

PROGRESS

SHARING THE EARTH SO ALL MAY PROSPER



PROSPERITY, LAND AND PEACE: CAN WE HAVE IT ALL?



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Karl Fitzgerald

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Prosper Australia

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Contact

Prosper Australia

64 Harcourt Street, North Melbourne Vic 3051

Tel: +61 (0)3 9328 4792 - land@prosper.org.au

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ABOUT

Prosper Australia is a 126 year old advocacy group. It seeks to move the base of government revenues from taxing individuals and enterprise to capturing the economic rents of the natural endowment, notably through land tax and mining tax.

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Contact Information Related Organisations:

ACT

Association for Good Government
www.associationforgoodgov.com.au
goodgov@bigpond.net.au
02 6254 1897

NSW

Association for Good Government
goodgov@westnet.com.au
02 9698 2436
122 Little Everleigh Street, Redfern NSW 2016
PO Box 251 Ulladulla NSW 2539

QLD

Site Revenue Society
dspain@spains.com.au
07 5574 0755
PO Box 8115
Gold Coast Mail Centre QLD 9726

WA

Georgist Education Association
www.gea.org.au
info@gea.org.au
08 9279 5590
5/20 Old Perth Road, Bassendean WA 6934
PO Box 472 Bassendean WA 6934

TAS

Prosper Australia (Tas branch)
foleo55@gmail.com
03 6228 6486
8 Rosina Court, Mt Stuart TAS 7000

Useful Websites

www.prosper.org.au
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Contents

Editorial by Karl Fitzgerald.....	4
How Land Barons, Industrialists and Bankers Corrupted Economics by Deirdre Kent.....	5
The Land-Labour-Capital Matrix by Gavin Putland.....	10
Geoists in History by Karl Williams.....	11
The Lost Commons by Sam Wallman.....	16
The First Great Reform by Henry George.....	18
Land: A New Paradigm for a Thriving World by Martin Adams.....	26
Land Value Capture by Karl Fitzgerald.....	28
A Letter From a Young Georgist by Jordan van Rhyn.....	31

“The sport of cock-fighting, where two birds are set before each other and so enraged as to claw each other to death is not so revolting as this viler system which pens whole populations within the narrow confines of a restrictive land system, loads them with oppressive taxation, insults them with wretched doles and wage pittances, and then goads them to fly at each others’ throats by the million, for some incomprehensible ideology, and for the vested interests of the few.”

A Philosophy of Peaceful & Practical Steps, Douglas JJ Owen, 1900

Editorial by Karl Fitzgerald

Welcome Georgists new and old to the 1120th edition of *Progress*. I am your new editor, having temporarily filled the role for a few editions over my 12+ years as Prosper's Project Director.

Over that time, I have enjoyed giving office visitors a geo-dossier of reading material spanning from our historic pamphlets to the latest reports. However, we've identified a *Progress* Primer edition as vital to building core understandings for new readers.

My intrigue with the Georgist message is the ability to speak to both the left and right sides of politics. The right can be placated by lowering taxes on the productive sector and the left with more affordable housing, self-funding public transport and decentralisation.

By engaging in this tax switch away from genuine entrepreneurs and onto land and natural monopolies, we can channel the property bubble away from the 1% and towards giving us all a tax cut.

Land Tax is in effect a counter-weight to land price (and thus mortgage debt).

Recently retired Prosper Secretary Anne Schmid tells the story this way: Imagine what would happen to Melbourne land prices if we all left the city. They would fall. What would happen when they returned? Now ask who creates those land values. The existence of the community. But why then are those same people taxed for working whilst land holders pay comparatively little?

"What earthly benefit is the landowner, who is simply a landowner and no more, to the country?... He is more destructive than the rabbit or the kangaroo: he merely eats and gives nothing in return." (Henry George, Nature's Gifts, John Pullen, p126)

The clarity of George's thinking helps address the pressing issues of our times: labour casualisation, congestion, migration, gentrification, inter-generational inequity - there are so many

issues reliant upon the one giant resource we all stand upon - the land.

It is the access to affordable land that enables productivity, sovereignty and independence.

My family have just moved to the countryside in Drummond, near Kyneton, Victoria. With solar, rainwater, and a handmade stone house on 30 acres, we revel at the potential of so much land and the fertility we can enhance. Just imagine what you and your friends could achieve on land with little or no mortgage. That's what we are doing!

With globalisation unleashing a tidal wave of international money scouring the globe for decent returns, we expect more will come to recognise Georgism as an undeniable force for good. The need for a land value tax grows daily when investors can buy and sell property from a hammock on a beach in their favourite tax haven.

Some see our vision as utopian, but with milestone achievements such as the imposition of a vacancy tax, the ACT's transition away from stamp duties and towards land taxes and more discussion of rezoning windfalls, we see plenty of growth to come in the understanding of economic rents.

We hope you can put this edition of *Progress* to good use by sharing it far and wide.



Resources

Georgist glossary - www.prosper.org.au/georgist-glossary/

Understanding Economics - Lindy Davies' excellent online course www.henrygeorge.org

LVT facebook page - a great place to ask questions www.facebook.com/groups/landvaluetax/



Image: pixabay.com/en/users/ivanacoi-323327/

How Land Barons, Industrialists and Bankers Corrupted Economics

by Deirdre Kent

Deirdre is a co-founder of Living Economies Educational Trust and the author of *The Big Shift: Rethinking Money, Tax, Welfare and Governance for the Next Economic System* (2017). She lives in Otaki, New Zealand, and has been active in the formation and activities of Transition Town Otaki and the Otaki Timebank. <http://deirdrekent.com/>

The so-called discipline of economics has been systematically corrupted in two major ways: first to get rid of the word 'land' from the very language of economics and second to downplay, omit or misrepresent any discussion of the words 'credit', 'banking' and 'money'. They shamelessly describe banks as intermediaries when they know this is a minor function and that a bank's major function is money creation. Fortunately the story behind the flagrant omission of land as a factor of production has now emerged, while the money story remains for some enterprising researcher in the future, (though various DVDs and stories hint in that direction).

The Corruption of Economics by Mason Gaffney and Fred Harrison, while free online, is hardly known; as of December 2015 only three New Zealand university libraries and the Auckland Public Library held copies. Yet in it is a very important story.

Fred Harrison describes the phenomenon of Henry George, the San Francisco journalist who took the world by storm with his book *Progress and Poverty* in 1879, in which he argues that the benefits of land ownership must be shared by all and that a single tax is needed to fund government – a land tax. The factors of production are land, capital and labour. Untax labour and tax land was the cry. Poverty could be beaten. Social justice was possible!

Of Henry George influential economic historian John Kenneth Galbraith writes,

In his time and even into the 1920s and 1930s Henry George was the most widely read of American economic writers both at home and in Europe. He was, indeed, one of the most widely read of Americans. Progress and Poverty... in various editions and reprintings... had a circulation in the millions.

Unlike many writers, Henry George didn't stop there. He took his message of hope everywhere he could travel – across America and to England,



New Zealand, Australia, Scotland and Ireland. He turned political. Seven years after his book came out in remote California, in 1886 he narrowly missed out on being elected Mayor of New York, outpolling Teddy Roosevelt. During the 1890s George, was the third most famous American, after Mark Twain and Thomas Edison. Ten years after Progress and Poverty he was influencing a radical wing of the British Liberal Party. He was read by semi-literate workers from Birmingham, Alabama to Liverpool, England. His Single Tax was understood by peasants in the remotest crofts of Scotland and Ireland.

Gaffney's section of the book outlines how certain rich land barons, industrialists and bankers funded influential universities in America and proceeded to change the direction of their economics departments. He names names at every turn, wading through presidents and funders of many prestigious universities. In particular, Gaffney, an economist himself, names the economists bought to discredit Henry George's theories, their debates with George and their papers written over many decades.

'George's ideas were carried worldwide by such towering figures as Lloyd George in England, Leo Tolstoy and Alexander Kerensky in Russia, Sun Yat-sen in China, hundreds of local and state and a few power national politicians in both Canada and the USA, Billy Hughes in Australia, Rolland O'Regan in New Zealand, Chaim Weizmann in Palestine, Francisco Madero in Mexico, and many others in Denmark, South Africa and around the

world. In England Lloyd George's budget speech of 1909 reads in part as though written by Henry George himself. Some of Winston Churchill's speeches were written by Georgist ghosts.'

When he died there were 100,000 at his funeral.

The wealthy and influential just couldn't let the dangerous ideas spread. Their privileged position was gravely threatened. Henry George must be stopped. But the strategy had to be subtle. What better route than by using their money to influence the supposed fount of all knowledge, the universities? That would then indoctrinate journalists and the general public. Nice one!

The story explains how, for their wealthy paymasters, academics corrupted the language to subsume land under capital as a factor of production. They redefined rent, and created a jargon to confuse public debate. Harrison says, 'For a century they have taken people down blind alleys with abstract models and algebraic equations. Economics became detached from the real world in the course of the twentieth century.'

Yes, the wealthy paid money to buy scholars to pervert the science.

Gaffney's rich, whimsical language is a joy to read. He writes to Harrison,

'Systematic, universal brainwashing is the crime, tendentious mental conditioning calculated to mislead students, to impoverish their mental ability, to bend their minds to the service of a system that funnels power and wealth to a parasitic minority.'

He painstakingly describes the funding of various American universities by such figures as JP Morgan and John D Rockefeller who choose the President who obligingly appoints suitable head economists to key academic positions. Gaffney trawls through the writings of key figures in neo-classical economics over many decades, quoting numerous pieces attacking Henry George and his Single Tax proposal. Several neoclassical economists actually debated George in person. These early neoclassical economists were J B Clark, Philip Wicksteed, Alfred Marshall, ERA Seligman and Francis A Walker, who each con-

tributed something to 'addle, baffle, boggle and dazzle the laity'. J B Clark, for instance, has a bibliography that quotes at least 24 works directed against George over a span of 28 years.

