

To achieve economic equality, we cannot divide the resources of the earth equally among the billions who will be here in the twenty-first century and beyond. But we can divide up the wealth of the land more equitably. Significant studies have shown that improvements in social and economic conditions reduce much of the pressures on the land.

There are many different roads to successful land reform. In Taiwan, the rent of the land was reduced in half, from two-thirds to one-third of the crop. With this incentive, farmers doubled food output. Other measures, including higher taxes on valuable but unused land, in cities as well as rural areas, prodded more land into production. As a result, urban development and rural development are more in balance. Population growth rates have dropped from 3.8% to 2.2% and more people are better off economically than almost anywhere else in Asia between Japan and Israel. Nowhere has there been such an improvement in the material and social well-being of the little man, as in Taiwan, and nowhere else in Asia has he greater control over the important decisions affecting his immediate livelihood. The rural progress of the farmers has not been subsidized by taxes on the urban and industrial sectors but paid out of the farmers' increased productivity."

The productive farmers of Taiwan have gained access to their own land, a promise made a quarter-century before by Sun Yat Sen.

More equitable sharing of the wealth has been achieved in free economies and planned economies. But we cannot secure this degree of equality by everywhere dividing up the land. Henry George suggests we call:

"...upon those who are allowed possession of pieces of land giving special advantage to pay to the whole community (including themselves) a fair rent or premium for that privilege. The rent that is paid for the use of the land would go, not into the pockets of individual landlords, but into the treasury of the community, where it could be used for the common benefit."

If we retain the paradigm that land tenure systems must gratify ownership without productive effort, then our hopes for the future will be dashed on the record of the past. Inequitable land tenure systems allow the monopoly of nature's resources and deny labor access to the land. From poverty and the accelerated population growth we see in all the undeveloped countries, a cease-fire on the economic front, like a cease-fire on the political front, is the first step in the cooperative effort for peace and justice. Let us take the first step, for without economic justice we cannot have peace. Without access to land, we cannot have economic justice.

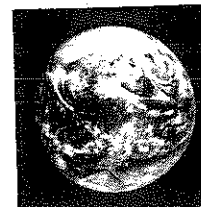
HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL
OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
3410 19th Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

Non-Profit Organization
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
San Francisco, CA
Permit No. 5510

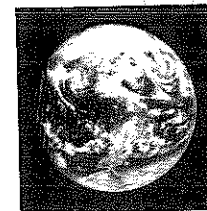
"We looked down and saw planet Earth and realized that it was our beautiful and very small home. We realized things were not going so well down there and we felt we had to do something about it."

Astronaut Edgar Mitchell

ECONOMICS FOR A PEACEFUL PLANET



ECONOMICS FOR A PEACEFUL PLANET



4-950

By E. Robert Scrofani*

Traveling to the conference this morning, I heard on the news that a cease-fire had been declared between the invading Israeli forces and the entrenched PLO in Lebanon. This encouraging news followed the cease-fire between the Arab nations of Iraq and Iran; and, the cease-fire between the governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Falklands.

Although a cease-fire is merely an agreement not to use force to solve conflicts, it is the initial step in the complex search for peace

* From a keynote speech at a June 1982 conference at Westminister, CA, on "Economics for a Peaceful Planet."

We should be heartened by these efforts.

Peace is that human condition of trust between men, that human capability to share the earth's bounty, that human desire to cooperate for the common good.

Peace permits man to enjoy his brief existence on this planet.

We know from reading Henry George that humans reach their greatest potential when numbers of people come together in cooperation. If peace is that special condition within which man can grow and prosper, a close examination of economics and its role in achieving this condition is essential.

"Economics" comes from the Greek word "eco", for house; "ecology" means the study of the home, or environment; and "economy" means the management of the house. Our house is this planet.

In a well-managed house:

- no one kills another
- there is trust
- everyone eats
- everyone who can work and wants to work can find it
- land is accessible for life, with labor at decent wages and capital at a decent return
- the productive members of society are allowed to produce.

But this planet of ours is not a well-managed house:

- millions go hungry
- vital forests are stripped for firewood or for ecologically disastrous development schemes.
- the poor are flocking to cities where there are no jobs.

To solve these problems some say we must take from the rich and give to the poor nations. Others espouse family planning programs to cut down on population growth. Still others argue that we must feed the hungry from our bounty.

In order to have a well-managed house, we must have priorities. First and foremost, we should recognize that we are all land animals and without land we cannot exist. As Henry George said:

"If you would realize what land is, think of what men would be without land. If there were no land, where would be the people? Land is not merely a place to graze cows or sheep upon, to raise corn or raise cabbage. It is the indispensable element necessary to the life of every human being. We are all land animals; our very bodies come from the land, and to the land then return again."

Therefore we must focus on the key problem of mismanagement of land tenure. The Global 2000 Report lists many of the effects of our mismanagement. It is a grim and troubling picture. In his World Watch monograph, "The Dispossessed of the Earth...Land Reform and Suitable

Development," Erik Eckholm, a world authority on ecological problems, writes:

"Many of international community's widely shared goals -- the elimination of malnutrition, the provision of jobs for all, the slowing of runaway rural-urban migration, the protection of productive soils and ecologically vital forests -- are not likely to be achieved without radical changes in the ownership and control of the land. It is a delusion to think that the basic needs of the world's poorest people will be met without renewed attention to the politically sensitive land tenure question. It is even a greater delusion to think that the dispossessed of the earth will watch their numbers grow and their plight worsen without protesting. The issue of land reform will not go away."

As Eckholm points out, the patterns of land ownership shape patterns of human relationships. They help determine the possibility and pace of economic change. To ignore the land tenure question, and in fact, not to give it the primary focus of our energy, will guarantee that our efforts will fail.

In agrarian as well as industrial societies, in poor as well as rich nations, man has a continuous relationship to land. Changing that relationship is the stuff of revolution -- political, economic and ethical. Land ownership remains a significant source of

wealth and influence, even in the most economically advanced countries. But it is in the developing world that this is most clear. Eckholm says:

"In Africa, Asia and Latin America, where three-fourths of the world's people live, the control of farmland remains the principal key to wealth, status and power. Hundreds of millions of families are struggling to improve their lives through agriculture without secure access to the basis of agricultural life -- farmland."

It is to this three-fourths of the world that we must direct our efforts. A landless peasant who is born in debt and dies in debt, who sees half of his children dead before the age of five, who lives on the edge of survival, will not be reconciled to less than access to the land for his survival in the future.

The global development process has bypassed the landless laborers, sharecroppers, and marginal farmers who constitute the majority of the rural residents of the world. In Mexico in 1979, Pope John Paul said:

"The land is held in stewardship for all people. There is always a social mortgage on all private property, in order that goods may serve the general purpose that God gave them."