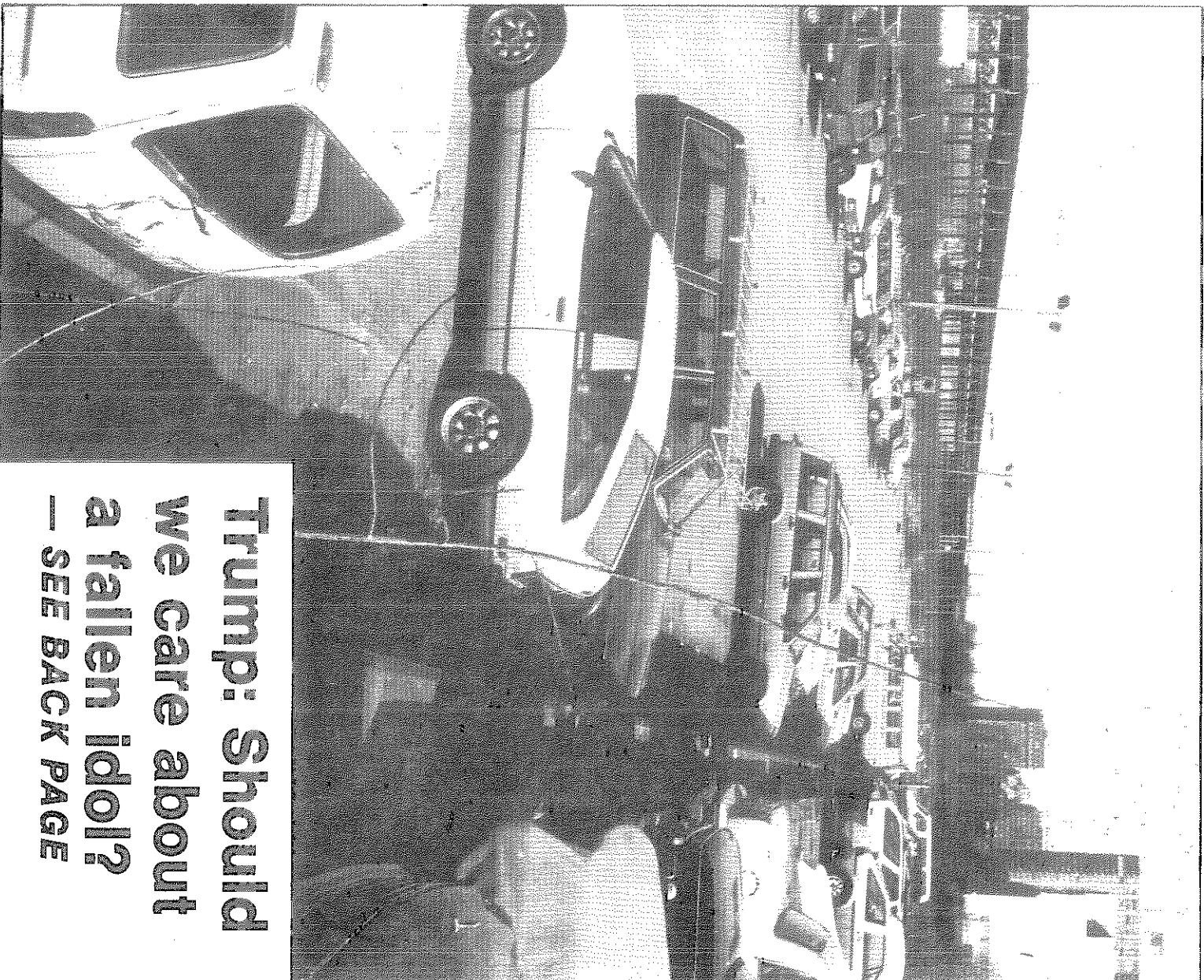


# LAND and LIBERTY

JULY-AUGUST 1991

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USSR BREAKTHROUGH  
See Page 67



**Trump: Should  
we care about  
a fallen idol?  
— SEE BACK PAGE**

# LAND and LIBERTY

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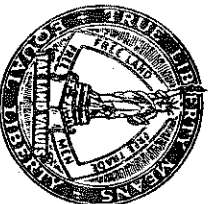
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## COVER PICTURE

The derelict New York site bought by Donald Trump for \$110m. Now there's a \$650m discrepancy in its value. Story back page

## A man-made trap

PITY the Bangladeshis who, by the tens of thousand, were drowned in the last monsoon.