Banker JP Morgan funnelled his wealth through Seth Low to Columbia University in New York, and John D Rockefeller did the same in Chicago. Ezra Cornell, who Gaffney says once held one million acres of land, creator of the Western Union Monopoly, founded Cornell University in Ithaca, New York State. Leland Stanford of Southern Pacific Railroad (really a land company), funded Stanford University. Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland was endowed by Johns Hopkins, millionaire merchant and investor.

Each of these benefactors appointed their own president. Hopkins appointed Daniel Gilman as President. Out of that university came eleven Presidents of the American Economics Association. Gilman had a natural hatred of Henry George as he had been hounded out of Berkeley by the crusading young journalist when he uncovered 'Gilman's improper diversion of the Morrill Act funds.'

In his chapter entitled 'The Chicago School Poison', Gaffney writes:

'John D Rockefeller funded Chicago spectacularly in 1892, and started raiding other campuses by raising salaries. Rockefeller picked the first President, William Rainey Harper. Harper picked the first economist, J Laurence Laughlin, from Andrew Dickson White's Cornell (he liked Laughlin's rigid conservative and anti-populist views. Harper drove out Veblen in 1906, then died, leaving Laughlin in charge of economics until he retired in 1916. He passed the torch to J. M. Clark, the son and collaborator of J.B.Clark. Frank Knight came to Chicago in 1917 from Laughlin's Cornell. The apostolic succession is very clear from Rockefeller to Harper to Laughlin to Clark to Knight. ...Chicago to this day is still the lengthened shadow of John D Rockefeller.'

In terms of numbers, and intensity of feeling generated, Knight probably produced more neo-classical economists than anyone in history. He made no secret of his firm opposition to Henry George and ideas that might comfort Georgists.

His enduring interest and his viewpoint are clear from the title "Fallacies in the Single Tax" (1953)

Who would have thought nowadays that Henry George had to be neutralised? After all, he wrote his books and did his public speaking and touring from 1870 to 1897.

It was in these five Universities that neoclassical economics developed to the stage where it has almost completely taken over from classical economics, and it was out of these universities that the American Association of Economists was founded in 1885 by Ely, Walker, Edwin Seligman and others. He notes they did not welcome 'reformers'.

In addition, Richard Ely retired after a long career at John Hopkins University, to establish what he called The Institute for Research in Land and Public Utilities whose purpose was 'to investigate all problems connected with land taxation'. Contributors included utilities, railways, building and loan associations, land companies, lumbermen, farmers, bankers, lawyers and insurance men.

At least two of these academics were wealthy – E R A Seligman of Columbia came from a wealthy banking family. Richard Ely, who was known as the 'Dean of American economists,' was a well-connected land speculator, making a small fortune in Wisconsin real estate. He spent his life rationalising land speculation.

To give you another taste of Gaffney (take a big breath):

'To most modern readers, probably George seems too minor a figure to have warranted such an extreme reaction. This impression is a measure of the neo-classicals' success; it is what they sought to make of him. It took a generation, but by 1930 they had succeeded in reducing him in the public mind. In the process of succeeding, however, they emasculated the discipline, impoverished economic thought, muddled the minds of countless students, rationalised free-riding by landowners, took dignity from labour, rationalised chronic unemployment, hobbled us with today's counterproductive tax tangle, marginalised the obvious alternative system of public finance,

shattered our sense of community, subverted a rising economic democracy for the benefit of rent-takers and led us into becoming an increasingly nasty and dangerously divided plutocracy.'

Let's turn a blind eye to money too

The omission of the words credit, banking and money or the downright distortion of facts in university teaching was also no accident. The publishing in 1906 of Silvio Gesell's book *The Natural Economic Order* sparked a decades-long movement. Gesell has been described by Irving Fisher as a 'strangely neglected prophet'. John Maynard Keynes wrote, 'I believe that the future will learn more from the spirit of Gesell than from that of Marx.'

For centuries American politicians and British politicians had been treating money creation as a political issue. Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln are two who knew that banks create money. But after the arrival of neoclassical economics in the late nineteenth century, things started to change. To please the banks who profit from land ownership, mention of the words 'money', 'credit' and 'banking' was also omitted, especially after the widespread influence of both Major CH Douglas from the 1920s and Silvio Gesell's advocacy of a decaying currency. It was a bit worrying for banks that the Social Credit Party in New Zealand won 12% of the vote in 1953. So a Royal Commission on Banking and Credit was set up. In 1956 it found that banks were 'banks of issue as well as banks of deposit'. However, thanks to their spin doctors, politicians managed to misrepresent the findings well enough for the public to believe the Commission had ruled the opposite. Who knows what mischief went on behind the scenes? Universities fell into line. Academic teaching on money creation was reduced to a brazenly inaccurate paragraph or two, misleading generations of students. But money is really created by private banks as interest-bearing debt. This writes in a growth imperative, ensuring we depend on exponentially growing debt and continue to monetise and privatise the commons.

If universities are a vehicle for spreading misinformation about how money is created we can

more easily understand the simple and chilling statement of Mayer Amschel Rothschild,

"Let me issue and control a nation's money and I care not who writes the laws."

Predicting the Global Financial Crisis

The corruption of economics in universities is no trivial matter. Economic crises are serious matters involving loss of homes, savings and jobs and economists need the right tools to predict them so they can deal with them. Tragically only a handful of economists predicted the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-8 and the Queen of England was known to ask, 'Why didn't anyone see this coming?' Professor Steve Keen in his book *Debunking Economics* spends a chapter summarising the work of a Dutch economist, Dr Dirk Bezemer. After laying down certain criteria for selection, he concludes there were only 12 (two published together). He named Dean Baker, Wynne Godley, Fred Harrison (UK), Michael Hudson, Eric Janszen, Steve Keen (Australia), Jakob Madsen & Jens Kjaer Sørensen (Denmark), Kurt Richebächer, Nouriel Roubini, Peter Schiff and Robert Shiller. Subsequently Bezemer had the list at three dozen, but out of a total profession of at least 20,000 it is a very dismal record. If any other profession (e.g medicine) was so wrong in something that affected millions they would be sued. The universities who train economists should hang their heads in shame.

The urgency of getting this right

If universities are failing us by misleading our young people, journalists and politicians, think how critical it is to reverse this. Naomi Klein says that the climate crisis came along at just the wrong time – when neoclassical economics was at its zenith. No wonder there was a reluctance to do anything meaningful as it simply clashed with the dominant economic paradigm. She says, 'Economics is at war with the planet'. According to many experts there is only a small window to reverse climate change, until 2017.

There is a long way to go to reverse public thinking. Neoclassical (or neoliberal) economics has a death like grip on us. In over a century the doctrine has succeeded in further privatising the commons, dismantling the state, deregulating everything that moves and fooling the public over land and money. The economic theory that ignores the role of money and debt can't possibly make sense of the economy in which we live. It should be jettisoned.

While the collapse of the global economy will be terribly painful and chaotic, it will certainly reduce carbon emissions dramatically. But as long as the economy holds up we need to get on our bikes and work. Whatever happens, no future economy should have the flaws we have now. It is time to get cracking, or as the sheep farmers of the South Island of New Zealand say – rattle our dags. We can do it.

Do universities lead advances in economics?

During depressions great thinking is done, sometimes in universities, but more often not. Henry George wrote *Progress and Poverty* (1879) in response to abject poverty in San Francisco. Silvio Gesell, a German businessman, wrote after an Argentinian depression of the 1880s and 1890s and John Maynard Keynes wrote after the Great Depression of the 1930s. As we descend into worldwide debt deflation, today's searchers now must urgently find and implement a new economic model. And that will involve a huge shift in thinking.

Keynes' suggestions were widely adopted after the Great Depression. In 1933-4 Gesell's currency was put into practice in a small town in Austria with spectacular results. People came from all over Europe to witness the 'miracle of Wörgl'. But it lasted a mere fifteen months, cut short by the influence of big banks over the Austrian government at the time, who made the 'work certificates' illegal. So despite considerable influence for three decades for his important thinking on currency design (a currency must only act as a medium of exchange and must rot like potatoes and rust like iron), Gesell is now all but forgotten. As central bankers grope helplessly for tools to

stimulate the economy at the same time as controlling inflation, Gesell presents answers.

Gaffney's description of how land barons, industrialists and bankers perverted university curriculum, which in turn leads to incorrect government policy, is reminiscent of the story of the history of banking. Banks have been a powerful influence on governments ever since governments allowed banks to create credit that could be used to pay taxes. This may have happened in Europe centuries ago after the goldsmiths.

To add to our troubles universities, under the influence of neoclassical economists, have all but stopped teaching economic history so no one can study Gesell or George.

The tie-up between universities and neoclassical economists also influences the relationship of politicians to bankers. Nomi Prins in her landmark book *All the Presidents' Bankers* sheds light on the symbiotic relationship of a century of American presidents with the top bankers of the country, and how elite bankers can even dictate foreign policy. The dust cover of her book says she 'ushers us into the intimate world of exclusive clubs, vacation spots, and Ivy League universities that binds presidents and financiers. She unravels the multi-generational blood, intermarriage, and protege relationships that have confined national influence to a privileged cluster of people. These families and individuals recycle their power through elected office and private channels in Washington, DC.'



The Land-Labour-Capital Matrix

by Gavin Putland

WORKERS (i) pay rent, (ii) help their employers to pay rent, and (iii) raise some of the next generation of rent-payers.

LAND SPECULATORS (i) receive economic rent for the gifts of nature, (ii) take the credit for providing them, and (iii) lobby governments for an ever-increasing supply of rent-payers.

BANKS (i) borrow money from overseas and lend it against the gifts of nature, driving their prices as high as possible, in order to siphon off the largest possible share of the economic rent under the guise of the interest margin, (ii) ensure that home ownership is financed by debt instead of equity, so that new owners become human shields against price falls, and (iii) take the credit for facilitating changes of ownership that might otherwise have taken place at much lower prices.

