attempt to extinguish or distort it, or all else failing, to hush it up.

Let us examine our common human situation.

Man is a land animal, born to subsist from the land - "land" being a term for the whole of the natural universe including its resources. There is nothing we can do to alter that situation. Labour cannot apply itself to production without land, and all our capital is but the fruit of that applied labour.

Therefore, at the root of all our dealings with one another lies the question of access to land. Rights to land is the first question for any society to settle. It is also one which there is every reason for certain vantaged parties wishing to keep hidden and distract attention from.

Co-operation or Exploitation?

Let us look at the starting-point of society.

As long as men lived as hunter-gatherers, access to land was a communal affair and individual rights didn't arise. But when men began to settle and live at least in part from the fruits of individual labours, the question of rights to land at once assumed individual proportions - since no man would labour if what one sowed another could walk in and reap.

Man alone among the creatures of the earth has this capacity for transforming primary resources by productive effort. Therefore his occupancy and use of the earth contain features not belonging to that of the other orders of creation. Being of a sociable nature, he

weaves into his productive efforts the blessings of co-operation and exchange. But that the blessing of co-operation be not made the curse of exploitation, and exchange become robbery - a trend which, by degrading human nature, must in time extend to exploitation of other creatures and of the earth itself - it behoves man well to study the law and workings of this interrelationship of his productive effort. By rising to the particular challenge that his gifts lay upon him, he can prevent that they work to the destruction of all.

The very first point to note about man's individual occupancy of land in a settled community is that a dual situation arises from the start. The gain to the individual occupier, that is, is not only from his own exertions. It is also from the presence and exertions of the surrounding community. And here is the initial point where that vital fine line of partition between co-operation and exploitation requires most exactly to be drawn.

Economic Rent is from the Community

As to this latter gain to the occupier of land - the gain which is not from his own efforts - there is fortunately nothing hazy about it economically. Although the fact has so far escaped public attention, it is a gain perfectly measurable in strict economic terms. What we have first to grasp is, as A.J. Nock sums it up rather neatly in his book, "Our Enemy the State" - that by our Western (State-legislated) system of land tenure each entitlement to land confers "*two distinct monopolies*", which are "*entirely different in their nature.*" One is the monopoly, to the occupier, of the use-value of the land, and it covers the natural right to his labour-made property. The other monopoly has no natural right about it at all, however - involving as it does the right to gain from the land beyond what the occupier's own exertions yield him. This further gain consists in what is termed the "economic rent of land" - and it is straight out of the hands of the community.

The economic rent of any piece of land is the term given to the measure of its superior productivity over the least productive land in use in a society. This superior productivity may refer to intrinsic agricultural or mineral properties, or it may refer to a site advantage, such as access to transport or a central position in a busy thoroughfare - or again, today it may refer to zoning or planning use. The point is that the features which give this superior rental value owe nothing whatsoever to the individual occupier. The rental value is something created solely by the community. (This can easily be seen when we reflect that even good agricultural or mineral land, useful though they

would be to a loner in the wilderness, would have no rental value to him until the arrival of other settlers on the scene.)

The economic facts of our fundamental social situation, thus stated, are perfectly known in economics - (though not widely taught) - and are termed Ricardo's Law of Rent.

Whilst the right of the occupier of land to the fruits of his labour is an obvious and natural right, antedating human legislation, his right to the economic rent of land is clearly an unnatural right - one that only deliberate human legislation upholds. Thus our system, allowing the private appropriation of this economic rent, owes its strength and continuance entirely to the unawakened state of the public as to the dual nature of the rights which our land legislation confers. The inequity of the legislation conferring this dual monopoly is further hidden up, in that our word "property" is by custom (whose?) used as an umbrella word, to cover both the land and the man-made improvements upon it, (i.e., the rental and the use aspects together), as though they were a natural unity - although every estate agent knows which is the more real part of "real estate"!

Land Not A Marketable Commodity

As this concept of the private pocketing of the rent of land views land as a marketable commodity, it takes in its stride the idea of the buying and selling of land - an idea which we have exported to other unfortunate peoples.

As Nyerere of Tanzania put it early in his book, "Ujamaa", in commenting upon the extraordinary concept of "*land as a marketable commodity*" which colonialism introduced into Africa - "Such a system is not only foreign to us, it is completely wrong."

Mechanics of Fundamental Land Reform

As for the mechanics of estimating the rental value of land separately from its buildings or "improvements", these are perfectly straightforward, for where land is treated as a capital asset rent is already expressed in the selling price of land, which is rent commuted or capitalized.

The selling price of a piece of land without its improvements is readily estimatable -(estate agents well know the value a community places upon its unimproved land); and the method of making such a valuation is that the improvements *in situ* are ignored, whilst those on the surrounding area, (the result of other people's labours),

are most emphatically taken into account, these being of prime importance to the valuation. The pilot survey by this method of Whitstable in Kent - (which won over the independent valuers, both for the justness and the simplicity of it) - and the paper, "When Hungary taxed land values", are both informative reading; the latter showing how the public themselves checked the valuations.

The first step is, of course, a registration and valuation of all lands separate from their improvements. But when this measure came nearest achievement earlier this century, the Conservative peers vowed that, should they get back into power, this legislation would never see the light of day. And so the situation has remained.

Not Nationalisation of the Land

Any discussion of land reform since that time has centred on land nationalization instead - a measure with a safe and obvious repugnance. For by that indiscriminate procedure the use value of all land would, of course, pass into the State's hands along with its rental value, which would not only give the State inordinate powers over land use, but could take with it, as well, the private title to houses, etc., which would then all be held on lease from the State, and so, on the State's terms.

Fortunately, as Henry George pointed out, for justice to be done between men - *"it is not necessary for the State to take land, it is only necessary for it to take rent"*; and it should be emphasised at this point that the collection of that rent may be made as local a matter as society decides. A.J. Nock's summary, in "Our Enemy the State", of Thomas Jefferson's shrewd pointer to the decentralized society of the future - land monopoly once removed from the scene - is first-class study material here.

With the collection of the rental value of land, the private title to the house, workshop, or whatever the fruits of human labour be, would not only be in no way invalidated, but rather would be affirmed, by the establishing of this clear and definite distinction between community-created and privately-created wealth. Thus the buildings on land would be bought and sold on the market, exchanged privately, bequeathed, or whatever the individual desires, just as now. Only there will be no capital cost of land to pay in buying these - (the real millstone of mortgages, etc.). Instead the buildings, upon exchanging hands, will bear with them as it were an invisible ticket stating the rental value owed annually to the community for the land which they occupy - (a valuation which the community would, of course, see it kept up-to-date). In the special case of improvements to agricultural land,

Denmark's just dealing with this, in a minor application of this reform, is recounted in an editorial footnote in Chapter "Endorsements and Objections" in "Progress and Poverty". In brief a period of years is allowed after which they are deemed to have "merged with the land". (See further Appdx. C. Freedom and Co-operation.)

As Henry George sums it up: *"Here are two simple principles, both of which are self-evident: (i) that all men have equal rights to the use and enjoyment of the elements provided by nature; and (ii) that each man has an exclusive right to the use and enjoyment of what is produced by his own labour. No matter how complex the industrial organization, nor how highly developed the civilization, there is no real difficulty in carrying out these principles."* As he proceeds to point out, what we have to do is to *"treat the land as the joint property of the whole people, just as a railway is treated as the joint property of many shareholders"*.

There is no conflict here with the ecological view of land as the common dwelling-place of all creation. For what we are focused upon here is strictly the sphere of man's productive activity, and how to set justice between men at the root of it. Get that right, and man will live at ease with his brother - and all creation breathe with relief. Fail to deal with it justly, or ignore it, and the exploitation inbuilt into human society will have repercussions to the end of the earth.

It is interesting that Labour is as deep in the hide-up of this just reform as are the Tories. The reason that Labour remains silent about it is undoubtedly that - power over land being the primary power to exert in this world - Labour is doing very nicely, thank you, without land nationalisation, (and all the undesirable furor that would create), by gathering into its maw vast tracts of the country under our present system, via death duties, capital transfer tax, etc., etc., and all the other ploys now familiar to us by which the State manipulates, organises, and variously "aids" the dispossessed - anything, that is, except setting to and actually eradicating the evil thing!

Vast Ramifications of Change

The effects of eradicating an evil so great are hard to visualise, let alone estimate. Here are some of the more obvious:

(i) Land would cease to be an investment proposition, (for anything except investing your energy in),

(ii) No more would foreigners buy up our homeland - (and we would set the tide against the reverse horror of Westerners buying up the rain-forests of Brazil, etc.; and reveal the paper feet upon which apartheid stands),

(iii) Land speculation would be ended at a stroke, for there would be nothing to speculate upon, (provided the community kept its valuations up-to-date),

(iv) A powerful and ever-tightening monopoly at the base of all productive effort would likewise be obliterated - a monopoly with effect through the entire economic system, and the *“robber that takes all that is left”* to the wage labourer beyond a virtual subsistence wage. (H.G.)

(v) As land would become a liability to hold instead of an asset, vast unsuspected resources of land would be released, under this reform, for people's use, as individuals, corporations, banks, pension and trust funds, churches, colleges, etc., disbursed themselves of superfluous land in an economy where it would no longer be possible to reap rental benefit - present or speculative - merely from land-holding. (As may be seen from studying the Law of Rent, it is impossible for land to yield that rent twice - once to pass on and once to pocket as before. Under a further demand the land would simply go out of use.)