And those who will not survive the next giant wave that will flood their homes.

On the surface it looks as though they are trapped in the middle of an ecological nightmare.

From the north, three great river systems come sluicing down to the Bay of Bengal. Together, they carry enough water each year to cover the low-lying country — which, periodically, is precisely what they do.

From the south, the tropical cyclones come charging into the coast, demolishing the fragile ecosystem on the mudflats.

But this is a man-made trap.

The deaths are not the result of natural calamities, for these people ought not to be living on the silt on the edge of the Bay.

They are social castaways, marooned on mudflats because they were driven off good land by private property rights in land.

As landless peasants, they had no option but to move further away from the high ground and on to chars, the low-lying tracts from which they eke out a precarious existence.

BANGLADESH, then, symbolises an anomalous legal and economic situation, one that afflicts every non-socialist country in the world today.

No amount of foreign aid is going to alleviate the Bangladesh family's vulnerability to inclement weather.

The fundamental reality is laid bare by the fate of the children.

• 870,000 children below the age of five die of malnutrition or disease every year.

• Nearly 30,000 pre-school children are blinded each year by Vitamin A deficiency.

• A quarter of the child population works for a living.

Curbing the high fertility rate would not solve the structural problem: it would merely alter the numerical degree of suffering. Fewer babies merely translates

into less business for the mortuaries.

We are not arguing against family planning programmes. Merely emphasizing that these would not translate into higher living standards or better levels of educational attainment.

Western agencies, then, ought to be emphasising knowledge, and we are not referring to the "green" variety — higher yielding crops. Bangladesh did adopt these improved variety of seeds. But that has not meant more food in bellies: in the last 25 years, the average Bangladeshi consumed fewer calories.

So where did the value of that improved productivity go? It was eaten up in the form of higher rents for the landowners rather than higher per capita incomes for the sharecroppers.

Whether we like it or not, there is one solution only to the plight of Bangladesh: a reversion to the communal philosophy of land tenure, the one that pre-dated the arrival of colonial Britain.

That does not mean a retreat to tribalism. Peasant farmers generate higher yields when they work on family-sized farms. The collective forms of enterprise, in the modern era, has been thoroughly tried out by the socialist countries of nearby Vietnam and Cambodia. And they failed.

THE SOLUTION is an economically simple one: the socialisation of rent.

That fiscal policy has its tribal antecedents; and western agencies — such as the World Bank, the United Nations, UNICEF even — could disseminate the information to make it possible for economically under-developed countries like Bangladesh to adopt a modern variety of the policy.

There is only one snag: the political will. But once the possibilities have been laid out for the people, it is up to them to apply the solution.

Bangladesh, after all, is supposed to be a democracy.

## COMMENT by the Editor

**'The social collection of rent is not equivalent to the government collection of rent'**

*CAN rent be used as a tool to force market economies to be efficient? And who, in an ethical society, ought to benefit from the value of natural resources? FRED HARRISON reviews the experience from oil-rich Alaska*



• Henry George

# Trust fund route to social justice

CAPITALIST economies are collapsing into the deepest recession for two decades, and former socialists are wrestling with the kind of society they ought to create.

Political economy is evidently assuming a new importance, but is it possible to derive solutions by relating theory to real-world experience?

Yes, says Gregg Erickson, a bureaucrat in Alaska, the US State that has enjoyed one of the biggest rent booms in living memory (see table).

Mr Erickson is Director of the Division of Oil Spill Impact Assessment and Restoration at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. He is also a lecturer at the University of Alaska Southeast, in Juneau. His views stem from the experience of watching oil rents accumulate during the 1980s.

Government has taken 70% of the oil rent, the difference being "excess return to capital" — in other words, Alaskans were overly-generous when they han-

## ALASKAN OIL RENT (1977-1990): US \$

Rent since 1977	Total (bns)	Per Capita
The share-out:	100	200,000
State Government	30	60,000
Federal Government	40	140,000
Privatised	30	60,000

ded out the leases to their state's petroleum.

Even so, as the table illustrates, the citizens of Alaska were bestowed with vast riches as a result of OPEC's decision in the mid-1970s to exercise its monopoly power over a scarce natural resource.

Petroleum generated more than sufficient to pay for government services. In Alaska, there are no state or local taxes, except a few exactions on the canned salmon interests, which are considered "outsiders" and "therefore don't count!"