HOME OWNERS (i) work themselves to death in order to pay rent under the guise of interest on their inflated mortgages, and (ii) support any policy that would increase their "equity" in their homes by making life even harder for future buyers.

PROPERTY DEVELOPERS drip-feed land to the market, after hoarding it for as long as possible in order to maximize prices.

IMMIGRANTS supplement the ranks of working rent-payers because, mysteriously, people of that class can't afford to breed at a sufficient rate.

GOVERNMENTS (i) enforce debts, (ii) protect property rights over the gifts of nature, (iii) provide public works and services that raise the market values of the gifts of nature for the benefit of the owners, (iv) bring in rent-paying immigrants who raise the market values of the gifts of nature even without public works and services, (v) fund these activities by taxing rent-payers, and (vi) take the credit for rising asset values.

THE UNEMPLOYED (i) try to take jobs from other people, thereby putting downward pressure on



Image: pixabay.com @ skeeze

the price of labour to compensate for the upward pressures caused by rents and taxes, and (ii) take the blame for all the free-riding in the system.

EMPLOYERS (i) pay rent, (ii) help their workers to pay rent, (iii) collect taxes payable by their workers, their customers, and sometimes even their suppliers, without being paid for this service, but under threat of penalties if they don't perform it, (iv) foot the bill for minimum wage increments that are mostly confiscated by the central government via welfare clawbacks and income tax, (v) hire immigrants in a self-defeating attempt to compensate for the above costs, and (vi) take the blame for all the exploitation in the system.

ASYLUM SEEKERS (i) divert attention from the far more numerous economic immigrants brought in by the central government, (ii) get branded as economic immigrants by the central government, and (iii) take the blame for the decline of national unity and national values.

LEFT-WING POLITICIANS pretend that employers can fix everything.

RIGHT-WING POLITICIANS pretend the unemployed and precariously employed can fix everything.

ECONOMISTS provide plausible explanations why the system doesn't need fixing, but should be as it is, only more so.

VOTERS reward governments for policies that (i) maximize the rents and land prices that they have to pay, and (ii) make the unemployed try ever harder to take their jobs and their kids' jobs.

Geoists in History

by Karl Williams

Welcome to a remarkable assembly of some of the greatest thinkers, reformers and philosophers in history. Although spanning many centuries and far-flung civilizations, these mighty figures were united in their belief that it's essentially wrong to own land and natural resources. The fairest and most productive means of sharing the Earth's bounty is to rent it according to its frequently assessed value, the proceeds of which are the proper source of public finance.

Very few of these geoists (deriving from geo, the Greek for Earth) had much in the way of contact with any of their fellows but rather came to their conclusions unassisted. Similarly, a startling number of our current Australian members had already arrived at geoist principles unassisted and were later amazed to find that there already existed formal organisations constituted to propagate these doctrines. While Henry George is generally considered to be perhaps the greatest proponent of geoism, he only rediscovered what many others had endorsed right back to biblical times.

In recent years, Progress magazine has begun to document some of the most noteworthy geoists in history, some of whom you'll recognise and some not. Each individual cultural perspective provides a fascinating insight into geoist principles, and these geo-biogs themselves are often inspirational. Here's a sample of the 63 we've featured over the last 16 years, with a few choice quotes:

MARK TWAIN (1835-1910) Celebrated American writer of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* fame who used his standing to promote the works of Henry George. "Give me the private ownership of all the land, and I will move the earth? – no, but I will do more. I will undertake to make slaves of all the human beings on the face of it."

LEO TOLSTOY (1828-1910) Russian writer, aesthetic philosopher and moralist who fearlessly attacked social inequality, coercive

forms of government and Church authority. "The only thing that would pacify the people now is the introduction of the Land Value Taxation system of Henry George. The land is common to all; all have the same right to it."

JOHN STUART MILL (1806-1873) English utilitarian philosopher who supported public ownership of natural resources. "Landlords grow rich in their sleep without working, risking or economising. The increase in the value of land, arising as it does from the efforts of an entire community, should belong to the community and not the individual who might hold title."

CLYDE CAMERON (1913-2008) Cabinet minister in the Whitlam government and Australian parliamentary delegate to the UN General Assembly "It is better to pay a small amount of land tax on your block of land than to pay a large amount in income tax and indirect taxation."

JAMES LALOR (1807-1849) Celebrated Irish nationalist and agitator for Irish independence. "I hold and maintain that the entire soil of a country belongs of right to the entire people of that country, and is the rightful property not of any one class, but of the nation at large."

SUN YAT SEN (1866-1925) Acknowledged by all sides as "The Father of the Chinese Revolution", he studied all possible economic systems with a view to having an independent China adopt the best. "The (land tax) as the only means of supporting the government is an infinitely just, reasonable and equitably distributed tax, and on it we will found our new system."

BARUCH SPINOZA (1632-1677) Dutch ethicist, rationalist philosopher and heretical theologian. "The fields and the whole soil ... should be public property, that is the property of him who holds the right of the commonwealth: and let him let them at a yearly rent to the citizens."



WINSTON CHURCHILL (1847-1965) Needs little introduction. Was a key author of the geist "People's Budget" of 1909, ultimately defeated by the House of Lords. "It is quite true that land monopoly is not the only monopoly which exists, but it is by far the greatest of monopolies – it is a perpetual monopoly, and it is the mother of all other forms of monopoly."

WALTER BURLEY GRIFFIN (1876-1937) One of America's greatest architects and the winner of the competition for the design of Canberra. Helped establish a home for the Australian geist movement in Melbourne. "Henry George has given us our text to carry forward."

ALDOUS HUXLEY (1894-1963) Acclaimed novelist and English thinker, and an environmentalist well before that word was coined. In his preface to *Brave New World* he wrote "If I were to re-write this book I would offer a third alternative - the possibility of sanity. Economics would be decentralist and Henry Georgian."

A.B. "BANJO" PATERSON (1864-1941) Arguably Australia's greatest poet. "The present system is absurd and unjust, in that it enables some people to get a lot of benefit from the community to which they have no right, and it discourages industry and prevents production."

ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879-1955) Was also a crusading pacifist and an economic activist in favour of geist reforms. "Men like Henry George are rare, unfortunately. One cannot imagine a more beautiful combination of intellectual keenness, artistic form, and fervent love of justice."

HELEN KELLER (1880-1968) Totally deaf and blind yet a tireless American reformer and an inspiration to millions. "Who reads shall find in Henry George's philosophy a rare beauty and power of inspiration, and a splendid faith in the essential nobility of human nature."

THOMAS PAINE (1737-1809) One of the recognised legends in the founding of the U.S.A. He was an author and revolutionary activist who took part in three revolutions. "Men did not make the earth it is the value of the improvement only and not the earth itself, that is individual property Every proprietor owes to the community a ground rent for the land which he holds ... from this ground rent I propose to create a National Fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person a sum."

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE (1863-1945) One of the 20th century's famous radicals who, as British prime minister, fought for geist reforms but was defeated by the landed aristocracy. "To prove legal title to land, one must trace it back to the man who stole it."

JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704) An Englishman respected as one of the great pioneers of political liberalism. "It is in vain in a country whose great fund is land to hope to lay the public charge on anything else."

HENRY GEORGE (1839-1897) Maverick, self-taught American economist who is held up by many as the greatest geist - both in terms of writings and campaigning - to ever walk this Earth. "The tax upon land values is the most just and equal of all taxes. It falls only upon those who receive from society a peculiar and valuable benefit, and upon them in proportion to the benefit they receive."

RICHARD COBDEN (1804-1865) An English politician and economist who was leader of the free trade movement and tireless worker for international peace. "You who shall liberate the land will do more for your country than we have done in the liberation of its trade."

MAX HIRSCH (1852-1909) Prussian-born world traveller who settled in Melbourne and became our country's greatest geist. "For the imposition of even a small tax on land values, would

lower rents, induce a more efficient use of land, increase the demand for labour, and therefore tend to increase wages.”

WILLIAM PENN (1644-1718) The Quaker peacenik who founded Pennsylvania on geist principles to govern its system of public finances.

STAMFORD RAFFLES (1781-1826) The English scientist, explorer, diplomat, administrator, founder of Singapore and historian who elevated the prosperity of the Malays and Javanese by restoring their traditional geist land laws.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790) Prolific inventor, journalist, statesman, high public official, pioneering librarian, noted abolitionist, philanthropist and co-drafter of the American Declaration of Independence.

THOMAS MORE (1478-1535) English lawyer, writer and politician who opposed the Enclosures of the Commons. Better known as the “Man for All Seasons” - the principled idealist who opposed the extension of power (and its abuse) of Henry VIII and paid for this with his head.

GERRARD WINSTANLEY (1609-1676) English religious visionary and reformer who led the Diggers in their fight for the natural right to common ownership of land. “Give thy free consent to make the earth a common treasury, without grumbling; that the younger brethren may live comfortably upon earth, as well as the elder: that all may enjoy the benefit of their creation.”

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-1778) A brilliant and unconventional thinker, this Swiss Francophone was one of the most influential Enlightenment figures, championing “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité” decades before the French Revolution. “We ought not to reason about a land-tax in the same manner as about duties laid on various kinds of merchandise.”

CLARENCE DARROW (1857-1938) This tireless champion of the underdog is probably the most acclaimed trial lawyer in American history. “Every man, woman and child adds to the wealth of the landowner; the others must secure land upon which to live, and they must bid with each other for the right to live.”

SIR RONALD EAST (1899-1994) The longest serving public servant in Australia who worked mostly in water engineering. He was an environmentalist long before the word was coined. “With our system of land tenure, each generation pays an ever-increasing tribute to the landowner.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809-1865) Almost all historians judge him as the greatest president in American history. “The land, the earth, God gave to man for his home, sustenance and support, should never be the possession of any man, corporation, society or unfriendly government, any more than the air or water.”

ARTHUR HENDERSON (1863-1935) A low-born Scot who became leader of the U.K. Labour Party and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. “The taxation of land-values seeks to open the way to the natural resources from which all wealth springs. The labour is here, and with it the will to work, but the land still lies locked in the grip of a tenacious and unrelenting monopoly.”