(vi) Land-owners, as such, would cease to be; all men would be equally placed as land-users,

(vii) What Henry George called the greatest waste in society - the waste of human beings - would cease, as work opportunity became available to all and men resumed the choice of whether or not to be their own bosses.

But the tentacles of the evil stretch on subtly through our system in other disguise. Thus it is speculation in land rental values, forcing a continual demand on the economy to overreach itself, that causes the familiar cycle of boom and slump - now politely retermed “recession”. (See “The Cause of Business Depressions”, by Henry George.) It is the unseen working of this Law of Rent, also, which sustains the essentially false conflict between labour and capital upon which so much irrelevant political argument tragically feeds. Again it is this unseen Law which sets in motion a secondary law, likewise unseen - the Law of the Depression of Wages, which explains the unending, tragic history of Trades Union struggle. (See App. A) Upon yet another important question: *“You who free the land will do more for the country than we who have freed its trade”*. Cobden's famous words were fitly followed by Henry George's volume, “Protection or Free Trade” - an absorbing study of the absurdity of the arguments for protection, (which really harms us all) - yet of how these arguments are fatefully forced upon a people from whom has been stolen their prior freedom to the land.

As for the painstaking schemes for the re-distribution of wealth, these must ever continue to miss their mark where all that is achieved is a redistribution of sorts among a people for the most part virtual

slaves - (bar what a mass of bureaucratic legislation has done to ameliorate their situation and so make them slaves of the State instead.) Henry George wrote blazingly about the slavery implicit in land monopoly - as indeed, others too have done. *“It is not until the ownership of land becomes equivalent to the ownership of labourers that any value attaches to it”*. And - *“who would buy men today when men can be hired so cheaply?”* “Slavery and Slavery” is how he entitles a chapter in his book, “Social Problems”, where he points out that the ending of shackle-slavery is the ending of slavery only in its more obvious form.

Thus, we see that this reform is not a mere matter of “land - for farmers?”, or of “money - for revenue?”, (although it is also these things). Far beyond them - it is a question of the right to life, of an equality between men from the Creator's hand, of freedom dearly held or dearly sold, for the proverbial mess of pottage.

From Every Walk

A reform of such scope needs studying if we are to grasp anything of its real import for society. For other wise we may carry an additional needless burden of legislation, from the failure fully to trace effects to cause where land monopoly has so long held sway - not only in the economic, social and political spheres, but now in the ecological too.

In every political party, in every occupation - (and most decidedly that of State employ), in every walk of life - among the large land-owners and land-invested capital interests no less - men of true aspiration exist, who will recognize this reform for what it is, and will help it forward in their own way, making their own study of it. One might say - the more honour to those who, from a position of privilege, set themselves to this task. But I think that every true seeker would claim as his own the view of Henry George, that in justice is the highest and truest expediency.

As he expresses it towards the end of “Progress and Poverty: *“The change I propose would be for the benefit of everyone - even the greatest landholder. Would he not be safer of the future of his children in leaving them penniless in such a state of society than in leaving them the largest fortune in this? Did such a state of society anywhere exist, would he not buy entrance to it cheaply by giving up all his possessions?”*

A Just, Far-Reaching and Ecological Reform

Here are some headings under which the principle of this land reform can be seen to have immediate bearing upon a range of issues important for any people, and the examination of which will sharpen insight into our present situation:

(1) A Natural Limit to Agricultural Holdings

The statement of a London merchant banker to a landowners' association recently, that *"the profits to be made in agriculture today are due entirely to the rise in land values"*, is only putting (in carefully-screened language) the point that it is society's failure to collect land rental values which is the force continually pushing farmers to acquire, amalgamate, and in any way possible enlarge their holdings of land - (as each such step tightens the land monopoly screw, it of course tends to raise land values yet again).

Where land cannot bestow upon its occupier the boon of community-created values; where it can command no landlord/tenant relationship; and where in reverse the occupier must now pay the full rental value of it annually to the community; there land will have an inevitable tendency to be held in that quantity only in which a man/family can make full productive use of it - or as some freely agreed co-operative venture may use. To heap legislation about the size of land-holdings upon such a reform - (and all that extra bureaucratic burden upon society) - may fairly therefore be compared to giving inflatable wings to a well capable swimmer.

(2) Ecological Husbandry - False Conflict between Farmers and Conservationists - The Uncommon Market - Newman Turner

A study of this reform places a powerful instrument in the hands of ecological husbandry. The extractive agricultural policies of today have turned out *"improvements to the pump rather than to the well"*. Fertility of the soil has declined under chemicals, requiring increasing applications of them, and production per acre has decreased with the continuing replacement of men by machines. To support the legend of today's "great increase in production", the Min. of Agriculture quietly switched the published assessments of production, in 1965, from a per acre basis onto a per-man-unit one. As Aldo Leopold put it: *"The art of land doctoring is being practised with vigour, but the*

with vigour, but the science of land health has yet to be born."

An ecological valuation of land must have at interest the "good heart" of the soil. It must value land for its highest sustainable production per acre. Since most farmland today, with soils depleted by chemicals, would be incapable of realizing this "highest sustainable production" in one leap, and in order to prevent a prolonging of the resort to chemicals, a graduated (timewise) system of valuation would have to be worked out, in dealing with agricultural soils, allowing an interval while the farmers "unhooked" themselves from the chemicals circuit. (If applied to all farmlands, organic farmers would gain reward from their present stand.)

As we remove the false government supports that prop up chemical agriculture - including, via agricultural training colleges - the escalating cost to the farmer of oil-based chemicals will in itself force change. What farmer will not then welcome an approach to farming which, besides relieving him of the mass of taxes which persecute him at present, places highest value on the soil as his greatest long-term asset, (which he in fact knows it to be), and induces the re-planting of hedgerows, etc., towards mixed farming, as in his own best interests as well as that of his animals - and of the countryside? Books like *"An Agricultural Testament"*, by Sir Albert Howard, will then easily zoom to the top of agricultural students' reading-lists.

It hardly needs pointing out, in the light of this, and of (1) above, that so much of the farming versus conservation controversy - (like that of labour versus capital) - is a tragic waste of both energies and time, being artificially induced by our artificial and unecological land-tenure laws. We lament that agriculture is in the hands of moneyed interests, who have turned the soil into a chemical formulation from a biological one in order to give the laboratories the whip-hand over the farmers in the field. But we forget that the upper millstone cannot grind without the nether, and that this whip-hand could not hold were agriculture composed of freemen farmers in a country that heeded well the power of monopoly over land - (which is the underpinning in turn, of course, of the monopoly capitalism that rules the labs).

The further structure of false agricultural subsidies, grants, etc., including of course those of the E.E.C. - whose real effects most people are quite ignorant of - built upon our false underlying land situation, and deliberately promoting these unecological practices in a new chapter of "highland clearances", is something else that environmentalists should be studying.

Nor let us overlook the weaselly way that agriculture, forestry, etc., have come to be called "industries", the neat suggestion incorporated in the term - that the products here too come off the end of a

conveyor belt - being subtly intended to furnish us licence to play about with the living world as we please. In the same way the term "agricultural improvements" so innocently quoted to this day, in fact features as an extremely twisted term in our history, the best "improvements" being always to the rental values. But - "I'll be judge, I'll be jury" - (and write the history books). And so - "improvements" they were!

Again - "Britain's biggest growth industry: creating derelict land" - is an article forming an important and powerful study, for conservationists and farmers alike, of our agricultural situation. (See ref.list).

To stand back and see the picture whole: Can one really imagine - in a country where all the people traditionally held a stake in their land, in their own environment, and in which the question of "getting a living" did not hold the artificial place it does in ours - that farmers would not guard the character and beauty of the land, not to mention its long-term fertility, as jealously as any of today's "conservationists", and as a most precious heritage to hand on to their own children? Farmers are not really any different in make-up from the rest of us. Only they have yet to awaken to their real land situation. Or some of them have. And some of us!

What could be more piteous, (and more demoralizing for the farmers), than the way they are made to sit trembling at what is going to come out of that great mouth - which has recently taken up residence at Brussels - apparently all unaware of the way they have been tricked into the hands of big business? The whole thing has nothing to do with farming (or real business) whatsoever. It has to do with making money out of a monopoly capital set-up - (note the incessant urging upon farmers to buy that new machinery and equipment!) - a monopoly capitalism battenning and fattening upon the underlying monopoly of land. In short - the Common Market is an uncommon market for monopoly interests!

With some delight, but no surprise, I have recently come across an article by no less a figure in the organic movement than Newman Turner, who, when editing an organic farmers' journal in the fifties, stumbled upon the principle of this land reform through his own reasoning - driven to it precisely by the anguish of watching the destruction both of the soil and of men that was going on in the agricultural scene before him.

The absorbing account of the "economic miracle" wrought by Stamford Raffles in Indonesia, by re-instituting the former indigenous land-system destroyed by the Dutch occupation - (which was the land-revenue system - before Henry George's time), is just further evidence that what we are dealing with here is inescapable, universal, social

law - which a society ignores at its peril. The great law-maker, Moses, undoubtedly grasped it. Hence his institution of the Jubilee Year, which in a more primitive society adequately dealt with land monopoly to prevent a new form of slavery taking over from the Egyptian one; a profoundly interesting part of Moses' work.

