

Private domain

A major change is coming to the internet. Iann—the not-for-profit authority that controls the structure of internet addresses (see [L&L](#) 1220)—is changing its rules on so-called top level domains. (Those are the bit of a web address after the last dot and before the first slash.)

For the moment these domains are nation-specific—such as .uk for the United Kingdom or .se for Sweden. (Exceptionally the us assumed the ‘international’ top level domains—such as .com—for itself.) There is no requirement for any internet concern to use a domestic address.

The change means a top level domain such as .hotel could be auctioned off to the highest bidder, for a one-off permanent transfer price. Any hotel owner who wished in future to have a website under the .hotel domain would then have to pay a fee to the (commercial) top-level domain owner, at a price determined in the competitive market.

Rather than relaxing the existing restrictions, and deregulating the internet naming system, the regulatory power is to be privatised to the highest bidder. Top level domain owners would enjoy sweeping new monopoly privileges—analagous to feudal land ownership. The value of those privileges could in time prove massive: the commercial owners’ control over access to large swathes of the internet’s trading centres may prove suffocating.

Dr Paul Twomey, CEO of Iann, calls the move “a massive increase in the geography of the real estate of the internet.” He told *nbc News*: “It will allow groups, communities and business to express their identities online. Like the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, we are in the process of opening up new real estate, new land, and people will go out and claim parts of that land and use it for various reasons they have.”

HGF report

**Chairman visits USA** HGF Executive Chairman David Triggs visited the us recently. There he attended the 28<sup>th</sup> Council of Georgist Organisations’ Conference in Kansas City and visited the Henry George School in New York. He met with some of the main thinkers, teachers and activists involved in promoting social justice in the us and Canada. In New York Triggs paid his respects at the grave of Henry George at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. Triggs also promoted John Stewart’s new book *The President*, an entertaining political novel which promotes George’s principles.

**A welcome visitor from Korea** Miss Vitnae Kang, an undergraduate student from Korea, recently visited the HGF Library Group. Miss Kang is heir to the teachings of an

UN seeks tax ‘normalisation’

The United Nations is driving forward a process aimed at ‘normalising’ tax regimes around the world.

The *Financing for Development* process is an intergovernmental dialogue which seeks “a global alliance” of stakeholders on the financing of international development. The process was born of the 2002 *Monterrey Consensus* in which developed, developing and transition economy countries pledged “to undertake important actions in domestic, international and systemic policy matters”.

In preparation for the *Financing for Development Review Conference* in Doha this winter, the first draft of the *Doha Outcome Document* has been published. Paragraph 10 says: “We will strengthen efforts to increase tax revenues through... simplification of the tax system, broadening of the tax base, and... the development of international tax norms and rules. We will consider strengthening the United Nations *Committee of Experts on International Cooperation on Tax Matters* by upgrading it to an intergovernmental body.”

The *Committee* is a group whose UN work goes back to 1968: its mandate is broad but focuses on issues of cooperation rather than tax policy itself. There is concern that if realised, the UN initiative could effectively delimit the ‘authorised discourse’ of fiscal policy—compelling the ‘Washington Consensus’ agenda. Others argue the reverse will be true: that the process—by its inclusive, para-democratic and consensus-building nature—will dissolve the current WTO/World Bank/IMF hegemony in the field. See [www.un.org/esa/ffd/index.htm](#) for further details.

old friend of the Foundation—the late Father Archer Torrey—and inspired by the work of Christian georgists in Korea. Father Torrey and his wife Jane started the Jesus Abbey community in Korea forty years ago. Barbara Sobrielo, Julia Bastian and others have fond memories of conference meetings with Torrey many years ago. The Abbey receives around 10,000 visitors each year and hosts a Summer School of Biblical Land Justice, where Henry George’s ideas are an important ingredient. It seems there is a significant body of Korean georgist scholars within the orthodox academic community. There may be much scope for future collaboration. (See diary, p.24, for up-coming HGF Library Group events.)

**New courses** A new ten-week course held at Mandeville Place based on Henry George’s *Protection or Free Trade* ended in July. Another new course, based on *The Condition of Labour*—

Thai tax

Thailand is preparing to reform its land and property tax system. Despite lower rates, the new law, if approved, would close loopholes and catch dodgers. Currently a flat rate is due on non-residential land over 100 wah (0.4 ha). The plan has commercial land tax capped at 0.5% of value, residential at 0.1% and farmland at 0.05%.

In a measure intended to combat speculators, undeveloped land would be taxed at double the rate, and increase the longer the land is left undeveloped, up to a 2% cap.

Making movies

This year has seen a surge of interest among land and tax reformers in making movies.

The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation has sponsored the documentary by Philippe Diaz *The End of Poverty?* The feature-length film was officially selected by the 2008 International Critics’ Week at the Cannes Film Festival. The film is currently doing the rounds of the festivals in search of a distribution deal. (Go to [www.theendofpoverty.net](#))

Fred Harrison has launched *The Renegade Economist* video channel on YouTube. (Go to [www.youtube.com/renegadeeconomist](#))

The ru has commissioned two documentary shorts, on poverty and on human rights. The films are presently being shot in southern Africa.

UK reformer Beryl Harris’s long-awaited tax reform film project is nearing completion.

Earthsharing Australia has launched a short film-making competition called ‘I Want to Live Here’. The competition invites “concerned people worldwide” to “address the growing affordability and housing crisis”. (Go to [www.iwanttolivehere.org.au](#))

George’s open letter to Pope Leo XIII, will take place on Wednesday evenings, starting on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2008 (see diary).

**UKIP** HGF Foundation member Dr Richard Lamerton, chairman of the Hereford Branch of UKIP, will deliver a talk on Henry George’s teaching at the Party Conference in the autumn. “UKIP members are usually passionate about justice and intrusive government” he says: “The natural simplicity of George’s ideas is likely to appeal to them strongly.”

**HGF database and L&L mailing list** HGF members Michael Leary and Barbara Sobrielo have been working hard to bring the HGF database and [L&L](#) mailing list up to date. Members, readers, supporters and friends are invited to advise the office of any changes to their details—or with suggestions for new recipients of complementary copies of [L&L](#).



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Zimbabwe’s MD... land value taxat... country from its

THE ZIMBABWEAN has a policy document under to *Govern to Preparing* 2008). As part of its “str... completing the business... national liberation” the... intention of setting out... of its plans for govern... is not merely a struggle... announcement, “but it... struggle for an ideal.”... the MDC’s “policy posit... Question in Zimbabwe... “will attend to the issue...

The MDC’s Land Ref... to engage with Zimbab... many of which have be... regime. The Program... values which guide it: f... creation; equity and eq... accountability; justice;... sustainability and pro...

The MDC introduces... plain-spoken words. “... the country’s unfortun... of plunder and wastage... with historical injustic... MDC takes note of the... that have been done by... between 2000 and 200... was chaotic and outsid... party recognises the ta... unpicking Mugabe’s w... it will work to “rationa... ensuring that there wil... pre-2000 status”, and... of wastage, corruption... multi-ownership” will... that the modern Zimb... agriculture, the docum... Agricultural Recovery... plans for radical land...

Previous statements... and his party on the is... have received little acc... criticised both for faili... Mugabe’s crude and in... programme, and for fa... agenda. The MDC’s new... plan would seem to sq... criticisms. As a broad... however, it will certai... questions than it answe...