VOLTAIRE (1694-1778) One of France’s greatest writers and philosophers and the veritable embodiment of 18th century Enlightenment. “The fruits of the earth are a common heritage for all, to which each man has equal right.”

GEORGE ORWELL (1903-1950) An Englishman who became the most widely-admired English language essayist of the 20th century as well as the author of *Animal Farm* and *1984*. “If giving the land of England back to the people of England is theft, I am quite happy to call it theft.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743-1826) Author of the Declaration of Independence and the third president of the United States. “Wherever in any country there are idle lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right.”

JACK CRAIGIE (1871-1966) Prosper Australia’s annual literary award is named after this devoted servant of The Cause, a long-time South Australian politician. “Unless a government distinguishes between communally and individually created values, it does not fulfil its true function in protecting the right of all the citizens.”

ADAM SMITH (1723-1790) This Scot's magnum opus, *The Wealth of Nations*, is unquestionably the most important work on economics ever written. "A tax upon ground-rents would not raise the rents of houses. It would fall altogether upon the owner of the ground-rent, who acts always as a monopolist, and exacts the greatest rent which can be got for the use of his ground."

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT (1867-1959) The father of 'organic architecture', this American was considered the most influential architect of this time. "Henry George showed us the only organic solution of the land problem."

ALFRED WALLACE (1823-1913) The audacious travels of this Welshman led him to become the co-discoverer with Darwin of the theory of evolution and natural selection. "Rent paid to the community, through state or municipal authorities, is the only system which is beneficial to the whole community."

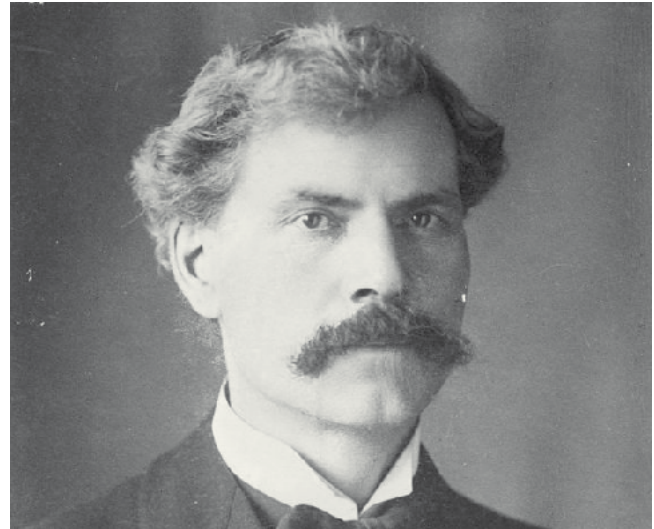
WILLIAM VICKREY (1914-1996) Pioneering Canadian mathematician who was awarded a Nobel in economics. "Use of land rents... for public purposes is therefore not merely an ethical imperative, as an unearned income derived from private appropriation of publicly created value, but, even more importantly, a fundamental requirement for economic efficiency."

BERTRAND RUSSELL (1872-1970) This English aristocrat earned fame as a philosopher, logician, mathematician, educationalist, Nobel laureate in literature, political theorist, historian, social reformist, and pacifist. "Every improvement in industry, every increase in the population of cities, automatically augments what the landowner can exact in the form of rent."

ANDREW CARNEGIE (1835-1919) The lowly-born Scot who became an American steel baron and the second-richest man in history also became the greatest philanthropist of all time. "The most comfortable, but also the most unproductive way for a capitalist to increase his fortune, is to put all monies in sites and await that point in time when a society, hungering for land, has to pay his price."

PHILIP SNOWDEN Twice Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, he took on the might of the established land barons. "Every user of land

should be required to make an annual payment to the local government equal to the current rental value of the land that he or she prevents others from using."



RAMSAY MACDONALD (1866-1937) Three times the PM of the UK, he is still respected as one of the great pioneering pacifists in world history. "Differences of fertility and value of site must be equalised by rent, and it ought to go to common funds and be spent in the common interest."

H.G. WELLS (1866-1946) Prodigious English author, futurist, essayist, economist, historian, pacifist, literary critic, teacher, political commentator and widely recognised as the father of science fiction.

JOHN DEWEY (1859-1952) The acknowledged leader in American educational philosophy and the great pioneer of pedagogy, the study of being a teacher and the process of teaching. "No man, no graduate of a higher educational institution has a right to regard himself as educated in social thought unless he has some firsthand acquaintance with the theoretical contribution of this great American thinker [Henry George]."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856-1950) Radical in his politics and bohemian in his lifestyle, this Irishman is the only person to have been awarded both a Nobel Prize in Literature and an Oscar. "Economic rent, arising as it does from variation of fertility or advantages of situation, must always be held as common or social wealth, and used, as the revenues raised by taxation are now used, for public purposes."



ALFRED DEAKIN (1857-1919) One of the fathers of federation who later became Australia's 2nd, 5th and 7th PM and one of the key figures in Australia's federation. Highly respected by all sides of politics. "The whole of the people have the right of the ownership of land and the right to share in the value of land itself."

HERBERT ASQUITH (1852-1928) Long-serving British PM who founded the British welfare state and took on the House of Lords three times in attempting to have the People's Budget passed. "We hold, as we always have held, that local and national taxes which are necessary for public purposes should fall on the publicly-created value [of land] rather than on that which is the product of individual enterprise and industry."

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV (1931-) Nobel peace laureate and leader of the Soviet Union who oversaw its breakup, along the way introducing perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (freedom). "Natural rent must be a part of public revenue – what they don't earn but rather what they simply receive from the nation, from nature."

RAE ELSE-MITCHELL (1914-2006) NSW Supreme Court judge, royal commissioner, historian and office bearer on countless lofty panels. "Land policy must be directed to ensuring that landowners are restricted to gains from the development or use of land and are excluded from gains associated merely with the passive holding of land".

CHIEF SEATTLE (1786-1866) The very embodiment of indigenous nobility whose speech expressing respect for all creation became an anthem for the conservation movement.

ROLLAND O'REGAN (1904-1992) Prominent New Zealand surgeon, writer and campaigner for racial equality. "Maori society could have survived land confiscations but it could not survive the evils a fundamental change of land tenure were to bring. Freehold land tenure caused the death of Maori society as it had been."

HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN (1836-1908) Perhaps Britain's first and only radical PM. "Let the value of the land be assessed independently of the buildings upon it, and upon such valuation let contribution be made to those public services which create the value."

JOHN BRADFIELD (1867-1943) The designer and builder of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, financed by geoist land value capture mechanisms.

No-one who's understood the set of principles that underpins geoism (or geonomics or Georgism, which are different names for the same thing) should be surprised to learn that it has been advocated by a multitude of glittering historical figures that transcend cultural practices or religious doctrines.

Take a moment to ponder the timeless and *universal* principles embodied here. On any planet on any galaxy, locations accessible to markets, weather, safety or teachers are obviously more desirable than those who don't. This is why we associate geoism with a natural law like gravity or entropy - it's always existed whether one acknowledges it or not, and if we try to live in defiance of the Law of Rent then we do so at our peril.

So join us each and every edition for more diverse accounts of geoists in history - there's a multitude in the pipeline. In the next edition of *Progress* we'll have Chaim Weizman, the first president of Israel and after that we'll review the life of the father of classical political economy, David Ricardo. Dozens more are still waiting in line, including Teddy Roosevelt, Bill Mollison (the co-founder of permaculture), Franz Oppenheimer, Joseph Stiglitz and Charles Darwin.

But the greatest geoists in history will be those who perform the ultimate service to the planet and bring about the widespread implementation of geoist sanity. Bring it on.

NO MATTER HOW RICH THEY ARE THEY CANT REALLY ACTUALLY OWN ALL THAT LAND!

MM, YEH, BUT THEY CAN DO A PRETTY CONVINCING IMPRESSION THOUGH

HELL, CADBURY HAVE HAD LEGAL OWNERSHIP OF A SHADE OF THE COLOUR PURPLE SINCE 2012...

A PROMINENT YOGA A COPYRIGHT IN A

I THINK WE NEED REMINDING- IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY.

YEAH...

...UH...

THE LOST

THE TERM "THE COMMONS" DESCRIBES THE GIFTS OF NATURE THAT ONCE DID - AND SHOULD AGAIN- BELONG TO ALL OF US.

THE COMMONS ARE COMMUNITY RESOURCES. NOT AS WELL AS SOCIAL MANIFESTATIONS LIKE L

BUT BECAUSE THE CONCEPT IS SO STAR LIMITLESS, HIGHLY CONCENTRATED PRIVATE HAS BEEN POINTEDLY DENIGRATED & ABANDONED THE LAST 200 YEARS. WE NOW SEE OURSELVES

BUT THE COMMONS COULD BE A SAFETY NET THAT WE COULD ALL RELY ON & WORK WITHIN.

IF WE CAN STILL CONCEIVE OF:

PUBLICLY OWNED TRANSPORT

BROADCASTERS PAID FOR AND OWNED BY ALL

CREATIVE WORKS

AND TECHNOLOGY THATS ANTI-COPYRIGHT FOR EVERYONE TO SHARE

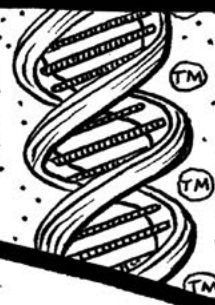
CIVIC PARKLANDS

MAYBE THE NOTION OF THE COMMONS ISNT AS DORMANT AS WE MIGHT THINK.

IN THE U.K., 5% OF THE POPULATION OWN 95% OF THE LAND.

NOT SO LONG AGO, OWNERSHIP OF PEOPLE WAS LEGAL.

AND NOW, OUR GENETIC SEQUENCES & DNA ARE ON TRACK TO BECOME TRADEMARKED.



INSTRUCTOR HAS CLAIMED SERIES OF YOGA POSTURES...