(3) Could not our Problems of 'Enough For All' be Solved by an Increase in Production Exploring All Possible Techniques?

It should be emphasised that no amount of achievement in producing, even by best ecological techniques, "two stalks of corn where one grew before", or its equivalent in industrial terms, will in any way alter our fundamental situation as at present. For whether it be two stalks or one that are produced, this is only a part - and unfortunately, the lesser part - of the picture. The question remains still - "To whom does the increase go?" For it is not land that is made more elastic by the increase in productivity that takes place upon it. The elasticity of production follows only from the application of labour to that land. So we return to: Whose labour? And: To what land does who have access?

That is why even such a measure as the repeal of the Corn Laws in the last century - while making corn more plentifully available (for all, rich and poor alike), and so removing the spectre of starvation at that time from the poor - prompted Cobden's famous utterance already quoted. For it could still do nothing to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor. For whether men are still growing corn, or whether land is turned to production of another kind under cheaper corn imports -(since imports have to be paid for): it is still the community that "gives the increase" - that is, the economic rent to land - whatever the productive effort. And this increase ("above what the most marginal land under production will yield") still goes to the owner of the land.

It is not only merchant bankers that know what is going on. "Land and Liberty", March - April, 1981, front page: "*George Ings of Savills, a British real estate agency, calculates that farm rents took 36% of net farm income between 1965 and 1975, rising to 40% until last year, when the share going to landlords rose to 61%*" (That this must lower the return to wages - since the landowner, qua landowner, produces nothing - is the other half of the Law of Rent. See Appendix A.). One is somehow reminded of the guld-wife in the fairy-tale, who finally oversteps her asking of the provident fish, when the whole thing collapses..... until it starts up all over again.

Had the aspiration of “enough for all” been purely a question of increasing productivity, there would be no need for hunger in the world today, as the more perceptive writers on this question are now beginning to discern - (quite apart from the matter of the criminal pile-ups and burnings of various “surplus” food-stocks that at present goes on). The real “spanner in the works”, as they point out, lies in the sphere of distribution.

But what has not so far been worked out - except by those falling wise to the land question - is that this business of distribution confronts us at two stages in the productive process, not just one. The more superficial and obvious confrontation is at the stage after goods have been produced (in conditions just or unjust), and refers simply to the distribution of those goods. The obviously more important, because prior, and therefore only really effective stage where the question of distribution confronts us to be solved, is the stage where it refers to the opportunity to bring about that production. This of course is the question of the distribution of, or the equal right of access to, productive resources. The very land question.

The report by the traveller, Karl Eskelund, of “an experiment in India” is an illuminating study on this question of the hopelessness of trying to solve hunger simply by producing more, where land monopoly prevails. That is - of failing to concern ourselves, at the same time, with the laws of distribution at the primary stage. As those Indian peasants saw it: why work harder when what you end up improving is not your own situation but the pockets of the owners of the land? Against such a stumbling-block - the fatal backlash effect of land monopoly, the insurance built so effectively into the system against production in the first place: against this, no amount of concern about the distribution of goods following production can be of any avail - (although it may provide some emergency relief from starvation); and the pious hope that “more education” will produce an answer, under such a system, is just another act in the comedy - (unless it be education in the land question, of course). No wonder that the point is being made with ever more force, by first-hand workers and observers on the scene, that the problems of the Third World will never be solved without fundamental land reform.

Nor let us be so simple as to believe that it is a question of “abolishing money”. The robbery would exist just the same under a system of barter, since money is only a symbol. This is how it works, in fact, in the more primitive societies. When we read in the seventies that the peasants of Ethiopia had to give above 70% of their production to the owners of the land it surely dawned on us why the peasants were starving! Some starve and still there is a “surplus” for some....

...as in the Irish famine.

Our own situation is fundamentally just the same, and the “experiment in India” and its industrial equivalent long ago turned sour here. So too, the same, in “dolce far niente” Italy, and “manaña” Spain, etc.- not to mention India itself. It was a group of outsiders, (excellently-intentioned Quakers, but ignorant of the land question), who set that experiment up. But Karl Eskelund’s article has a useful lesson for us, because the ramifications of the effects of our land system are so much more easily hidden up in our “highly complex industrialized society” - especially when we are carefully schooled into believing that it is all much too complicated for ordinary people to grasp! Not to mention the cushioning effect of various social support systems, which for too many decades now have successfully further discouraged fundamental study by ordinary people of the actual workings of the system. So true is Henry George’s statement that - *“in whatever lies beyond common experience we assume the beliefs of those about us, and it is only the strongest intellects that raise themselves above the accepted opinions of their times”*.

(4) The Land Reform: Terminology

As Henry George pointed out: by the remarkable workings of natural law, as a society arises a fund arises spontaneously with it to supply its social needs. Such is the rental value of its land.

Since this fund does not arise from land in its pure state, but only from occupied land, therefore it is not land that it is proposed to tax, nor even, to be exact, land value - (how could we really value the land?) - but accurately stated, its rental value. As this value is fully created by the community, it is, again, more accurate to speak of collecting it from those occupiers of land to whom it falls, and not of taxing it, as the latter perpetuates the pernicious idea that the rent originally belongs to the occupier.

If it is to be collected locally - (as a natural part of decentralist policy) - Community Ground Rent, or Community Land Rent, would seem ideal terms - (the middle term would be needed to make fully clear). They are certainly correct terms, however it is collected. The correct understanding and use of terms in economics is essential if it is to be studied as a science; and the early pages of “Progress and Poverty”, where Henry George takes by turn the various economic terms, such as capital, wealth, etc., analyses, and defines them, are as interesting and enlightening as any in the book. Particularly where he deals with that dangerously undefined word “profits” (so meaninglessly tossed about by Marxists): *“To talk about the distribution of wealth into rent*

wages and 'profits' (either in its common meaning or in the leaning expressly assigned to that term) is like talking of the division of mankind into men, women, and human beings". (See index to "Progress and Poverty".)

(5) The Social Fund and the Multi-Nationals

A study of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" helps reveal what is clear in fact to observation: that the social fund of land-rent, which grows as a society grows and flourishes, not only grows absolutely, but the proportion of wealth, also, that is community-created, is continually increasing as against the proportion that is individually created. "*Society works feverishly for the land-owner*", as Gustavus Myers sums up the incredible situation in his "History of the Great American Fortunes", where we can well study the origins of the multi-nationals - and their "abiding stay", (i.e. the working-force). The Law of the Depression of Wages, under land monopoly, gives Myers' words yet more desperate emphasis. (Appendix A.)

What we need to grasp is that we live, not in a capitalist society, but in a monopoly capitalist society*. We would then see that our answer is not to move into Socialism - the biggest monopoly capitalism of all! - but to remove the monopoly from our present situation. At root, by removing it from land. * (Hence the 7:84 Scottish Theatre Group)

If we get hold of that point, we get hold of all, since the centralization of power in the State is in fact wholly welcome to monopoly capitalism. The way of centralized control of the people is the easiest way to the full control of the people's wealth.

The hierarchies in the multi-nationals have therefore nothing to fear from Communism, and much to gain - (although it is useful to pretend there is a real fight between such capitalism and Communism, because money can be made out of that too.) And it is interesting to observe how, for example, fluoridation, which is now known to be a most cunning multi-million racket of the chemical and sugar industries combined, has been pursued yet more vigorously by the Left, in this country, than by the Right. So readily does the Left lend its support to big business! (Of course, once the framework of economic monopoly has been established through land pre-emption, and has nurtured up its offspring of centralised-political-power-in-a-variety-of-shades, we can scarcely expect the latter to turn and rend their maker!)

The dispersal of power, through the dispersal of capital, among ordinary people - which would follow as the natural corollary of this fundamentally anti-monopolistic land reform - is the one threat that the multinationals could not meet. The hide-up of Henry George's

teaching is pursued even more assiduously by the multi-nationals than by the Communists, because they are more alive to the threat it poses.

Little do those who espouse Communism through genuine concern for people, not power, and who turn from Henry George as "too decentralist", realise the extent of their naivete!

(6) Insane Directions - Social Problems

The great enigma of our time remains what it was in Henry George's: the continuation of poverty alongside increasing wealth and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor; a gap lessened only by State intervention, (and still producing its Child Poverty Action groups, etc.). But in the inbuilt monopoly direction of our system the key to the enigma is found. For we see that the prosperity of a growing society arises chiefly from the presence and activities of the community as a whole, and not its separate members. But this fact is cunningly hidden from our view under the system of the private collection of land rental values!

Once it is seen - (and a study of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" makes it abundantly clear) - that by far the greater part of the wealth of a growing society is community-created, a whole new panorama opens before us. We see that, but for the monopoly element at the base of productive effort, the wealth of the people never would have amassed in the pockets of the few, to form the distorted capital holdings that have in turn so misshapen society. We see that our lauded industrial revolution never could have got under way (in that form), had there not been to hand the necessary pool of cheap-because-dispossessed labour to man those "satanic mills" (and the coalfields that fed them). We realize that an incalculable creative contribution to society in every sphere of activity has been lost, from so great a body of the people having so long been fastened to the grim treadmill of mere survival. Insight grows into why "development" has pursued the deadly path of technology, with its final insult of placing the population in pawn to the leisure-makers - (when the greatest treasure of a nation are its people and its land). The boosting of television both in home and in school takes on new perspectives. And we discover why Bronowski's attempt to write up "The Ascent of Man", after its fascinating early chapters turns out a tale so dull.

