



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Salisbury, Zimbabwe

October 23, 1980

Mr. E. Robert Scrofani
4301 20th Street
San Francisco 94114

Dear Mr. Scrofani:

Thank you for your letter of October 7.

You are right that one of the key issues in the new Zimbabwe, in fact the key issue, will be the question of land distribution. That is really what the recent civil war was fought about, though of course it was couched in terms of political control and majority rule. For decades 3 per cent of the population (the whites) were entitled by law to own 50 per cent of the land, and that 50 per cent was the very best land. Although these laws were later changed to permit land ownership anywhere by members of any race, the whites, because of their economic power, were thus enabled to own all the land if they so wished; in other words, the protection afforded the blacks in their own 50 per cent of the area was eliminated.

It will of course be very interesting, and crucial, how the new government deals with the land question. They are now studying the problem intensively, but have as yet reached no firm planning decisions. These should come in 1981. So far the government has an open mind, is willing to study and learn, and has not adopted rigidly ideological positions on the question.

Your letter noted that you were enclosing "Land for the People by Henry George." It was not enclosed. I would be interested in seeing it, partly because my grandfather in his late years was a follower of George and his philosophy, about which I know less than I should.

Sincerely yours,

Robert V. Keeley

Robert V. Keeley
Ambassador





EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Salisbury, Zimbabwe

April 14, 1981

Mr. L. Robert Scrofani
Director
Henry George School of
Social Science
833 Market Street
San Francisco, Ca. 94103

Dear Mr. Scrofani:

Thank you for your letter of last November. I have been waiting to respond until I had something authoritative in hand about how the new Government of Zimbabwe plans to deal with the land question. In February they published an economic policy statement entitled "Growth with Equity," of which I enclose copies of the first 6 pages, which deal with the land issue. They have not yet spelled out further their plans in this area, but this paper should give you an overall idea of their thinking and the directions in which they appear to be headed.

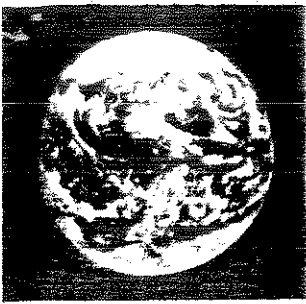
Of course the land question in this country is very complex. It is not only a matter of some 5000 commercial farmers owning half or more of the land, including the best land, while some 800,000 peasant cultivators have to get by on the other half; the further complication is that these divisions are along racial lines, the commercial farmers being white and the peasants all being black. This adds a racial, social and also political dimension to the whole issue. There are also the requirements for compensation for land taken over by the government for redistribution or other purposes set forth in the Constitution agreed to at Lancaster House.

I would very much like to have a copy of George's Progress and Poverty for my library, as you offered in your letter. I note that George Gilder's new book explaining so-called "supply-side economics" is entitled Wealth and Poverty, which harks back to the George book.

Sincerely yours,

Robert V. Keeley

Robert V. Keeley
Ambassador



HENRY
GEORGE
SCHOOL
OF
SOCIAL
SCIENCE

Ambassador Robert Keeley
U.S. Embassy
Salisbury, Zimbabwe

March 5, 1982

The Earth is the Birthright of all People

Dear Ambassador Keeley,

E. Robert Scrofani
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I note from the article enclosed that the government of Zimbabwe will be attempting to relocate 165,000 families in the next three years, and will need almost one billion dollars to buy the land. This is a staggering amount to attempt to gain justice for Zimbabweans.

As our earlier correspondence suggests, the land of Zimbabwe could still belong to the people of the nation simply by exercising their rights as landlords and collecting the rental value of that land. In this way, the Whites of Zimbabwe would pay their fair share to the community for the privilege of using the land.

It is not certain that creating many petty landlords, Black or White, would increase production in Zimbabwe. A tax on land values would mean that the community would collect its fair share.

I am enclosing for your perusal, and that of your economic advisors, the case of Raffles of Singapore and a proposal of our association in Africa. In addition, Henry George's short speech, Land For the People, is enclosed.

Thank you for sending us previously the Economic Policy Statement of the Government of Zimbabwe.

Very Sincerely,

E. ROBERT SCROFANI
Director, Northern California

encl.
cc: G. Dunkley
ls/RS



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Salisbury, Zimbabwe

March 31, 1982

Mr. E. Robert Scrofani
Director, Northern California
Henry George School of Social Change
3410 19th Street
San Francisco, California 94110

Dear Mr. Scrofani:

Thank you for your letter of March 5 with its enclosures.

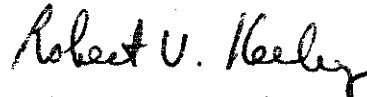
There are unfortunately a lot of inaccurate statistics floating around on the subject of resettlement and the entire land question in Zimbabwe. The government's plan is to resettle 162,000 families (that would be close to a million people) over the coming three years. The Lands Ministry has estimated that this would require a take-over of some 12 million hectares of the 16 million hectares owned by the white commercial farmers, but I doubt this is accurate. The resettlement plans now being implemented call for each family to receive 5 hectares of arable land for food and commercial crops and 20 hectares for grazing. For 162,000 families that would mean something over 4 million hectares. At 25 Zimbabwe dollars a hectare, the cost would be about 100 million Zimbabwe dollars for land purchase. The 12 million hectares allegedly needed could be purchased for around 300 million Zimbabwe dollars. (The current exchange rate is about 1.36 U.S. dollars equals 1 Zimbabwe dollar.)

To date some 9,000 families have been resettled. The government has purchased about 782,000 hectares for use in resettlement schemes, all acquired on a willing-seller-willing-buyer basis. Prices paid have ranged from 10 to 25 Zimbabwe dollars per hectare (or about 7 to 15 U.S. dollars per acre). As you can see, the price of farm land in this country is extraordinarily low, by any standard. The one billion dollars you mention in your letter could probably buy all the farm land in the country. I enclose an ad which ran in the local paper last August offering the Forrester Estate, made up of ten farms, for 5 million Zimbabwe dollars. The area is over 50,000 acres. The ad tells you what you get for your 5 million dollars, other than the land.

.../2

Zimbabwe could be the subject of an interesting study on the question of substituting a land tax for all other taxes. Taxes on land are very low now, which no doubt partly explains the low prices. But one would want to know who is paying what taxes now and who would pay what under a different set-up such as a single land tax. I would guess that the same people would overall be paying the same amount of taxes, that is the white community which owns and earns most of the wealth of the country, and which is currently the most important source of government revenue. One would want to know what the change would do to prices of food, and to the country's self-sufficiency in food, and how a land tax would change the costs of the different factors of production. Unless one entirely exempted the peasant farming sector (some 4 million blacks) from a land tax, one would further disadvantage them vis-a-vis their better off fellows who live and work in urban areas -- the latter would pay little or no tax and would continue to outearn their rural brethren by a factor of ten to one. Cheap land has no doubt been a major factor in the tremendous success of the commercial farming sector in this country. How would changing the tax structure affect this segment? One problem for such a study is that land in this country was historically divided along racial lines, so factors other than pure economics played a major role in how the land is owned today as well as how it is used.

Sincerely,



Robert V. Keeley
Ambassador

Enclosure:
Newspaper ad