WHILE JESTAR & TOYOTA SUE ONE ANOTHER OVER WHO OWNS JUMPING.

...IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS.

...BENEATH THE PAVING STONES, LIES AN ALMOST FORGOTTEN CONCEPT

COMMONS

NOT JUST LAND - BUT ALSO AIR, THE OCEANS, LIBRARIES, PUBLIC SPACES & CULTURAL FOLKLORE.

THE NOTION HAS EXISTED IN NUMEROUS FORMS, WITH MANY NAMES, THREADED THROUGHOUT MOST OF HUMAN HISTORY.

CLASHES AT ODDS WITH THE IDEA OF THE PROFIT, & CENTRALISED POWER, IT'S ABANDONED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR OURSELVES AS CONSUMERS MORE THAN CUSTODIANS.

IF CLIMATE CHANGE, WATER THEFT, ALIENATION FROM NATURE, PRECARIETY OF HOUSING & UNCONSENTUAL MINING PRACTISES ARE RUINING COUNTLESS LIVES,

MAYBE IT'S TIME TO SAY THOSE SMALL WORDS AGAIN:

"THE COMMONS"

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO TRADEMARK THE WORD "COMMONS" SO I GET A LICENSE FEE EVERY TIME SOMEONE SAYS IT?





Image: unsplash.com/@kevinjyoung

The First Great Reform

by Henry George, Social Problems, Ch19, 1883

Do what we may, we can accomplish nothing real and lasting until we secure to all the first of those equal and unalienable rights with which, as our Declaration of Independence has it, man is endowed by his Creator -- the equal and unalienable right to the use and benefit of natural opportunities.

There are people who are always trying to find some mean between right and wrong -- people who, if they were to see a man about to be unjustly beheaded, might insist that the proper thing to do would be to chop off his feet. These are the people who, beginning to recognize the importance of the land question, propose in Ireland and England such measures as judicial valuations of rents and peasant proprietary, and in the United States, the reservation to actual settlers of what is left of the public lands, and the limitation of estates.

Nothing whatever can be accomplished by such timid, illogical measures. If we would cure social disease we must go to the root.

There is no use in talking of reserving what there may be left of our public domain to actual settlers. That would be merely a locking of the stable door after the horse had been stolen, and even if it were not, would avail nothing.

There is no use in talking about restricting the amount of land any one man may hold. That, even if it were practicable, were idle, and would not meet the difficulty. The ownership of an acre in a city may give more command of the labor of others than the ownership of a hundred thousand acres in a sparsely settled district, and it is utterly impossible by any legal device to prevent the concentration of property so long as the general causes which irresistibly tend to the concentration of property remain untouched. So long as the wages tend to the point of a bare living for the laborer we cannot stop the tendency of property of all kinds to concentration, and this must be the tendency of wages until equal rights in the soil of their country are secured to all. We can no more abolish industrial slavery by limiting the size of estates than we could abolish chattel slavery by putting a limit on the number of slaves a single slaveholder might own. In the one case as in the other, so far as such restrictions could be made operative they would only increase the difficulties of abolition by enlarging the class who would resist it.

There is no escape from it. If we would save the Republic before social inequality and political demoralization have reached the point when no

salvation is possible, we must assert the principle of the Declaration of Independence, acknowledge the equal and unalienable rights which inhere in man by endowment of the Creator, and make land common property.

If there seems anything strange in the idea that all men have equal and unalienable rights to the use of the earth, it is merely that habit can blind us to the most obvious truths. Slavery, polygamy, cannibalism, the flattening of children's heads, or the squeezing of their feet, seem perfectly natural to those brought up where such institutions or customs exist. But, as a matter of fact, nothing is more repugnant to the natural perceptions of men than that land should be treated as subject to individual ownership, like things produced by labor. It is only among an insignificant fraction of the people who have lived on the earth that the idea that the earth itself could be made private property has ever obtained; nor has it ever obtained save as the result of a long course of usurpation, tyranny and fraud. This idea reached development among the Romans, whom it corrupted and destroyed. It took many generations for it to make its way among our ancestors; and it did not, in fact, reach full recognition until two centuries ago, when, in the time of Charles II., the feudal dues were shaken off by a landholders' parliament. We accepted it as we have accepted the aristocratic organization of our army and navy, and many other things, in which we have servilely followed European custom. Land being plenty and population sparse, we did not realize what it would mean when in two or three cities we should have the population of the thirteen colonies. But it is time that we should begin to think of it now, when we see ourselves confronted, in spite of our free political institutions, with all the problems that menace Europe -- when, though our virgin soil is not yet quite fenced in, we have a "working-class," a "criminal class", and a "pauper class;" when there are already thousands of so-called free citizens of the Republic who cannot by the hardest toil make a living for their families, and when we are, on the other hand, developing such monstrous fortunes as the world has not seen since great estates were eating out the heart of Rome.

What more preposterous than the treatment of land as individual property? In every essential land differs from those things which being the

product of human labor are rightfully property. It is the creation of God; they are produced by man. It is fixed in quantity; they may be increased illimitably. It exists, though generations come and go; they in a little while decay and pass again into the elements. What more preposterous than that one tenant for a day of this rolling sphere should collect rent for it from his co-tenants, or sell to them for a price what was here ages before him and will be here ages after him ?

What more preposterous than that we, living in New York city in this year, 1883, should be working for a lot of landlords who get the authority to live on our labor from some English king, dead and gone these centuries?

What more preposterous than that we, the present population of the United States, should presume to grant to our own people or to foreign capitalists the right to strip of their earnings American citizens of the next generation? What more utterly preposterous than these titles to land? Although the whole people of the earth in one generation were to unite, they could no more sell title to land against the next generation than they could sell that generation. It is a self-evident truth, as Thomas Jefferson said, that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living.

Nor can any defense of private property in land be made on the ground of expediency. On the contrary, look where you will, and it is evident that the private ownership of land keeps land out of use; that the speculation it engenders crowds population where it ought to be more diffused, diffuses it where it ought to be closer together; compels those who wish to improve to pay away a large part of their capital, or mortgage their labor for years before they are permitted to improve; prevents men from going to work for themselves who would gladly do so, crowding them into deadly competition with each other for the wages of employers; and enormously restricts the production of wealth while causing the grossest inequality in its distribution.

No assumption can be more gratuitous than that constantly made that absolute ownership of land is necessary to the improvement and proper use of land. What is necessary to the best use of land is the security of improvements -- the assurance

that the labor and capital expended upon it shall enjoy their reward. This is a very different thing from the absolute ownership of land. Some of the finest buildings in New York are erected upon leased ground. Nearly the whole of London and other English cities, and great parts of Philadelphia and Baltimore, are so built. All sorts of mines are opened and operated on leases. In California and Nevada the most costly mining operations, involving the expenditure of immense amounts of capital, were undertaken upon no better security than the mining regulations, which gave no ownership of the land, but only guaranteed possession as long as the mines were worked.

If shafts can be sunk and tunnels can be run, and the most costly machinery can be put up on public land on mere security of possession, why could not improvements of all kinds be made on that security? If individuals will use and improve land belonging to other individuals, why would they not use and improve land belonging to the whole people? What is to prevent land owned by Trinity Church, by the Sailors' Snug Harbor, by the Astors or Rhinelanders, or any other corporate or individual owners, from being as well improved and used as now, if the ground-rents, instead of going to corporations or individuals, went into the public treasury?

In point of fact, if land were treated as the common property of the whole people, it would be far more readily improved than now, for then the improver would get the whole benefit of his improvements. Under the present system, the price that must be paid for land operates as a powerful deterrent to improvement. And when the improver has secured land either by purchase or by lease, he is taxed upon his improvements, and heavily taxed in various ways upon all that he uses. Were land treated as the property of the whole people, the ground-rent accruing to the community would suffice for public purposes, and all other taxation might be dispensed with. The improver could more easily get land to improve, and would retain for himself the full benefit of his improvements exempt from taxation.

To secure to all citizens their equal right to the land on which they live, does not mean, as some of the ignorant seem to suppose, that every one must be given a farm, and city land be cut up into little pieces. It would be impossible to secure

the equal rights of all in that way, even if such division were not in itself impossible. In a small and primitive community of simple industries and habits, such as that Moses legislated for, substantial equality may be secured by allotting to each family an equal share of the land and making it unalienable. Or, as among our rude ancestors in western Europe, or in such primitive society as the village communities of Russia and India, substantial equality may be secured by periodical allotment or cultivation in common. Or in sparse populations, such as the early New England colonies, substantial equality may be secured by giving to each family its town-lot and its seed-lot, holding the rest of the land as town land or common. But among a highly civilized and rapidly growing population, with changing centers, with great cities and minute division of industry, and a complex system of production and exchange, such rude devices become ineffective and impossible.

Must we therefore consent to inequality -- must we therefore consent that some shall monopolize what is the common heritage of all?

Not at all. If two men find a diamond, they do not march to a lapidary to have it cut in two. If three sons inherit a ship, they do not proceed to saw her into three pieces; nor yet do they agree that if this cannot be done equal division is impossible. Nor yet is there no other way to secure the rights of the owners of a railroad than by breaking up track, engines, cars and depots into as many separate bits as there are stockholders. And so it is not necessary, in order to secure equal rights to land, to make an equal division of land. All that it is necessary to do is to collect the ground-rents for the common benefit.

Nor, to take ground-rents for the common benefit, is it necessary that the state should actually take possession of the land and rent it out from year to year, or from term to term, as some ignorant people suppose. It can be done in a much more simple and easy manner by means of the existing machinery of taxation. All it is necessary to do is to abolish all other forms of taxation until the weight of taxation rests upon the value of land irrespective of improvements, and take the ground-rent for the public benefit.