In this panorama it becomes refreshingly clear to us that great masses of struggling people today, who have to be subsidized, allowed, grant-aided - in the first place, catalogued, questionnaired, etc. - and of course schooled, housed, medicated, and so on, by "big brother",

are being placed in an entirely false position in the social scene, and as of right possess the wherewithal to stand on their own feet.

Our colossal social problems - including most of what is termed "racial conflict" - are economic in their origin. And unless we look in the right direction we will never solve them; rather they will proliferate. In the chapter "Economics and Psychology" of his book, "Freedom - the only end", F. McEachran gives a penetrating study of the degree to which psychological illness, which has now become a major burden upon our health service, is the outcome of our failure to research, and bring ourselves into harmony with, the laws governing man's economic association. His book is essential study for both psychologists and social workers, who might then join in finding a real way forward for the multitudes who become social casualties basically because they are in environment or work they find depriving - or who are deprived of any work at all.

The repercussions similarly, upon the ups and downs of population figures, of our failure to confront the economic situation at its root, are illuminatingly touched upon by G. T. Wrench, (organic husbandry crusader), in his book "Reconstruction by Way of the Soil". From another angle, a succinct comment upon the population problem is made by a Westerner, from his years of experience in densely-populated Korea: "*overpopulation* is a serious misnomer and euphemism for *improper land use due to landlordism*". (Ref. List: Archer Torrey.)

(7) National Income Scheme from Land Rent - Dismantling the Bureaucracy - No Taxation

The point that a national income scheme forms a natural part of this land reform is referred to in W.R. Lester's booklet, "The True National Dividend", (which exposes the falsities and superficiality of the Social Credit Scheme). It is referred to also in a recent article by Fred Foldvary, in "Land and Liberty".

Since community collection of land rent builds justice into the very foundations of society, preventing distorting monopoly directions from the outset, with their disruptive social consequences, so accompanying this land reform, would come a major dismantling of the State. For the tasks of central government would then be confined to those very few proper to it - which are, by definition, those only that free men cannot accomplish better for themselves, in free co-operation with one another.

For this latter way has the rich gain of maximum flexibility, with space for the burgeoning of experiments and ideas which is what a society needs; and in addition, the safer basis of masses of small, uncostly experiments, instead of a few that are both costly and large.

Thus the tasks of government would certainly include nothing in the way of business, agriculture, housing, health, education, etc., government involvement in which will come to be looked back upon as a truly Alice-in-Wonderland state of affairs! As too will the present obliteration of an increasing amount of Scotland under coniferous cover by a quasi-governmental body - a situation causing growing concern. Death duties and capital transfer tax - part of the whole bag of trick substitutes for land rent revenue - both increase such monopoly use by the State of the people's land.

With the State's land requirements drastically pruned alongside its involvement in social and economic activity, yet further resources of land would be released for the use of individuals, giving rise to yet further economic rent, while an enormous burden upon production for the payment of bureaucracy would at the same time be removed. Not least of the blessings following from this would be the release it would bring to a great body of civil servants, who would far rather be "doing their own thing" - and would be a far greater asset to society doing it.

Fred Foldvary's article points out, as other Georgist writings do, that the Jeffersonian way can be used of collecting the land rent at local level, only that amount being handed on to the higher echelons which each in turn calculates as strictly necessary. This would certainly be the soundest way of ensuring that central government only got what the people at grass-roots level decided was needed - and would equally surely make it impossible for government to cut essential social services retained, and opt for guns instead. The fact that the rental value of land has a naturally local arising point makes this reform a prime instrument of radical decentralisation.

When we consider the vast network of support systems we pay for now, to make the condition of people tolerable in our present society; the huge expenditures of government money in various erratic directions; and the great social changes that would come about with the collection of land rent: it is clear that a considerable sum over and above government requirements would be to hand from the collection of this rent for revenue. And whether retained for distribution at local level, or redistributed from the centre, it would be the means of providing a basic income for all, ridding us of the poverty-oriented concept of today's "social security". There would be this difference too, that with the forces of unjust economic discrimination removed at the root, the distribution would take the natural form of a per capita one. Thus would be removed at the same stroke the role of the State as inspector of the personal standing of its citizens, with the growth of computerized information that has silently arisen alongside.

Both Lester's booklet and Fred Foldvary's article echo the strong warning of Henry George and others against mixing taxation with land rent revenue - (which latter would in itself, of course, collect the valid part of current Council Tax). The following are a handful of reasons why:

(a) *Unprofitable* - Against a background of land monopoly, taxation gathered in *some* of the gains that privilege bestowed. But because falling only beyond the point of access to land, it missed the real "boat" - (see Appdx. B) - and so could not begin to undermine the power of real wealth, nor fail to fall heaviest upon the poorest. Were the community-created wealth of a society, however, to be collected for that society one hundred per cent, any taxation added to it would then become a powerful charge upon the initiative and energies of the individuals making up that society, and so would work against society's own best interests, reducing the economic rent.

(b) *Servitude Anew* - The state has always been against people getting away with living at subsistence level without interference - not to mention the individual's honest attempt to better himself by his own exertions - and taxation with its boundless scope of inventiveness has always been an ideal instrument for keeping people in servitude to the State. (Under both home and colonial rule.)

(c) *Corruption* - Land cannot be hidden or removed, or run away. Hence there is no avoidance of the land rent payment - with the ensuing corruption that such avoidance always brings.

(d) *Economy of Collection* - For the same reason as in (c), the collection of this revenue would be at a fraction of the cost of present taxation, tariffs, etc. (See Whitstable Report)

(e) *Non-arbitrary* - Taxation, similarly grants, subsidies, etc., having no natural character, or starting or ending point, are an arbitrary affair. Thus they set at nought the good judgement of men in running their own affairs and planning ahead, the use of which judgement is to the benefit of the whole of society.

(f) *No Bottomless Purse* - The fact that there is a natural limit to the community fund, (as well as a natural character, and starting point, to it), establishes the concept of government's having to cut its coat to fit its cloth, in the same way as its citizens.

For these reasons alone, to allow the imposition of taxes, etc., in addition to the collecting of land rent, would seem the height of folly for any society.

That we have failed to use a natural method of funding our community needs, and devised instead a method that is unnatural, has much to do with the affrighting powers that confront men in both State and private institutions today.

(8) Violence - National & International

Today's violence and vandalism were vividly foretold by Henry George a hundred years ago in "Progress and Poverty", should land monopoly remain in force; and the transformation of the political scene was also envisaged - the fearful dangers that would follow for society as men come to lose faith in democratic institutions, parties pass into the control of oligarchies, law falls into disrepute, and corruption becomes commonplace.

As to the present nuclear race - whose astronomical costs the impoverished working masses, their own wealth turned against them, are themselves perforce financing! - grimly envisaged is this ultimate madness in the opening pages of Henry George's book, where he marks the continuing mass poverty that accompanies our progress as the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilization, which not to answer is to be destroyed. In the words of the proverb - "*the destruction of the poor is their poverty*". But the pithiness of that saying seems to have escaped notice!

One needs to grasp how the device of public debt arose out of the transference of the cost of the militia from landed privilege, (a rough ground rental payment), onto the people at large, in the form of taxation, to begin to glimpse the extent to which the devastations of modern warfare owe their origins to the people's continuing ignorance of the land question. (For which much thanks to the silence of the historians too, of course!) For in this way the increasing burden of the cost of wars has been shifted onto the ordinary working masses who are least able to bear it - and have nothing to gain from fighting one another. In a yet more direct sense land monopoly is the handmaid of war. It was rife land speculation which caused the economic collapse of Germany that brought Hitler into power. Ponder that, democratic nations of today (so-called), and tremble!

The chapter, "Public Debts", in Henry George's "Social Problems", is a crying protest against the whole paraphernalia of war: the waste and demoralization of constant warlike preparation; the corruptions which those vast public expenditures foster; the deadening of true social spirit and decline of liberty that accompany these preparations; and the perversion of spiritual perception in followers of "the Prince of Peace" It is all a too apt commentary upon what is taking place today, as once more the masses of ordinary people in the various nations are lined up to exterminate one another.

It is impossible to omit a mention at this point of the Irish Question. The following extracts are from the chapter, "Population and Subsistence", in "Progress and Poverty":

"... even under these conditions of land monopoly...Ireland did more than support eight millions. For when her population was at its highest, Ireland was a food-exporting country. Even during the famine, grain and meat and butter and cheese were carted for exportation along roads lined with the starving and past trenches into which the dead were piled... So far as the people of Ireland were concerned, the food thus exported might as well have been burned up or thrown into the sea.

It went not as an exchange, but as a tribute...rent...Had Ireland been by nature a grove of bananas and bread-fruit the social conditions that have prevailed there would still have brought forth poverty and starvation."

The ages-long silence upon the land question - how many crimes has it to answer for!