But how should the revenue be distributed? Direct to citizens, on a *per capita* basis? Over 13 years, each Alaskan could

have received \$200,000. Or hand it over to the government, to be spent on behalf of the public?

In Mr Erickson's view, Alaska made the big mistake of handing money over to the government.

GOVERNMENTS and bureaucrats have short time horizons: they don't peer beyond the next election. Result: give them money, and they go on spending sprees! "That's indeed what happened. We had the opportunity to put Henry George into effect, and did so with a vengeance."

The oil rent revenue provided legislators with the chance to reduce other forms of taxes, the

**Continued on Page 52**



kind that damage incentives to work and invest.

But instead of spending a smaller proportion of their incomes on government-provided services, people found that proportion rising: from 7% of *per capita* income spent on state and local government services in 1977, to 30% of their income three years later.

This was a mistake, in Mr Erickson's view. "It is not necessarily the case that the social collection of rent is equivalent to the government collection of rent.

"Public choice theory needs to be thought about carefully, before adopting the tenets, but there is, within it, a kernel of truth: governments are special interest groups."

Governments don't need to be involved in the social distribution of rent. There is an alternative institutional arrangement available that could deliver social justice and economic efficiency: trusts.

ATRUST was created in Alaska, called a Permanent Fund, which is now worth \$10 billion.

"In 1976 it was decided to take 10% of rents and royalties and put it in a fund, away from the clutches of the government, and reserve it for future generations," explains Mr Erickson.

Income generated by the fund was distributed to the citizens. The first pay-outs were \$300 per head. Today it's \$1,000.

But the trust model can serve another vital role, which the former socialists could turn to their advantage in their search for a route through to the market economy.

"In Eastern Europe, the bureaucrats have the job of measuring, collecting and redistributing rents. Bureaucracies that administer the resources often feel they have interests in

## THE CHURCH AND THE LAND: Part Four

# HOW PAPAL

• ONE hundred years ago, Pope Leo XIII published *Rerum Novarum*, in which he stressed the right to private property, especially in land. American social reformer Henry George read the encyclical as an attack on his writings, and replied in vigorous terms.



• DAVID REDFEARN reviews the original controversy, and in the next issue of *LAND and LIBERTY* he analyses *Centesimus Annus*, the encyclical written by Pope John Paul II and published in May to celebrate the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*, which the Catholic Church now regards as an "immortal document".

1991 is a significant year in the history of the Roman Catholic church, for it is the centenary of the Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which marks the beginning of the Church's concern, charity aside, with social problems and possible solutions to them.

It is also the centenary of Henry George's *The Condition Of Labour: An Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII*, which is a detailed commentary on the Encyclical and an appeal to the Church to recognise the correspondence between true economics and true religion.

This was soon translated into Italian and passed to the Vatican as a sumptuous leather-bound special edition, which, it is to be hoped, is still to be found in the Vatican Library; for more recent evidence of catholic thought suggests that very little notice has been taken of it hitherto.

We are indebted for an account of this to John Jukes, a Franciscan Friar, Bishop of Strathern and Auxiliary in Southwark, who presented a paper last year to a conference on "Christianity And Capitalism", held under the auspices of the Health and Welfare Unit of the Institute of Economic Affairs.

The title of his paper is *Christianity And Capitalism: A Catholic View*; and it is encouraging to see that, at the very outset, he makes it clear that he understands the distinctions between the three factors of production, land, labour and capital, as conceived by the classical economists.

"Capital," he justly observes, is "a product in itself which can be employed for the further production of goods and services". He has forgotten goods in the process of exchange; but no matter, the main point is that he understands the difference between capital and land.

Unfortunately, this mental clarity of his makes it all the harder for us to understand why he has failed to see, or at any rate to comment on, the

them that are akin to ownership interests.

"Bureaucracies need to be taken account of, as we opine how the Eastern European countries should restructure the collection, measurement and redistribution of rent," says Mr Erickson.

He acknowledges that the

Western liberal market economy is hardly a perfect system — witness the mass unemployment, inflation, poverty and the ensuing crime. How, then, is the capitalist economy to be forced in the direction of even greater efficiency? Here, trusts — rather than bureaucrats — may have

an important role to play.