In this simple way, without increasing governmental machinery, but, on the contrary, greatly simplifying it, we could make land common property. And in doing this we could abolish all other taxation, and still have a great and steadily increasing surplus -- a growing common fund, in the benefits of which all might share, and in the management of which there would be such a direct and general interest as to afford the strongest guaranties against misappropriation or waste. Under this system no one could afford to hold land he was not using, and land not in use would be thrown open to those who wished to use it, at once relieving the labor market and giving an enormous stimulus to production and improvement, while land in use would be paid for according to its value, irrespective of the improvements the user might make. On these he would not be taxed. All that his labor could add to the common wealth, all that his prudence could save, would be his own, instead of, as now, subjecting him to fine. Thus would the sacred right of property be acknowledged by securing to each the reward of his exertion.

Practically, then, the greatest, the most fundamental of all reforms, the reform which will make all other reforms easier, and without which no other reform will avail, is to be reached by concentrating all taxation into a tax upon the value of land, and making that heavy enough to take as near as may be the whole ground-rent for common purposes.

To those who have never studied the subject, it will seem ridiculous to propose as the greatest and most far-reaching of all reforms a mere fiscal change. But whoever has followed the train of thought through which in preceding chapters I have endeavored to lead, will see that in this simple proposition is involved the greatest of social revolutions -- a revolution compared with which that which destroyed ancient monarchy in France, or that which destroyed chattel slavery in our Southern States, were as nothing.

In a book such as this, intended for the casual reader, who lacks inclination to follow the close reasoning necessary to show the full relation of this seemingly simple reform to economic laws, I cannot exhibit its full force, but I may point to some of the more obvious of its effects.

To appropriate ground-rent to public uses by means of taxation would permit the abolition of all the taxation which now presses so heavily upon labor and capital. This would enormously increase the production of wealth by the removal of restrictions and by adding to the incentives to production.

It would at the same time enormously increase the production of wealth by throwing open natural opportunities. It would utterly destroy land monopoly by making the holding of land unprofitable to any but the user. There would be no temptation to any one to hold land in expectation of future increase in its value when that increase was certain to be demanded in taxes.

No one could afford to hold valuable land idle when the taxes upon it would be as heavy as they would be were it put to the fullest use.

Thus speculation in land would be utterly destroyed, and land not in use would become free to those who wished to use it.

The enormous increase in production which would result from thus throwing open the natural means and opportunities of production, while at the same time removing the taxation which now hampers, restricts and fines production, would enormously augment the annual fund from which all incomes are drawn. It would at the same time make the distribution of wealth much more equal. That great part of this fund which is now taken by the owners of land, not as a return for anything by which they add to production, but because they have appropriated as their own the natural means and opportunities of production, and which as material progress goes on, and the value of land rises, is constantly becoming larger and larger, would be virtually divided among all, by being utilized for common purposes.

The removal of restrictions upon labor, and the opening of natural opportunities to labor, would make labor free to employ itself. Labor, the producer of all wealth, could never become "a drug in the market" while desire for any form of wealth was unsatisfied. With the natural opportunities of employment thrown open to all, the spectacle of willing men seeking vainly for employment could not be witnessed; there could be no surplus of unemployed labor to beget that cutthroat competition of laborers for employment which crowds wages down to the cost of merely living. Instead of the one-sided competition of workmen to find employment, employers would compete with each other to obtain workmen. There would be no need of combinations to raise or maintain wages; for wages, instead of tending to the lowest point at which laborers can live, would tend to the highest point which employers could pay, and thus, instead of getting but a mere fraction of his earnings, the workman would get the full return of his labor, leaving to the skill, foresight and capital of the employer those additional earnings that are justly their due.

The equalization in the distribution of wealth that would thus result would effect immense economies and greatly add to productive power. The cost of the idleness, pauperism and crime that spring from poverty would be saved to the community; the increased mobility of labor, the increased intelligence of the masses, that would result from this equalized distribution of wealth, the greater incentive to invention and to the use of improved processes that would result



from the increase in wages, would enormously increase production.

To abolish all taxes save a tax upon the value of land would at the same time greatly simplify the machinery and expenses of government, and greatly reduce government expenses. An army of Custom-House officers, and internal revenue officials, and license collectors and assessors, clerks, accountants, spies, detectives, and government employees of every description, could be dispensed with. The corrupting effect of indirect taxation would be taken out of our politics. The rings and combinations now interested in keeping up taxation would cease to contribute money for the debauching of voters and to beset the law-making power with their lobbyists. We should get rid of the fraud and false swearing, of the bribery and subornation which now attend the collection of so much of our public revenues. We should get rid of the demoralization that proceeds from laws which prohibit actions in themselves harmless, punish men for crimes which the moral sense does not condemn, and offer a constant premium to evasion.

"Land lies out of doors." It cannot be hid or carried off. Its value can be ascertained with greater ease and exactness than the value of anything else, and taxes upon that value can be collected with absolute certainty and at the minimum of expense.

To rely upon land values for the whole public revenue would so simplify government, would so eliminate incentives to corruption, that we could safely assume as governmental functions the management of telegraphs and railroads, and safely apply the increasing surplus to securing such common benefits and providing such public conveniences as advancing civilization may call for.

And in thinking of what is possible in the way of the management of common concerns for the common benefit, not only is the great simplification of government which would result from the reform I have suggested to be considered, but the higher moral tone that would be given to social life by the equalization of conditions and the abolition of poverty. The greed of wealth, which makes it a business motto that every man is to be treated as though he were a rascal, and induces despair of getting in places of public trust men who will not abuse them for selfish ends, is but the reflection of the fear of want. Men trample over each other from the frantic dread of being trampled upon, and the admiration with which even the unscrupulous money-getter is regarded springs from habits of thought engendered by the fierce struggle for existence to which the most of us are obliged to give up our best energies. But when no one feared want, when every one felt assured of his ability to make an easy and independent living for himself and his family, that popular admiration which now spurs even the rich man still to add to his wealth would be given to other things than the getting of money. We should learn to regard the man who strove to get more than he could use, as a fool -- as indeed he is.

He must have eyes only for the mean and vile, who has mixed with men without realizing that selfishness and greed and vice and crime are largely the result of social conditions which bring out the bad qualities of human nature and stunt the good; without realizing that there is even now among men patriotism and virtue enough to secure us the best possible management of public affairs if our social and political adjust-

ments enabled us to utilize those qualities. Who has not known poor men who might safely be trusted with untold millions? Who has not met with rich men who retained the most ardent sympathy with their fellows, the warmest devotion to all that would benefit their kind? Look to-day at our charities, hopeless of permanent good though they may be! They at least show the existence of unselfish sympathies, capable, if rightly directed, of the largest results.

It is no mere fiscal reform that I propose; it is a conforming of the most important social adjustments to natural laws. To those who have never even thought to the matter, it may seem irreverently presumptuous to say that it is the evident intent of the Creator that land values should be the subject of taxation; that rent should be utilized for the benefit of the entire community. Yet to whoever does think of it, to say this will appear no more presumptuous than to say that the Creator has intended men to walk on their feet, and not on their hands. Man in his social relations is as much included in the creative scheme as man in his physical relations. Just as certainly as the fish was intended to swim in the water, and the bird to fly through the air, and monkeys to live in trees, and moles to burrow underground, was man intended to live with his fellows. He is by nature a social animal. And the creative scheme must embrace the life and development of society, as truly as it embraces the life and development of the individual. Our civilization cannot carry us beyond the domain of law. Railroads, telegraphs and labor-saving machinery are no more accidents than are flowers and trees.

Man is driven by his instincts and needs to form society. Society, thus formed, has certain needs and functions for which revenue is required. These needs and functions increase with social development, requiring a larger and larger revenue.

Now, experience and analogy, if not the instinctive perceptions of the human mind, teach us that there is a natural way of satisfying every natural want. And if human society is included in nature, as it surely is, this must apply to social wants as well as to the wants of the individual, and there must be a natural or right method of taxation, as there is a natural or right method of walking.



Image: PUCK, Wikipedia

We know, beyond peradventure, that the natural or right way for a man to walk is on his feet, and not on his hands. We know this of a surety -- because the feet are adapted to walking, while the hands are not; because in walking on the feet all the other organs of the body are free to perform their proper functions, while in walking on the hands they are not; because a man can walk on his feet with ease, convenience and celerity, while no amount of training will enable him to walk on his hands save awkwardly, slowly and painfully. In the same way we may know that the natural or right way of raising the revenues which are required by the needs of society is by the taxation of land values. The value of land is in its nature and relations adapted to purposes of taxation, just as the feet in their nature and relations are adapted to the purposes of walking. The value of land only arises as in the integration of society the need for some public or common revenue begins to be felt. It increases as the development of society goes on, and as larger and larger revenues are therefore required. Taxation upon land values does not lessen the individual incentive to production and accumulation, as do other methods of taxation; on the contrary, it leaves perfect freedom to productive forces, and prevents restrictions upon production from arising. It does not foster monopolies, and cause unjust inequalities in the distribution of wealth, as do other taxes; on the contrary, it has the

effect of breaking down monopoly and equalizing the distribution of wealth. It can be collected with greater certainty and economy than any other tax; it does not beget the evasion, corruption and dishonesty that flow from other taxes. In short, it conforms to every economic and moral requirement. What can be more in accordance with justice than that the value of land, which is not created by individual effort, but arises from the existence and growth of society, should be taken by society for social needs?

In trying, in a previous chapter, to imagine a world in which natural material and opportunities were free as air, I said that such a world as we find ourselves in is best for men who will use the intelligence with which man has been gifted. So, evidently, it is. The very laws which cause social injustice to result in inequality, suffering and degradation are in their nature beneficent. All this evil is the wrong side of good that might be.

Man is more than an animal. And the more we consider the constitution of this world in which we find ourselves, the more clearly we see that its constitution is such as to develop more than animal life. If the purpose for which this world existed were merely to enable animal man to eat, drink and comfortably clothe and house himself for his little day, some such world as I have previously endeavored to imagine would be best. But

the purpose of this world, so far at least as man is concerned, is evidently the development of moral and intellectual, even more than of animal, powers. Whether we consider man himself or his relations to nature external to him, the substantial truth of that bold declaration of the Hebrew scriptures, that man has been created in the image of God, forces itself upon the mind.