Henry George's writings form in fact an essential complement to Gandhi's teaching. As Wilfred Wellock, a close Western disciple of the latter, expressed Gandhi's thought: *"To refuse to participate in war while ignoring the disruptive and disintegrating forces in Western industrialism, indeed in its entire economy.....is illogical, socially indefensible.....suicidal. The true alternative to capitalism and communism has yet to be produced..."*. One can but regret that Gandhi was not acquainted, as Tolstoy was, with the work of Henry George.

(9) Human Rights

A Society concerned that its position on human rights will stand examination would be wise to study the critique, by Frank Dupuis, of the United Nations Charter.

In revealing the self-stated absurdity of most of the rights included in the Charter, Mr. Dupuis traces the cause of this to its failure to give any study to some of the most fundamental human rights of all, and concludes that the Charter may as well have been written, by a ring of land monopolists and protectors of privilege.

(10) 'Small is Beautiful': The Urban and Industrial Scene

Because unused and derelict land goes untaxed and unrated under our present system, fears are expressed by some that when such land is made to bear its share of rental payment, development upon it will take the form of tower-blocks, etc.

This is a grand misconception. It is the present system that produces this kind of landscape.

Think! When monopoly power over land can overnight multiply ground rents in a city street between 400% and 900% - (just one random example - see Ref. List: Christian Aid) - the land rentier has as good as served multiple notice on the small businesses there to quit. "Small" may be "beautiful", but small is not the portion that goes to the land rentier under land monopoly! And as this is the first part in the production equation, the rest remains helplessly hooked to it. These properties amalgamate, a suitable "developer" is brought in, and the "big is beautiful" highway rushes before us. It is speculation in rental values which is the primary land speculation and goes on all the time - and sits laughing at legislation directed against speculation merely at point of sale.

Make no mistake! The reason that big business, as chain and superstore, can undercut the prices of small business every time, is that the former are the ones who have cut through the land rent barrier, and turned it to their advantage by investing in land.

Nor is there any hope of the race ending here, the superior financial position once secured. For more glittering than the award of money - far more interesting and exciting - is the award of power, as big fish eats up little fish in a steadily eliminating game. In fact it is only as the engrossed financial advantage begins to add up that the real game gets under way.

Outraged appeals to the Monopolies Commission, such as from time to time erupt, focusing merely on the effects of the system while allowing the cause to go unchecked, indicate either that those who complain are children themselves, uncomprehending of what is going on - or that they depend hard upon the public's so remaining!

There is one way, and one way only, to end it. With the initial leverage of land investment removed from the scene by the public collection of ground rent, the monopoly factor at work in land use is out-manoeuvred once for all. The unseen screw constantly turning towards bigness in the business and industrial scenes has lost its driving thread.

We should consider also: once the false leverage of monopoly is done away with so that the ground rent demand finds its natural level, (removing from the producer only the "windfall" advantage he did not earn); when there is an end to producers being persecuted by the land factor in production; when the economic linchpin of the power game is gone: in that society neither will precious inner city space be left vacant or derelict because it can be held for nothing - and neither will its members remain bound to the empty husk of an artificially

constructed juggernaut game. Let us recognize clearly that the inhabitants of today's tower-blocks were housed into them (whether for living or working space) by the privileged "space-bestowers" of our society. Natural choice had nothing to do with it.

Creativity, inventiveness, the ideas of beauty and service, and the feeling of reverence: all these are a natural part of the human make-up - and of right human work; and it is obvious that men do not amass themselves voluntarily in the deafening giant, soulless enclosures of our factories. Kropotkin - the anarchist prince who, after escaping from the Tsar's dungeons, fruitfully examined the European and English scenes - reveals that, of the great centralisation of industry which took place in the industrial revolution, much was not even economical, but rather, was economic madness. The real attraction lay in the familiar power-trip - as old as human history!

Since we have nothing better than human nature to build society out of, surely the least we can do is to see that, in our association with one another, we do not install systems that will positively nurture our worser tendencies!

Fears of change must be assessed for their relevance against the unnaturalness of today's scene. Let us remember that the pressures upon those who are themselves exploited, to exploit in turn the environment, are great. And equally, since power is ever corruptive, those to whom we have permitted the exploitation of men without regard should not surprise us when they proceed to the exploitation of the environment in turn. It is open to us to see what is happening and institute change. *"The ownership of land is the great fundamental fact which ultimately determines the social, the political, and consequently the intellectual and moral condition of a people."* From Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" - and the only reason the word "ecological" isn't there is that it wasn't current in Henry George's day.

Recourse may naturally be had under this reform, as now, to zoning, planning, and other such regulations for a period. But we must look forward to a time when the human condition, under this reform, will more have normalized itself, since bureaucratic manipulation of the citizenry by the State is not a true answer. How could it be when we only "get the government we deserve", anyway! - while the opportunities for corruption fostered by such legislation make it partially self-defeating from the outset.

Look at the way the government defeats its own citizens - or is defeated by! - on roads, petro-chemical plants, 2,4,5-T, fluoridation, nuclear installations, etc., etc. It's the old insuperable enigma of *"Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?"* - ("Who will supervise the supervisors?"...!) While to any hardened believer that government control of land -

whether centrally or locally operated - can solve the question of land use, the article already referred to, "Britain's biggest growth industry: creating derelict land", will be compulsive reading and will administer a sharp and rapid cure!

(11) Work - 'Employment'

A supreme test as to how far we accept the abnormality of our present society as normal, and of the degree to which we are permeated by its slave mentality, lies in what Henry George points out as the quite extraordinary habit of regarding work as a boon. Moreover, as something to be given us - and jobs something to be "created"! - when each of us is born with a mouth to feed as well as a pair of hands, denoting that work is, quite simply, an elementary condition of life on earth for all.

As he well puts it - *"the land question is the labour question"*. While more glaringly obvious in primitive, agricultural societies, this same naked question burns through our dressed-up industrial scene. As he points out, first principles still apply, regardless of the false constructions we have built: *"Did you ever think what a strange thing it is that men cannot find employment? Adam had no difficulty in finding employment, neither had Robinson Crusoe; the finding of employment was the last thing that troubled them ..."*

With great clear-sightedness, Henry George warned against the belief that it is the business of government to furnish either capital or work. He foresaw the danger further inherent in this false creed, that it would *"bring great masses of men, the repositories of ultimate political power, under the leadership of charlatans and demagogues"*. Today we see the pitiable state to which Scotland has sunk through failure to heed this warning and confront the land question at root, dependence on the State for the jobs involved being a major way of keeping Scotland insultingly tied to her nuclear leading-strings.

Meanwhile, as land monopoly continues its centralized hold upon work-opportunity, the vocabulary of "employment" subtly takes over from that of "work", allowing as it does, in the term "employer", the idea of the benefactor, or "work-bestower", and also the useful translation of the workers into the more passive role of employees. Some there are that escape to create "small is beautiful" oases in the landscape, but it is still always against a background that militates against smallness. Even if, then, achieving this ideal for ourselves, we cannot afford to ignore the false law that supports largeness and thereby lend support to its destructive force.

(12) Decentralisation

Surprisingly, some in the ecological movement take the view that de-centralization is unimportant. They clearly have not discerned that the centralization of political power in our society is an unnatural growth. It is the direct outcome of the unnatural and evil centralization of its economic power - (for political power always follows on economic). Even were it desirable, then, it is hard to see how the former will survive when the latter, which is its prop, is taken from under it by society's collection of land rent. But surely we shall not shed tears at its passing. Power is a corruptive thing, and centralisation increases both corruption and power.

As for the fears expressed by some that small local communities could not be trusted to act from ecological and long-term interests: Where is the State doing that, we would like to ask - in agriculture or anywhere else? But where local communities seem to lack this true incentive - it is the dispossessed who have understandably lost interest in what they do not see any more as their heritage. First restore *that* to them with the collection of land rent - then discover that caring is natural for those who have a real stake in their environment. *"We are made for co-operation - like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth"* - a co-operation that has its natural span through time as well as space. These words of Henry George seem to me to harmonise with all that is best and soundest in ecological thinking.

Henry George and the Ecological Crisis

Henry George was a man of vision, and were he with us today there is not a shadow of doubt that he would be in the very forefront of the ecological movement - exposing the shapers of society for what they are, usurpers, and the ecological situation for what it is: the most glaring testimony of the ultimate price exacted from any society which presumes to build itself upon an ignorance of the land question.

Fortunately, we have his writings to turn to still, and here is how one new student of them sums it up: (Sam Greco, quoted in "The Georgist Journal", Spring 1977) - *"Henry George was a scholar and thinker. His logic, arguments and proofs are some of the best I have read."*

"His proposal for reform is in accord with the natural laws of the universe. However, this proposal, though sound in all respects appears to be ahead of its time for the majority of individuals on the face of this

earth. This is so because man on earth has not begun to understand the natural laws of the universe and instead utilizes emotions to express and satisfy his wants. These emotions are good for the politicians whom Mr. George has criticized in his book and who utilize them for their benefit in the false name of liberty and justice.

In time, as man comes to learn about the natural laws, this proposal by George should become a reality, since it will be the first step toward a complete and harmonious life in those laws, whereby everything on earth will be produced and used for the good of man in the quantities required and with little or no waste. This is a long row to hoe."

There is no use underestimating the strength of the opposition to - or the hide-up on - the true land teaching. But there is a saying about the strength of an idea whose time has come, and it seems to me that this is now true both of this land reform and of the entire ecological movement. They would make a formidable partnership! And one for which the earth is crying out.