# WRITINGS WORRIED GEORGE

By DAVID REDFEARN

mental confusion evident in both the original *Rerum Novarum* and subsequent catholic pronouncements. Leo XIII's principal aim was to defend private property against the attacks of socialists and communists; but it was his failure to distribute the term "property" between the more precise ones of "land" and "wealth" – a part of which is set aside to constitute "capital" – and his tendency to use the rightness of the private ownership of wealth to justify also the private ownership of land, that excited the interest of Henry George.

Subsequent publications of the Church did nothing to improve matters. Popes Pius XI's and XII's main concern was that fascism, nazism and communism should not cause a total submergence of the rights of the individual; and Pope John XXIII, in his Encyclical *Mater Et Magistra* (15th May 1961), re-affirmed *Rerum Novarum*'s teaching on the subject of the justice of private property, including the "means of production," and therefore asserted, by implication, the justice of private property in land.

Abuses were to be controlled, if necessary, by public authorities, who would impose limitations on individual ownership. The machinery for achieving such limitations baffles the imagination.

MORE IMPORTANT, however, according to Fr. Jukes, is the teaching of John Paul II in his Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (14th September 1981) on the subject of the relationship of "labour" and "capital". It is to be noted that this document

is marred, like the previous ones, by an inadequate grasp of the true extension of the term "capital".

Sometimes it is said to consist of "the whole collection of the means of production" and therefore to include "land". On another occasion, however, it is "the vast collection of resources" that "has come into existence only as a result of man's labour....", a definition from which "land" is excluded. The quotations are from Fr. Jukes, who appears to be paraphrasing the original.

After all this, it is hardly surprising to learn that "in all the teaching of the official magisterium of the catholic church there is no intention of canonising a particular political solution or economic theory". One may even be thankful that, having chosen such an inadequate basis for fruitful deliberation, it has refrained from doing any such thing.

The pity of it is that it has neglected the means at hand, in the shape of the sumptuous leather-bound special edition of Henry George's *The Condition of Labour*, for clarifying its vision and proving to the world that a practical solution based on Christian principles can still be its salvation.

As we have seen, the main thrust of *Rerum Novarum* was against socialism and communism, and in favour of private property. The type of private property was not always defined; but the context was often sufficient to give Henry George the impression that private property in land was what Leo XIII had chiefly in mind, and that he himself was also under attack.

He had all the more reason for believing this in that a friend of his, the Rev. Edward McGlyn, the Irish/American parish priest of St. Stephen's, New

Continued on Page 54

By distributing rents through trusts, the beneficiaries — the public — recognise that it is in their interest to actively ensure that the economy runs efficiently. This is the only way to maximise their rental income.

"This is what I suggest the East European people should do: consider non-governmental

trusts as a mechanism for privatizing the social product of the land and resources," urges Mr. Eickson.

"Once such trusts are established and independent, as democratic entities, they would agitate for rent-conserving changes in pricing, subsidies, trade and the like. The trusts

would have an incentive to have inputs priced in terms of national or regional opportunity costs.

"The biggest share of the rent should go to local trusts, but regional and national trusts could be organized to provide some measure of inter-regional equity."

From Page 53

York, had, nine years before the issue of the Encyclical, brought upon himself suspension and excommunication for preaching the Georist doctrine that all existing forms of taxation should be replaced by a single tax on the value of land.

As a result of this, many parishes throughout the United States and Ireland withheld their dues from the Catholic Church, thereby causing it severe financial embarrassment. In the following year, 1892, Father McGlynn was requested to draw up a summary of what he had been preaching, which was declared by a Committee of four of the professors of the Catholic University of Washington to "contain nothing contrary to Catholic teachings". He was reinstated in all his functions.

HENRY GEORGE, however, delighted though he was at the Committee's findings, had intended all along to prove much more. It was, of course, necessary that he should devote considerable space in his *The Condition Of Labour* to refuting Leo XIII's arguments in favour of private property in land, and, by implication, against the single tax.

That he had no difficulty in doing so may be shown by the example of how he dealt with the Papal assertion 'that what is bought with *rightful property* is *rightful property*'. After pointing out that sale cannot create rights, but only transfer them, he demonstrates, by substituting the word 'slave' for the word 'land' in a quotation from the Pope's own text, that his contention would be equally valid if used in justification of slavery:

"Thus, if he lives sparingly, saves money, and invests his savings for greater security in a slave, the slave, in such a case, is only his wages in another form; and consequently a working man's slave thus purchased should be as completely at his own disposal as the wages he receives for his labour."