If all the material things needed by man could be produced equally well at all points on the earth's surface, it might seem more convenient for man the animal, but how would he have risen above the animal level? As we see in the history of social development, commerce has been and is the great civilizer and educator. The seemingly infinite diversities in the capacity of different parts of the earth's surface lead to that exchange of productions which is the most powerful agent in preventing isolation, in breaking down prejudice, in increasing knowledge and widening thought. These diversities of nature, which seemingly increase with our knowledge of nature's powers like the diversities in the aptitudes of individuals and communities, which similarly increase with social development, call forth powers and give rise to pleasures which could never arise had man been placed, like an ox, in a boundless field of clover. The "international law of God" which we fight with our tariffs -- so short-sighted are the selfish prejudices of men -- is the law which stimulates mental and moral progress; the law to which civilization is due.

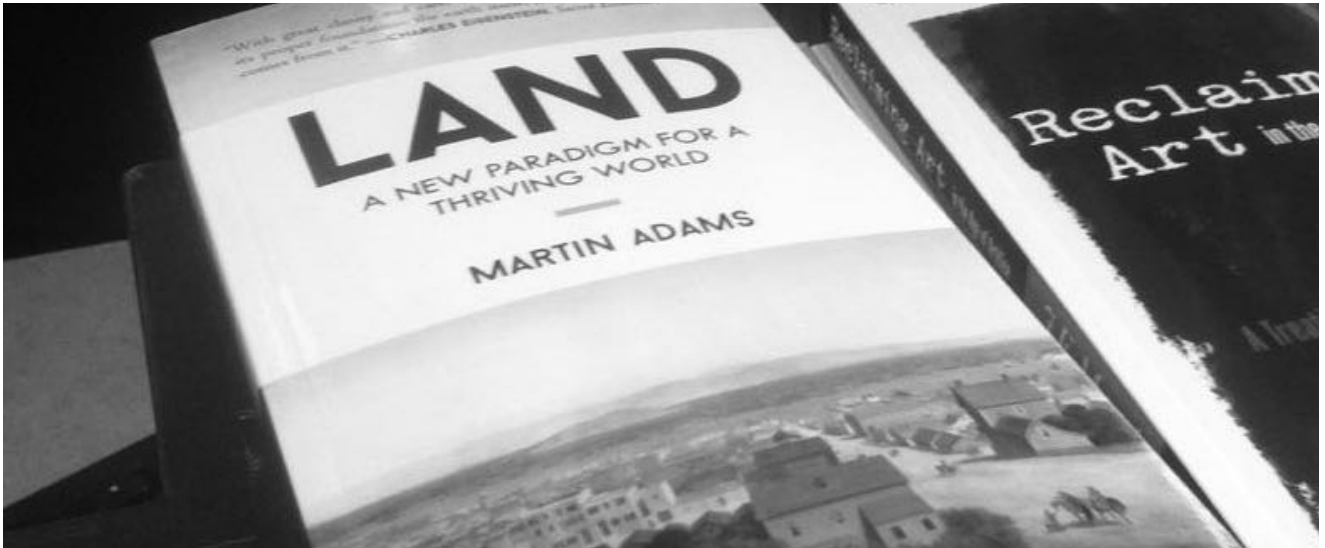
And so, when we consider the phenomenon of rent, it reveals to us one of those beautiful and beneficent adaptations, in which more than in anything else the human mind recognizes evidences of Mind infinitely greater, and catches glimpses of the Master Workman.

This is the law of rent: As individuals come together in communities, and society grows, integrating more and more its individual members, and making general interests and general conditions of more and more relative importance, there arises, over and above the value which individuals can create for themselves, a value which is created by the community as a whole, and which, attaching to land, becomes tangible, definite and capable of computation and appropriation.

As society grows, so grows this value, which springs from and represents in tangible form what society as a whole contributes to production, as distinguished from what is contributed by individual exertion. By virtue of natural law in those aspects which it is the purpose of the science we call political economy to discover -- as it is the purpose of the sciences which we call chemistry and astronomy to discover other aspects of natural law -- all social advance necessarily contributes to the increase of this common value; to the growth of this common fund.

Here is a provision made by natural law for the increasing needs of social growth; here is an adaptation of nature by virtue of which the natural progress of society is a progress toward equality, not toward inequality; a centripetal force tending to unity, growing out of and ever balancing a centrifugal force tending to diversity. Here is a fund belonging to society as a whole from which, without the degradation of alms, private or public, provision can be made for the weak, the helpless, the aged; from which provision can be made for the common wants of all as a matter of common right to each, and by the utilization of which society, as it advances, may pass, by natural methods and easy stages, from a rude association for purposes of defense and police, into a cooperative association, in which combined power guided by combined intelligence can give to each more than his own exertions multiplied many fold could produce.

By making land private property, by permitting individuals to appropriate this fund which nature plainly intended for the use of all, we throw the children's bread to the dogs of Greed and Lust; we produce a primary inequality which gives rise in every direction to other tendencies to inequality; and from this perversion of the good gifts of the Creator, from this ignoring and defying of his social laws, there arise in the very heart of our civilization those horrible and monstrous things that betoken social putrefaction.



Land: A New Paradigm for a Thriving World

by Martin Adams

Chapter 1. The Production of Wealth

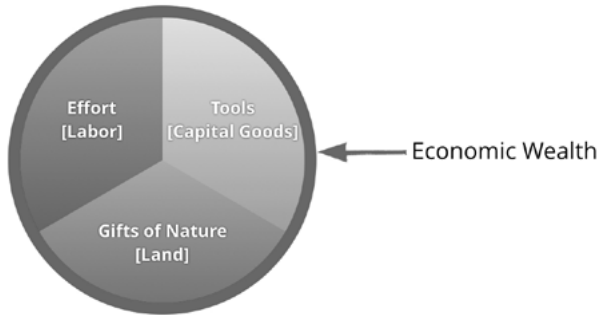
I am sure that each of you would want to go beyond the superficial social analyst who looks merely at effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.

—Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968)

The late publisher Alfred A. Knopf once quipped, “An economist is a man who states the obvious in terms of the incomprehensible.” But the subject of economics doesn’t have to be incomprehensible; since all economic principles are grounded in human behavior, you really need only your common sense to understand them. Indeed, if we’re ever to create a world where we can all enjoy materially fulfilling and dignified lives while also living in harmony with nature, it’s vital that we properly understand economics, because the science of economics underlies the study of social welfare.

In this book, we’ll define economic wealth as all goods and services that can be perceived with our senses, that are produced with human effort or the use of machinery, that directly satisfy human desires, and that have an exchange value. This particular definition is important because a conventional understanding of wealth isn’t precise enough for our purposes. One key example: Under our definition, money isn’t economic wealth, since it can’t satisfy human desire directly, but only indirectly when we exchange it for something else (a person stranded on a deserted island quickly realizes that money itself isn’t real wealth). Nature’s gifts such as fresh air, water, and land are also not economic wealth, because no human being has made them. Under our definition, human-made goods and services are economic wealth because goods and services can add value to our lives. So, when we talk about how wealth is created, it’s important to keep in mind our specific definition of economic wealth; whenever I use the term wealth, I mean economic wealth as defined here.

On the most foundational level, wealth is created from nature, human labor, and tools. The so-called classical economists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries referred to these three elements as the three factors of production: land, labor, and capital. The term land refers to all gifts of nature; the term labor to human effort; and the term capital to capital goods such as tools and machinery.

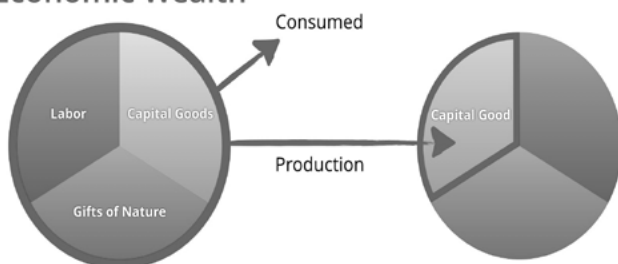


Under this definition, land refers not simply to parcels of land, but to anything freely provided by nature, including the air, minerals, trees, and water, and even the electromagnetic spectrum.

The term labor is pretty straightforward and signifies all human exertion, both mental and physical, aimed toward the production of wealth.

The term capital means all previously created wealth that's put toward the creation of new wealth. The word capital here doesn't mean money, but rather refers to capital goods: human-made objects such as machines or buildings that assist in the production of new wealth. Over time, we generally produce more wealth than we consume or destroy, and so our societies have a surplus of capital goods; everywhere we look, we see factories, office buildings, computers, trucks, and railroads, all standing by and ready to assist humanity in the production of new wealth.

Economic Wealth



Broadly speaking, there are only two ways human beings can make an income: They can either make an income by contributing to society, or they can extract an income from society.[3] People can contribute to society by providing valuable goods and services: When human beings add value to the wealth production process through their labor, that added value can be classified as a wage (for example, when a mechanic buys a car, repairs it, and then sells it for more money afterward, that sales differential becomes her wage); and when capital goods add value to the wealth production process, that added value is what economists call a capital return (for example, the value added by the mechanic's use of time-saving power tools is a return on the mechanic's capital—her power tools).

The only other way people can make an income is by receiving what economists call economic rent. They do this not by adding wealth to society, but by extracting an income from society without providing wealth of corresponding value. For example, when people make money from selling land, they extract economic rent from society since they didn't contribute any human-made wealth to society.

The problem with rent extraction is that the more rent people extract from society, the fewer resources remain to pay people for their goods and services. Because many people extract economic rent from society on an ongoing basis, the people who add value to society—employees, small business owners, independent contractors, and so forth—are left with a much smaller share of the economic pie from which to draw an income.

The important thing to remember is that wealth production utilizes nature's gifts, human labor, and tools, and that we can either get paid for providing goods and services that add value to society, or simply extract money without creating any corresponding value for society.