"Let others labour, we shall own the land,
They'll work for bread, and place it in my hand."
(B.C. Mollison)

"The cause of discord is to be found in the violation of the laws of creation, of nature. If man will only discover and obey these laws which actually govern our existence, will learn to live in harmony with them, everything in this world will go well."
(Meishu Sama)

"Men like Henry George are rare, unfortunately. One cannot imagine a more beautiful combination of intellectual keenness, artistic form, and fervent love of justice."
(Albert Einstein)

(Appendix A)

The Law of Rent becomes the Law of Depression of Wages

Follow the diagonal arrow in the diagrams below, from B to E

A Different grades of land

Here are four sections of land with fruit trees. For simplicity, let us assume you can get one bushel of fruit from each tree. On the best section where four trees are growing (at left) you can get four bushels in one day. On the next section, with the same day's labour, you can get only three bushels. On the next land two, and on the worst (at right) only one.

B The First Comer - All Wages

So far, all the land is free. When the first man comes to pick the fruit, which land will he appropriate? Naturally, the best. The best land is then the margin of production (indicated by the dotted line). With one day's labour he gathers four bushels. They are all his wages - the reward for his exertion.

C The Second Comer - Rent Begins

The next comer has to be content with the three tree section. (This land now becomes the margin of production). With one day's labour he can get only three bushels - they are his wages.

These two men work the same - still one gets four bushels and the other only three. Why? Because of the difference of the land. The four-bushel land has a rent. Since it is one bushel superior, its rent is one (above the black line). Wages are three on both lands.

D Third Comer - Further Rise of Rent

The third comer has to use the two-bushel land. (This land now becomes the margin). The two bushels he gathers are his wages. The three-bushel land now has a rent of one and the four-bushel land a rent of two. Wages on all lands are two.

If this third comer wanted to work on the three-bushel land, its owner would give him only two in wages and take one as rent. And if he were to work on the best land, that owner could demand a rent of two, leaving two as wages. That's all the third owner could get for himself working on his two-bushel land.

The rent represents what the landowners can get without working, but solely by virtue of their ownership.

E The Fourth Comer - All Land Used

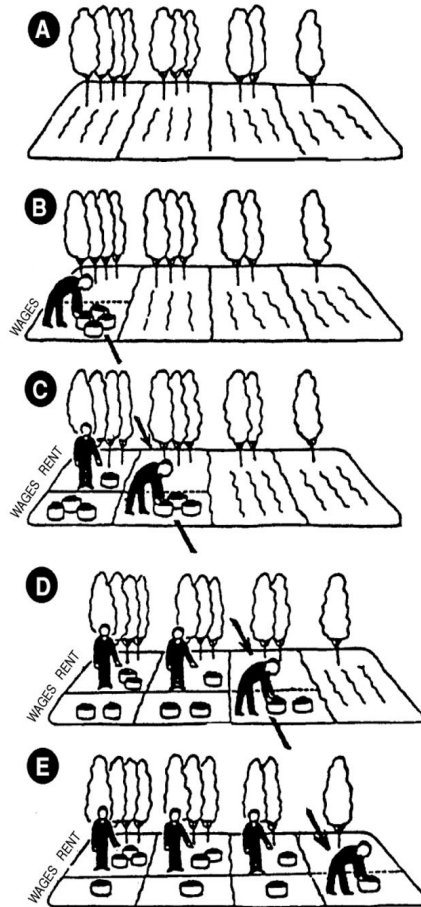
The fourth comer arrives and the only land left is the worst land, on which he can get only one bushel. Now all the other lands have a rent in proportion to their superiority over this land (which is the margin of production).

F Other Natural Differences

The operation of rent applies with any factor that makes one piece of land superior to other lands. There are other besides agricultural differences. The good harbour makes land around it valuable. The land further away is less valuable.

G Growth of Population

Here is a good piece of agricultural land that yields four. People settle in one section of it, and a town grows up there. Though land within the town is no more fertile than land outside, a productiveness of a new kind has arisen. Through co-operation and specialisation of labour, that section of the land is of much greater productivity. It now yields forty instead of four. If the four land were free, rent within the town would be thirty six.



H Effect of Industrial Growth

Industries grow up, new machines are invented and much more can be produced. The productivity of industrial lands has become seventy, which is greater than the town's productivity by forty.

Since more is produced, new materials are needed, and this extends the margin of production to lands that yield only one. Wages then become one, and rent is the excess on all superior lands.

(Appendix B)

The Multi-Monopolists

Those who would challenge the power of the multi-nationals would do well to start by calling them by their proper name: multi-monopolists. For the lately discovered phenomenon of "bio-magnification" has its parallel in the economic sphere.

Just as Rachel Carson recounts in "Silent Spring" how chemists in their laboratories were still denying that their pesticides could affect the bird population, while the robins who were their victims were falling dead about a college campus, because these scientists had not yet awoken to the phenomenon of biological amplification, (or bio-magnification), whereby the effects of poisons multiply, via the food-chain, up increasingly complex biological structures; so, in parallel manner, the poison of land monopoly multiplies, or bio-magnifies, up the increasingly complex structures of social and economic life.

For the economic scene, similarly, has its "food-chain": the capital extracted from and re-invested into an enterprise, re-fuelling it at each stage of its development. And into that chain of capital the poison of land monopoly is of course fed right at the start - literally "at ground level", by our failure to collect land rent. With incredible carelessness and ignorance we have poisoned the economic concept of land, by forcing upon it the false role of capital, in the economic scene.

This error whereby we confuse capital, the stored-up fruit of labour applied to land, with the actual land itself including its resources - things which precede all human labour and we can neither produce nor extend: this we may call a capital error indeed, in both senses of the word. The error fed in thus at base level is helplessly multiplied up the ascending spiral of extraction and input, into the fabric of society, whether the enterprise concerned be economic or social in its purpose, and whether its structure be private, corporate or State.

The effect of masquerading land as capital can only be - (since nought can be done without access to land) - to enhance, by multiplying, the monopoly advantage of those in at ground level, (the receivers of land rent), and oust the chances of the rest. Of course the name of the game is Growth! What else could it possibly be?

Of course it poisons human relationships, makes a mockery of free speech and action, and is the one real though hidden class distinction: that of the Dispossessioners versus the Dispossessed. The Dispossessed in the business world as well as in the farmers', as witness the small businesses that fall by the way in the relentless spiral up. So the poison of land monopoly, "bio-magnified" on its ascending path, relentlessly

converts into the multi-monopolism that is the multinationals' real power.

Meanwhile our array (or disarray) of economics "experts" in their laboratory think-tanks, blind to what is actually taking place around them, and while wringing their hands over the dying "robins" in the scene - (our closing work-places pouring out their masses of unemployed) - with a naivete paralleled only by those other white-coated technicians in their labs, see not what is staring them in the face - as though some mental paralysis had overtaken them at the confrontation.

Multi-nationals may stretch across nations; but a name that merely denotes their horizontal stretch is not as powerful as that which focuses upon their vertical one - the Multi-monopolism which constitutes these Goliaths' real strength.

A country taking the one step of radical economic reform - that of collecting its land rent - would soon lose its fear of the multi-nationals, since there is no sooner way to make these corporate creatures lose interest in investing in a country - and thus loosen their hold on its economy - than to present them with a scene where there is no longer any way of getting in at that all-important ground-level (of land-rent advantage), or even to gain from that advantage by squeezing in somewhere at a window on an upper floor; and where, on the contrary, the ground-level factor of rent, now payable to the community, will be found removing, at every level, the kind of reappings they were previously accustomed to make. (The opposite of multiplication is not just subtraction, of course, but division; and the interest of the multi-nationals is not just in monopolising, but in multi-monopolising.)

To those who perceive how the "bio-magnification" principle is at work in the economy, it is naturally no more logical to ask for figures to "prove" whether land rent will suffice for revenue, ere seeking this reform, than to a true biologist, (the man out in the field - not the one in the laboratory), it is logical to ask for "scientific proof", (i.e., by laboratory standards), of the effects of a pesticide fed into the biological scene, before seeking its ban.

The human-economic scene, just as the creature-biological one, is a living scene; and one of incalculable complexity. It does not allow of the successful extraction of parts for artificial laboratory reconstruction - to an overall end such as this. What we are dealing with here are principles and laws. (Natural laws - not man-made ones.) And upon our intelligent recognition of our situation in this regard - and action upon it - our survival must ultimately depend.

Meanwhile, plenty of interesting field-studies are to hand in both spheres of investigation, well corroborating how these laws and principles work. One such, on the fatal "bio-magnification" effects of permitting the capitalization of land rental values, is of such arresting content as to be discussed by the reviewer under the title "Proof Positive". (See Ref. List) Or why not just turn to "The Questor Column" in the Daily Telegraph of 21st September, 1981, where too it is clearly put: the company's "steeply rising rent roll" re-fuelling - and in turn re-fuelled by - the "appreciating capital value" that it gives rise to, on a continuing spiral up; and the "net rental income from investment properties" putting a cool £2.5 million more on the figures, by making an increase in the space of one year of almost 50%.

What labourer or non-land-invested capitalist gets that rise? And this, not only for not producing or contributing a thing - (the land-owner does not "provide" the land!) - but actually for standing between labour (and true capital) and the necessary ground of their activities. The returns to labour, as to true labour-made capital, are equally pillaged by the rentier of land. These are the pennies raining from heaven, indeed! Not to mention the further bonus, to those who achieve such power, of being able to manipulate to advantage the tariffs, etc., of the international trading scene.