In *Progress And Poverty*<sup>2</sup>, George's main arguments had been couched in economic terms that could be understood by the enquiring agnostic. Here, in *The Condition Of Labour*, he shows that the same conclusion may be reached by theological arguments addressed to those who believe, as

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he did, that God is the creator and subsequent governor of the universe. Here is the core of his exegesis:

"No sooner does the State arise than, as we all know, it needs revenues. This need for revenues is small at first, while population is sparse, industry rude, and the functions of the State few and simple. But, with growth of population and advance of civilization, the functions of the State increase, and larger and larger revenues are needed.

"Now, He made the world and placed man in it, He that preordained civilization as the means whereby man might rise to higher powers and become more and more conscious of the works of his Creator, must have foreseen this increasing need for State revenues, and have made provision for it.

"That is to say: The increasing need for public revenues with social advance, being a natural, God-ordained need, there must be a right way of

# Just what

"THE rights of man." It has a quaint 18th century sound. There is of course the gender question, and nowadays one speaks of "human rights" and "persons" instead of "men". However, this is mostly a verbal matter. More basic is general scepticism over the concept of "natural rights."

1991 is the bicentennial of the ratification of the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights. In 1791 there was a consensus that human rights derived from natural law, and the chief controversy was whether the states or the federal government should formulate and guarantee them.

The Federalists won, but the anti-federalists had an important input in the Bill of Rights. The rights were basically personal rights dealing with freedom of speech and assembly, the right to a fair trial, protection against encroachments by government, etc. — known as "civil rights."

But after their adoption, the Bill of Rights was seldom invoked, and there was a steady erosion of the concept of "natural rights." Social Darwinism prevailed and rights became whatever organized society dictated. Not much time was spent on refuting natural rights; they were simply dismissed. Yet the concept was the result of at least 100 years of intense thought and discussion, from Locke to Jefferson.

**AFTER World War II there was a resurgence of active concern about rights. The result of "rights" based on government dictates had become an appalling nightmare. The United Nations Declaration of Rights,**

raising them – some way that we can truly say is the way intended by God. It is clear that this right way must accord with the moral law”?

EXISTING methods of taxation, he goes on to explain, do not so accord. They take from individuals what is rightly theirs; they give some an advantage over others, as for example by interfering with prices; they create crimes that are not sins (e.g. smuggling); they lead men into temptation by giving them a motive to make false statements; and they punish God-ordained labour.

George's single tax would be in quite a different category. The unimproved value of land owes nothing to the efforts of any individual, but arises with the beginnings of civilisation, and increases as civilisation develops. At present the rent, or income that arises from this value, is appropriated by those who claim to own the land. Now rightful ownership is conferred by labour, and labour alone, and cannot be taken as applying to the

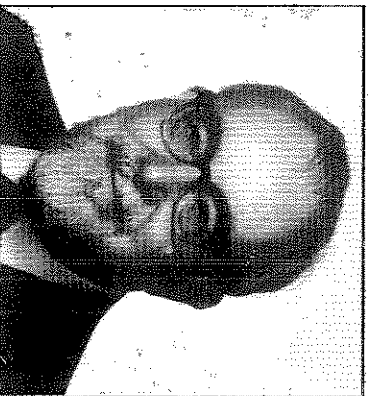
land, which was provided by God for the use of all mankind.

Subsequent purchases, as we have seen, have no effect on an original wrongful title. The inference from all this, that rent belongs to us all, is reinforced by a further consideration. As the need for revenue grows, it is the value of land, and the value of land alone, that grows with it. Have we not therefore sufficient reason to believe that the value of land is the source of revenue that God intended for us? If this were not enough, is it not evident that our attempts to derive revenue from elsewhere have brought upon us the social evils from which we suffer?

It is time for the Catholic Church, and others too that express concern for our social problems, to consider carefully what Henry George had to say to Pope Leo XIII, and to realise that here at last is a practical solution that they can advocate in the sure knowledge that they can do so without straying from their proper province.

# ‘rights’ have we got?

**asks  
BOB  
CLANCY**



adopted in 1948, was one manifestation of this reaction.

In the United States the demand for “rights” has multiplied — at a time, ironically, when little attention has been paid to “natural rights.” More numerous, varied and insistent have grown the calls for minority rights, freedom of expression, the right to privacy, and so on — far beyond anything imagined by the Founding Fathers. The appeal is to the extended interpretation of the Bill of Rights rather than to natural law, and the courts, especially the U.S. Supreme court, are flooded with cases.