Read Martin Adam's Land, a superb introduction to Georgism, available for \$20 from:

prosper.org.au/bookshop



Land Value Capture

by Karl Fitzgerald

Understanding the link between public infrastructure and the value delivered to location, location is one of the most tangible means of grasping Georgism.

Land values are the barometer of an attractive community. Infrastructure adds enormous value to land in prime locations. Windfall gains deliver several times the cost of the infrastructure to surrounding properties.

Terry Ryder, Property specialist and journalist states:

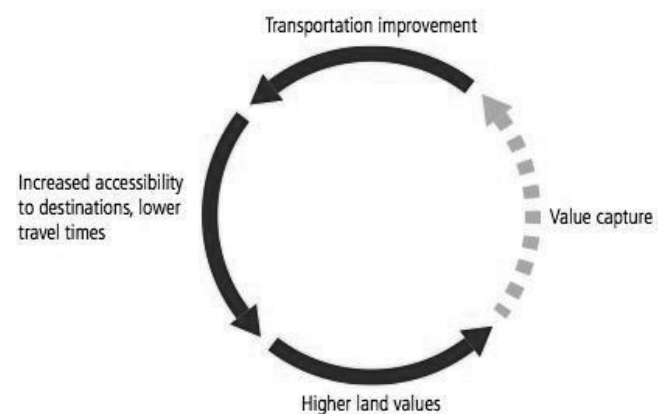
"Increasingly I find transport infrastructure the most powerful creator of price growth in residential property. This is confirmed by research from multiple sources in recent years, which shows homes close to public transport services tend to grow faster in value than the norm." (The Australian, Aug 18, 2011)

Steve Harrison, Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) Gold Coast President revealed:

There's a handful of smart developers who have actually grabbed land around each of the stations – they're waiting to see the pushback from council." (Goldcoast.com.au, 26/9/2010)

Massachusetts developer Frank McCourt used

the increased value of his Seaport District properties from roughly \$10 million to \$200 million – to help finance his acquisition of the Los Angeles Dodgers. In a recent conference on value capture, Richard Henderson, an executive involved in the Seaport District's transformation, described the investments as: "a tremendous boon to the landowners in the area." (Smart Growth America, June 30, 2011)



Land Value Capture (LVC) is a simple technique to recycle a portion of the windfall gains land owners benefit from publicly funded infrastructure. Importantly, these windfalls are captured over the life-cycle of the infrastructure, such that one generation is not hit with the total infrastructure costs (i.e. as per the current preference for Developer Charges).

How it works

Macro:

- *Government bonds finance the infrastructure project.*
- *Infrastructure proposal announced = windfall gains for nearby landowners.*
- *Yearly land valuations quantify the windfall gain.*
- *Land Value Capture (a subset of Land Taxes or alternatively council rates) ensures the public receive a share of the increase.*
- *Over 20 years this higher government income repays the government bonds.*

Micro:

- *Fixed costs of infrastructure are covered by LVC.*
- *Marginal costs are covered by marginal revenue (ie train ticket sales cover driver wages).*

Political machinations

A Metropolitan Regional Improvement Tax, similar to Perth's, could be included in the Federal or State tax mix. However, it should be set at a higher rate than the 0.14% rate the Western Australian government has used to provide Australia's most modern public transport (PT) system.

If taken to its logical conclusion, revenue from this Betterment Levy type charge could be used to fund the abolition of payroll tax and stamp duties at the state level.

We propose a change in the tax mix so that future infrastructure pays for itself by expanding the tax base without increasing the tax burden. The *Henry Review* stated "A recent OECD report found that a 1 per cent switch to land or property tax (but not to taxes on transactions) away from income tax would improve long-run GDP per capita by 2.5 percentage points" (Johansson et al. 2008).

Examples of LVC

Hong Kong's Mass Transit Railway (MTR), has returned dividends for the last sixteen years, dispelling the myth that PT can never be profitable.

Japanese Railway East – the efficiencies of LVC have enhanced profitability such that ticket prices have remained at 1987 prices. Read Fred Harrison's *Wheels of Fortune* for detail.

We should take stock of how past generations financed public transport.

Glen Waverley Station (Vic): How did they do it?

Residents were asked and agreed to donate £30,000 worth of land (1925) to build the train station and rail line. Additionally, they were asked to pay a Betterment Levy of £10,000 per annum for the first five years. The Railways Standing Committee presented to the State Parliament in its' 36th general report:

"It is calculated that there are 6,000 acres within one mile of the new line... It is not intended that a uniform rate shall be charged on each property, but that the rate should be varied according to the distance from the line."

Sydney Harbour Bridge (NSW): 16% financed by council rates on the land only component.

What we are asking

Windfall gains from infrastructure add up to several times the cost of the infrastructure. We propose a sufficient contribution from this windfall be recycled back to the government so that other infrastructure projects can be funded without substantially burdening one generation over another.

At present, land speculators balk at paying barely 2% of the economic rent (windfall gain) to the community via government's Land Tax and Council Rates. This abstinence from the public good is limiting government of all levels from providing infrastructure.

Please note, the LVC rate can be set so that land-owners still receive the majority of gains.

In closing, government bonds finance the initial investment. Public debt that adds to productivity (at least cost) is a strategic use of borrowings. Land holders repay the community for the new services over the lifetime of the asset.

Such a LVC system would also help keep a lid on land prices (the extent reliant upon the rate in the dollar). With land comprising over 70% of a mortgage, the reduced land-based interest payments could assist consumer demand.

By widening the tax base, more infrastructure proposals could get off the ground.

Advantages

- Common sense: Those that benefit, pay.
- Can be revenue neutral.
- Cheaper public transport ticket prices.
- Widens tax base.
- Expands public transport and public services as financed with minimum leakage
- Spreads load over the entire community, rather than slugging commerce (i.e. trucks on tollways).
- Encourages walkable communities by providing a dis-incentive for land speculation.
- Can prevent future Global Financial Crises by deterring land speculation.

Academia are quantifying the benefits of infrastructure provision:

... [We] found that within 1/4 mile of one of

Philadelphia's 54 (library) branches, the value of a home rose by \$9,630. Overall, Philadelphia's public libraries added \$698 million to home values—which in turn generated an additional \$18.5 million in property taxes to the City and School District each year. That benefit alone recouped more than half of the city's investment. (*The Economic Value of The Free Library In Philadelphia, Fels Institute of Government, 2010, p8*)

... Research into quantifying park quality continues; in the interim we have chosen to assign the conservative value of 5 percent as the amount that parkland adds to the assessed value of all dwellings within 500 feet of parks. (The preponderance of studies has revealed that excellent parks tend to add 15 percent to the value of a proximate dwelling). (*Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System, Harnik and Welle, 2009, p8*).

Visit Prosper's infrastructure portal:
www.prosper.org.au/1m4



A Flag for Geoism?

A proposal by Jordan van Rhyn (featured on our front cover)

Prosperity

The wheat grain symbolises prosperity. The three grains represent the three factors of production: labour, land and capital. The placing of the symbol in the canton emphasises its importance.

Peace

The white field in the left third of the flag represents the peaceful transition of systems.

Land

The Green field of the flag denotes the green forests, fields and farms of Earth and emphasises our connection to it.

A Letter From a Young Georgist

by Jordan van Rhyn

AS A YOUNG GEORGIST, I find myself often wondering about the future of our movement. I suppose it is because my generation will eventually have to take the reins, as every generation does, and has since 1879. My name is Jordan van Rhyn. I am currently fifteen years old.

When I consider the long and storied history of the Georgist movement, I am always surprised at the relentless hope of its people. Through it all, Georgists have always remained hopeful about the future of this planet and its people. I suspect this hope is due to our surety in what we believe. Indeed, my studies of economics since I became a Georgist have only confirmed what I already knew – that Henry George’s remedy is of unparalleled importance.

Since reading *Progress and Poverty* first a year and a half ago (I stumbled across it from a Wikipedia page), I have been filled with the same hope. It has reassured me during dark times to know that not all of our problems must last forever, and that solutions do exist. I am humbled when I think of the efforts put in for the Georgist movement; for more than a hundred years and through millions of hours, volunteers have worked for the cause. Occasionally – and I suspect this is exacerbated by my being young – it feels as though nothing can be done; that perhaps we are too far gone to save this planet and the people on it; that the system is too entrenched to ever be changed. But I am reassured by the knowledge that the truth has been found – at least, by some. I am heartened by the knowledge that individuals across the globe are co-ordinating for a brighter future.

Perhaps we will not achieve our goals soon. Perhaps not in our time. But eventually, as George himself stated, the truth ‘will at length prevail’.

I am fortunate to have ended up living in Melbourne, Australia, where there is still a relatively vibrant Georgist community. But even living in a city where Georgist organisations

are present, it is hard to meet other like-minded youth. I have met one other young Georgist since I became a Georgist in December of 2015. Admittedly, I have met many outstanding and intelligent adults. But it is an area of particular concern for me that not enough young people are hearing about the Georgist cause.

I have attempted to remedy this in my own way. Having dabbled in design earlier in life, I set out to create a recognisable flag for Georgists to fly, with the aim of expressing the passion and zeal that I feel, and allowing others to express the same. I did this because perhaps one of the benefits of Georgists is our ability to reach across ideological lines: to speak to the people that identify with another cause, or none at all. But I have found in my capacity as a Georgist a need to connect with other Georgists. I can only hope that I have furthered this goal.

In epilogue, I would encourage fellow Georgists, young and old, to connect with one another, and to reach out to others. And while I have a platform, it may not be out of place to express my desire for an organisation dedicated to young Georgists and youth outreach globally. I have many ideas for such an organisation; the only problem is the necessary financial and human support required. But it certainly isn’t impossible! I’d love to talk with any interested parties.

To other young Georgists: please contact me on Facebook or on other platforms. I’m open for a chat!

There are great and many problems faced by humanity and by the people of the Georgist movement. But with people like ours, I have no doubt that they will be overcome.

IS THE QUEEN A GEORGIST?

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