Incredibly, one still comes upon such comments - and from people doing serious and responsible work in the world - as that Henry George's ideas have "very limited application to today's economy", that we have "shifted too far into the industrial age" - and even that they refer to "a really primitive peasant society"! Perhaps it is we who are "the peasants", as they say. Henry George's analysis of the economic scene is just the most up-to-date thing around. The question is - when are we going to catch up with it? He was a master of the human scene, far ahead of his time, (contemporary as he was of Karl Marx). He is the real but yet-to-be-discovered champion of those who have yet to discern the multi-nationals' clay feet.

Meanwhile, insultingly superficial are those panic measures to pump capital to the tune of millions into deprived inner-city areas which have lately sparked riots of discontent - (one of which is now being grabbed for conversion into a "garden" centre indeed!) More to the point would be for the deprived in those areas - who are less needed apparently than are the millions - to take upon themselves an independent study of just where those millions being rushed forward actually arise from.....

It may be said that the more are the superficial efforts of this kind to improve the lot of the deprived, where a society fails to collect its

land rent, and the more the hope and faith that are concentrated upon these superficial efforts, the more successful they will be in one thing above every other, and that is: in hiding up the real cause of the poverty and destitution from which people suffer. If it has needed multi-monopolism to this degree really to get people to see what is going on, then the multi-nationals may well prove to have played a role that is paradoxically positive - (as well as positively paradoxical!) - for mankind.

(Note: The first edition of this Booklet just preceded the inner-city riots in Britain of Summer 1981)

(Appendix C)

Freedom & Co-operation

It should be noted that, the rental value of the land once collected from the individual, that is the end of the matter. The fruits of his labour are thereafter his, freely to enjoy or exchange - just as handicaps in a race are set to remove injustice at the base-line, and thereafter the race is free. The truly individual incentive here woven into production highlights the false philosophy of today's "productivity deals".

There will always be a place for acts of compassion and charity, but in a just society these are best left to individual initiative, since this will encourage the horizontal lines of inter-dependence which are the mark of a healthy society, instead of the vertical lines of one-way dependence which mark a society that is sick.

Again - co-operation among free men is an enjoyable and natural part of life that finds its own place. But it does not need the waste of energies so often involved in deliberate attempts to create communal life-styles; which, however valiant and however praise-worthy against today's scene, unless recognized as part of the exposure of the false limitation on land-space that is their background, do not play the part they might in pointing out the distorting power of land monopoly.

Since, in a society which frees land from the role of capital, the relation between capital and labour is co-operative, not cut-throat, the analogy of the "race", above, is without vicious aspects. There are, too, many who will always prefer to live at a more basic level, beyond this giving their energies to music or meditation, rather than to more directly wealth-producing pursuits. Society is the richer for these.

(Appendix D)

Work....fit for human beings (Gandhi)

"The truth is that man needs work even more than he needs a wage. Those who seek the welfare of the workers should be less anxious to obtain good pay, good holidays and good pensions for them than good work, which is the first of their goods.

For the object of work is not so much to make objects as to make men. A man makes himself by making something. Work creates a direct contact with matter and ensures him precise knowledge of it as well as direct contact and daily collaboration with other men; it imprints the form of man on matter and offers itself to him as a means of expression; it concentrates his attention and his abilities on one point or at least on a continuous line; it bridle the passions by strengthening the will. Work, bodily work, is for nine-tenths of humanity their only chance to show their worth in this world.

But in order that work itself, and not just payment for it, shall profit a man, it must be human work, work in which the whole man is engaged: his body, his heart, his brain, his taste. The craftsman who fashions an object, polishes it, decorates it, sells it, and fits it for the requirements of the person he intends it for, is carrying out human work. The countryman who gives life to his fields and makes his flocks prosper by work attuned to the seasons is successfully accomplishing the task of a free man.

But the worker enslaved in a serial production, who from one second to another repeats the same movement at the speed dictated by the machine, fritters himself away in work which has no purpose for him, no end, no taste, no sense. The time he spends there is time lost, time sold: he is not selling his creation, but his very lifetime. He is selling what a free man does not sell: his life. He is a slave.

The problem is not how to sweeten the lot of the proletariat so as to make it acceptable to him, but how to get rid of the proletariat, just as we got rid of slavery, since the proletariat is indeed slavery.

As for the whole peoples who are doomed to idleness, what is to be done with them, what will they do with themselves?

In reply to which people will tell you that the State (and if you don't know what the State is, I shall tell you: it is mechanised Providence), which will have solved the problem of work by complete industrialisation, will then only have to solve the problems of leisure and education. It will plan games and entertainment and will distribute learning to all.

But the pleasures of men without work have always been drunkenness and mischief. The State can offer them educational pleasures for all it is worth, they will still prefer drunkenness and mischief. The games will then have to become compulsory and for many will cease to be games and turn into discipline and duties, falsifications of work from which no good can come. It would have been better to plan work.

But there is a pleasure dearer to man than work, dearer than drunkenness and mischief, that of shouting 'Down with...!' and setting fire to everything. That is a game which will quickly replace all others in the mechanised Paradise."

The teachings of Gandhi, from Ch. "Wardha" in "Return to the Source", by Lansa del Vasto, (Rider & Company, London, 1971). Quoted with kind permission of the Publishers.

Gandhi on Education (from the same book)

"...The question was how to rid official teaching of its fundamental vice, which is that of all our culture, namely the divorce between practice, theory and morality.

Practice, says Gandhi, is the root and stem of the plant, science its foliage, virtue its flower and fruit. Separating disciplines is cutting up the plant.

The child should first be taught a craft, and from that stem the branches of his culture will grow. The child's body should be busied, exercised and fortified at the same time as his intellect and heart. No knowledge, no principle should be revealed to him without their point of application, their use, their connection with reality being made tangible to him.

Now, everything is connected with everything else. It is up to the educator to discover the joints. If he starts from spinning and weaving, for example, it is not difficult to spin and weave a whole history of the civilizations from that subject. The study of cotton leads on to botany, agriculture, political economy and so on.

The child should be taught the dignity of working with his hands, and from that, the dignity of working on himself and mastering his senses, which leads on to all duties and all the virtues.

From the outset the child should be made to understand the price of knowledge and he should earn it himself in the sweat of his brow. A school must be productive and self-supporting through the work of its pupils. Boredom must be banished from school. Boredom is useless mortification by bodily idleness; it is dead science, dead principles forcibly inflicted on children. Children are the most lively creatures there are, the most open, the most inquiring on all subjects. Imposing silence, immobility, dead science and dead principles on them is not bringing them up. "Dead" means "cut off at the root".

(Pages 257-258)

(Appendix E)

Extracts from 'An Historian's Conclusions' by John Peter, JP, MA, FEIS

During the first decade of this century, the great politico-economic debate in Great Britain was Free Trade or Protection. I was in my teens; and my interest in public affairs was from the first economic rather than political. My family background was Liberal. Of course I was a Free Trader. I had read every available pamphlet on the Free Trade side of the question, and also most of what the other side had to say... It appeared that foreigners had no right to be in our market, but that we had a peculiar and exclusive right to be in theirs.

Meantime, the Socialists were... assuring the workingman that the question was of little consequence to him, and that he was exploited by the capitalists. I used to listen to the Clydeside "rebels" on this theme when they visited my home town.

It was at this time that a relative handed me a well-worn paper-covered copy of "Protection or Free Trade" by Henry George I soon recognised that here was a thinker who had gone right down to fundamentals and shown that Free Trade was essential to economic well-being - and that Free Trade was not enough! I was no longer worried as I had been about the "displaced" worker. His opportunities were really unlimited - though he didn't (and doesn't) know it - if only access to them under just conditions were permitted.

In due course I became an undergraduate of the University of Edinburgh. From a school fellow, Matthew Wilson Paul, who had become attached to the then very active Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values, I received a copy of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" which I still possess. Having already become familiar with economic terms and reasoning, I found it comparatively easy to grasp its main thesis. I soon realized that this analysis of the economic problem was unique and satisfying and that the solution presented was simple and just. I need hardly add I did not all at once grasp the full significance of the teachings of this book. Who ever did? But it was quite obvious that the author deserved the attention of all serious-minded people. Certainly, I was gripped.

The subjects which we "took" (as we say in Scotland) in my degree course were all chosen so that, besides qualifying me to earn my living, they would help me to become a citizen competent to understand what was going on around him. Thus I became a member of Professor Shield Nicholson's class in Political Economy. In his lectures (and in

his books) he explained the Law of Rent, as promulgated by Ricardo, perfectly. It was all exactly as I had understood it from reading Henry George (and others) and was illustrated by a diagram which I often used later on when I was speaking to audiences. What I could never understand, however, was his failure to draw the obvious conclusion from it. That, of course, was just exactly what Henry George did.

The man who grasps the significance of the margin of land utilisation and its effect upon wealth distribution has in his hand the key to an understanding of the great economic problem of our time, indeed, of all time. The question of to whom "rent" rightfully belongs was shirked or slurred, over. Economists in established places are always anxious to declare their objectivity. They deal, they say, with things as they are. The realm of ethics and morals is one into which they claim it is not their business to enter. Usually they dismiss Henry George in a footnote without even trying to show wherein he was wrong. But Henry George will not be disposed of so easily. Practice proves.