In the Winter 1991 issue of *The Wilson Quarterly*, James H. Mulson comments on the subject: “Today, natural law and natural rights are said to be rejected by spokesmen of every ideological stripe. The result is that natural law, considered indispensable by the founders’ generation, is now dismissed as unnecessary while the

Bill of Rights, considered unnecessary in 1787, is held to be indispensable. Such reversals are not uncommon... What they indicate is that the most strongly held convictions often change and that the current reverence for the Bill of Rights cannot be taken for granted in the future.”

Little is said in the Bill of Rights about economic rights. Henry George was a staunch believer in natural rights in an age which had virtually abandoned the concept. He agreed with the acceptance of natural law that brought forth the American Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution with its Bill of Rights. He felt, however, that it was unfinished business, that the concentration was on civil rights, and that economic rights must also be considered.

The twin rights that George said were founded in nature were the right of all to access to land and the right of each to the fruits of his labour. Based on the natural truth that we all come into the world in the same way, it is deduced that we all have a right to the use of the earth. Based on the fact that nature yields her fruits only to labour, it is deduced that this too is a mandate of nature. It was to guarantee these rights that George formulated the single tax: “To abolish all taxation save that upon land values.”

In the heated disputes over the proliferating “rights” demanded by so many, the air would be much cleared if the rights Henry George pointed to were introduced into the dialogue. The bicentennial of the Bill of Rights does not seem likely to yield this happy result, so we’ll have to wait a little longer.

# BLOWN AWAY BY THE DESTRUCTIVE

TODAY'S predominate systems of land tenure, which gives absolute ownership of land and other natural resources to individuals, is detrimental to the environment. It sanctions the destruction of plants and animals, and justifies the robbery from future generations of their right to a clean and bountiful world.

Real estate speculation and inequality of distribution create situations in which people are forced to destroy forests, an essential link in the biological system of the planet. Though there may be particular cases where a certain piece of land has had the advantage and protection of a beneficent owner, private property in land has been, on the whole, an antagonistic influence on the well-being of the environment.

Though this paper is focused on the environmentally ill effects of the present system of land ownership, it will clarify its point to briefly visualize a better system. This system would radically change our perceptions of the land and radically alter our land use patterns. Rather than feeling as if the individuals who used the land "owned" the land, it would be recognized that their use of the land constituted a loan from the community and from future generations. Chief Seattle, in his address to President Pierce's 1854 offer to buy a large tract of Indian land put it well:

"We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother but his enemy, and when he has conquered it he moves on. He leaves his fathers graves behind and does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children. He does not care. His fathers' graves and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought and plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert."

As well as not being owned, land would be distributed in such a way as to enable those who needed it most to be the stewards of the land, rather than the present system whereby a few land owners engross massive estates and shut the many out, creating a desperate class of landless people who all too often must destroy the environment to survive from day to day.

The philosophy of property in land embodies a moral and legal right to destroy the environment. According to *American Jurisprudence*, an encyclo-

paedia of law, "Property" refers to the unrestricted right to an objects use, enjoyment and disposition.<sup>1</sup>

This philosophy confers an absolute right to the indefinite use of our forests, rivers, air and hills upon an individual to the exclusion of all other generations present and future. It is insensitive to the independent right of plants and animals to the enjoyment of their own lives, treating them, within the definition of property, as mere inanimate objects. It is a belief system whereby 'a gift that comes only once in the lifetime of the planet, namely ancient, native forests, representing over 100,000,000 years of complex biological evolution,<sup>2</sup> may be clear cut for the short term profits of the land owner.

It embraces the maxim "one may do with one's own what one wills" in a totally inappropriate context, that disenfranchises the future to a whole-some environment.

The rape of the environment, a now somewhat familiar metaphor, can be further illustrated by the parallels between land ownership and marriage. According to Andrea Dworkin, "Marriage laws sanctified rape by reiterating the right of the rapist to ownership of the raped."<sup>3</sup> As the marriage certificate creates a property in the woman, "providing a legal qualification that a husband cannot rape his own wife,"<sup>4</sup> so the title deed creates a property in the land, providing a legal and irrevocable right to the rape of the environment.