At the conclusion of my war-service, I was concerned like thousands more to know what beyond earning a living was a worthwhile aim in life. From the beginning I had felt that the way of life propounded by Henry George was for free men the best I knew. Advocacy of his teachings might put a worthy purpose into my life. Yet his way of things was frowned upon, or ignored, by the established economics teachers. I resolved to re-read his books systematically and critically. If there was a fallacy somewhere in his reasoning I would find it and that would be the end of the matter.

As it was, far from finding error in George's teaching, I could not help seeing the errors in others'. Chief of these was imprecision in the use of terms, the crime - to the logician - of giving things that are essentially different a generic name, e.g., property, and drawing conclusions that were not applicable to all things in the category. In short, they were illogical.

By this time I had extended the breadth of my reading considerably. I read the classical economists and the socialist propagandists - how hard it must be for a classical economist not to be a socialist! - and history of all types, particularly political and economic. It was borne in on me how almost all writers failed to see the connection between the system of land tenure and taxation in a country and the general well-being of its people; and how obvious (throughout all history) the connection was to me.

Cause and effect were there for all but the wilfully blind to see. I read scores of theses on economic subjects and discovered that these could be written without once using the word "land", the very prerequisite

of life itself. The word rarely appeared even in the most learned tomes written by the most be-degreed men in the business. "Capital" and "property" were there alright, scattered all over the text, but never precisely defined. Yet accuracy of definition is the first essential to clear thinking.

By this time I had become a subscriber to "Land and Liberty" and joined the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values. This brought me into contact with some of the stalwarts of the movement I had begun to write letters to the editor whenever I saw anything reported that invited comment. I did some speaking to groups of people under various auspices ... I was invited on one occasion to write the leading article in "Land and Liberty" - and did; and finally to speak for Scotland at two International Conferences, at Edinburgh and St. Andrews.

The great merit of Henry George's analysis of the economic problem (the equitable distribution of wealth) is that it is made in terms of real things, land, labour and capital, as opposed to "finance". George also assumes as fundamental, and demonstrates as true, that the distribution of wealth among the productive agents is, in free and just conditions, in accordance with natural law. This latter conception is beyond the unenlightened thinker who sees the problem - and how obvious! - as one of a shortage of purchasing-power, particularly in certain individual hands, and thus a monetary one. This view has won most of our leading men in all parties and though they see the danger of increasing purchasing-power (paper currency and credit built thereon) they know no way out. All advanced nations are today inflating their currencies, with good intent, and hoping to dodge the consequences! We Georgists must understand this "money-business" for we are now being confronted by another attractive, specious and dangerous "remedy" for the poverty-malaise.

(Note: The above article was published in August 1959 in the "Personally Speaking" series of the journal "Land and Liberty". See Ref. List. John Peter; born in Stirlingshire, and a member of the teaching profession, was a Vice-President of the Scottish League for Land-Value Taxation, on the Executive of the Scottish Liberal Party, and a member of Falkirk Town Council.)

Immediately following in the same series is the article from which the following extract is taken:

On The Threshold

by Philip Knab
An Austrian Vice-President of the International
Union for Land Value Taxation

“Personally Speaking” I am standing on the threshold of what I hope will be another life, as does every man who is past seventy. I can see our movement standing on a threshold also. On the threshold to success. Its two predecessors and adversaries, monopolistic capitalism and communism, are furnishing glaring evidence of their absurdity every day, threatening to annihilate mankind in their life and death struggle. Humanity is yearning for a new line of thought which will reconcile the individual with society. A new generation is growing up, looking out for new solutions



“Just as the water of the streams we see is small in amount compared to what flows underground, so the idealism which becomes visible is small in amount compared with what men and women bear locked in their hearts, unreleased or scarcely released. To unbind what is bound, to bring the underground waters to the surface: mankind is waiting and longing for such as can do that.”

(Albert Schweitzer)

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The Peregrine Press, The Rocks, Pitlochry, Perthshire PH16 5QZ
sending a stamped, addressed envelope

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Foreword to the 1981 Edition

THE AUTHOR - who is Scottish and returned in 1975 to live in Scotland - first discovered Henry George's teachings in 1958, and since then has written, thought and spoken continuously upon them, from the beginning recognising their link with the fundamental condition of our social life.

Following a Degree in Russian, she refused an invitation to research on Tolstoy, entering instead the field of liberal studies lecturing in order to forward the knowledge of Henry George.

She ran a course entitled "Upside Down World" at a London Polytechnic, and had the gratification of her students informing her at the end of the year that "Upside Down World" was the only liberal studies course still going strong!

She was invited to serve as a vice-president of the then newly-formed Anti-Common Market and Free Trade Party, which incorporated as one of its aims the reform discussed in this article; and "Henry Georgism: Shirley-Anne Hardy" appeared under Agriculture & Land Reform, among the forums of the Fourth World Assembly, (London, July 1981).

She has campaigned vigorously on various environmental issues, her interests in this field pre-dating her discovery of Henry George, and concern with ecology and economics (eco - oikos - house - habitat) are, to her, as the two faces of one coin.

"The Earth is our Mother. Let us start with that"

Reviewers Responses to 'The Land Question'

A fascinating essay on the land question, rejecting the present system of land ownership and its most widely discussed alternative of nationalisation, has been re-printed in its second edition by the author Shirley-Anne Hardy, Pitlochry.

Called "The Land Question" this short, controversial book gives food for thought for all residents in Scotland. It calls for radical changes to replace Government taxation not with nationalisation but with a "natural method of funding our community needs" - collection of land rent by the community.

In her introduction, Shirley-Anne Hardy asks why the land question is so intractable. Indeed why so many people are not aware that there is a land question.

She goes on: "...at the root of all our dealings with one another lies the question of access to land. Rights to land is the first question for any society to settle. It is also one which there is every reason for certain advantaged parties wishing to keep hidden and distract attention from."

The Oban Times; Thursday 4 November 1982

ONE OF the questions with which most environmentalists eventually, and sometimes reluctantly, find themselves confronted is: what kind of economic system best accords with environmental conservation?

The appalling damage being inflicted under monopoly capitalism has led many people to consider a socialist economy based on the partial or total nationalisation of the land as preferable, or at least, as a lesser evil. Shirley-Anne Hardy's booklet suggests another option, based on the philosophy of the American economist, Henry George, which is to restore the right to land by collecting ground rents as Government revenue in place of all taxation, while safeguarding the individual or corporate occupier's right to the full product of his labour and capital. 'The Land Question', which was originally written for the Ecology Party, discusses the ramifications of Georgist land reform with especial reference to the environment. It is a thought-provoking, controversial essay, and indispensable reading for those in the environmental movement who realise the impossibility of considering ecological matters in isolation from the social, political and economic context in which they arise.

George Morton, Friends of the Earth (Scotland)
Spring 1982 Newsletter

MODERN ADVOCATES of land-value taxation begin to be conscious of their difficulties at the point where, because the human capacity to absorb the spoken word is limited, talking must stop and reading must begin. What advice should they give? Let us face it at the outset: it is not everybody who is capable of taking in the full message of Progress and Poverty at first reading. Henry George was a genius, and his analysis and treatment of his subject will probably never be bettered; yet his use of the grand style, and the fact of his writing a hundred years ago, are insuperable obstacles for many readers of today. "I can't understand it" they will say, or "How can a book written then have any relevance now?"

To meet these difficulties, the present-day land-value taxpayer has at his disposal, many excellent short summaries in pamphlet form; but these, in turn, have prompted a different set of reactions. "It seems so simple, it can't be true". "What about money, multi-nationals, etc?" In her recently reprinted pamphlet, Shirley-Anne Hardy has set out to provide, in reasonably compact form, both a clear-cut statement of the theory and a wealth of examples, drawn from the controversies of the day, with which the common reader and watcher of television can be expected to be familiar. In all this she has been brilliantly successful.

I use the word "brilliantly" advisedly; for behind the print one senses the presence both of the eagerly enthusiastic conversationalist and of the poetic imagination that lights up her vision. It is a vision, which she shares with George himself; of the difference between the world as it is and a regime of economic freedom, the like of which the mass of humanity has, as yet, no conception. "We realize", she says, "*that an incalculable creative contribution to society in every sphere of activity has been lost, from so great a body of the people having so long been fastened to the grim treadmill of mere survival*".

It must be said, in passing, that "The Land Question" was originally written for a political party conference. Hence the references to a national incomes policy with which I dare say, Shirley-Anne Hardy agrees no more than will the majority of her readers. Hence also her demonstration that proper land use, limits to holdings and decentralisation of government functions will follow naturally after the abolition of land monopoly – thus refuting those who claim that these things need to be planned for now. This second edition, however is aimed at the wider audience of all those with a care for liberty, justice, peace and the harmony of Man with Nature. She deserves to reach it.

This edition has also been enlarged with a more detailed treatment of the multi-nationals, a diagram to illustrate the law of rent, some quotations from Gandhi and extracts from "An Historian's Conclusions" by John Peter. It is to be hoped that a number of distracting typographical errors caused doubtless by the urgency of the task, will be eliminated from future re-prints, of which there should be many.

David Redfearn,
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