Land ownership has a detrimental effect on the environment through the large unemployed landless or semi-landless population created by the present deliberate and profitable characteristics of real estate speculation and inequality of distribution. These characteristics are essential to a profitable land ownership system, because by with-holding the plentiful, good aricultural land from the poor, it for-

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# 'E ECONOMICS OF TION

Report by  
Anders Corr

ses them to become low paid wage earners for the rich.

Throughout the world tolls are being levied on the environment by countless unemployed landless families who, denied access to agricultural land, must seek survival in the fragile soils of native forests. According to Philip Johnston, President of CARE, an organization working on education and sustainable agriculture in developing nations,

"To feed their families, poor farmers in Nepal are clearing forests for farmland. The soil quickly becomes depleted and the farmers are forced to clear more land, cutting down even more trees. In the mountainous areas of Guatemala, landless farmers are forced to plant crops on steep hillsides where rain and wind sweep away topsoil, leaving the land useless."

Brazil is an especially glaring example of needless destruction. Government land policy contributes to deforestation by conferring title to land upon the clearance of the forest. A cleared forest is legally an "improvement" on the land.

The inequality of land distribution is another leading cause of deforestation. Catherine Caulfield, in her book *In the Rainforest* states:

"Brazil has 2.3 acres of farmland per person, which is more than the United States, the world's greatest exporter of food, taking potential farmland into account but still leaving aside Amazonia, each person in Brazil could have 10 acres. Instead, 4.5% of Brazil landowners own 81% of the country's farmland, and 70% of rural households are landless.<sup>5</sup>

Many of Brazil's landless, facing starvation, clear the rain forest which in 1988 was 8 to 10% smaller than its original size.<sup>4</sup> It is ironic that the amount of Brazilian rainforest left, 3.8 million square kilometers,<sup>8</sup> is nearly equal to the amount of agricultural

land that is not being farmed but is being held out of production for speculative reasons by the few powerful landlords. If utilized and distributed in an equitable manner, this 3.35 million square kilometers<sup>9</sup> would virtually halt Brazil's destruction of the Amazon, the world's largest tropical moist forest.

In addition to creating a large class of desperate landless families, inequality of distribution impedes the worker, who by nature of her or his work has an individual and personal relationship with the land, air and water, from making decisions regarding the best way to treat the environment. Profit oriented orders issue forth from a landed class of owners who have no personal connection and understanding of the amount of environmental destruction that their policies, often carried out far away in corporate headquarters, actually perpetrate. With a system in which the worker was the decision maker and steward of the natural resources, the responsibility and benefits of environmentally sustainable industry and agriculture would be squarely on the shoulders of those with the closest relationship to the land.

THERE IS some reason to be hopeful. Among the vast number of allies that the struggle for sustainable life on this planet has are those working for justice in our systems of land tenure. Joshua Karliner, in his *Political Ecology and U.S. Foreign Policy* states that "Peasant movements fighting for land redistribution ... may become the fundamental force that can reverse the surging tide of rainforest destruction in Central America. For while they are not driven strictly by ecological considerations, genuine land reform movements are inherently environmental movements in that they seek to bring food production out of the forests and off the hillsides."<sup>10</sup>

Changing the perceptions and practices of our systems of land tenure and ownership are fraught with political difficulties. Karliner explains: "Gruesome stories abound of peasant communities that were literally blown away for organizing resistance to cattle ranchers who were evicting them from their land and pushing them deeper into the rainforest.

In the mid-1960s' for example, Guatemalan peasants organized to keep their land. An armed guerrilla movement emerged at the edge of the rainforest to challenge both the government and the ranchers.

"In response, a U.S. Special forces team directed a Guatemalan counterinsurgency campaign that used

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12. Ibid. Pg. 153.

13. Photo reproduced from *Appalachia, USA: A Case Study*, San Francisco: Henry George School.

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# Idiosyncracies of farming exposed

SIR Richard Body is a brave man, and this is a brave book. It will win him few friends in Whitehall or Brussels. Fearlessly and clinically, he takes on the agribusinessman, the Ministry of Agriculture, the chemical industry, the EEC and many others in this incisive study of the alarming state of our food and our countryside.

If ever there was a public issue which was truly politico-economic, it is the state of British farming. The whole public health question of the state of our food is an integral part of the politico-economic problem.

First, he shows how the current Common Agriculture Policy of the EEC hits hardest at Britain's poor, by inflating their weekly food bill by £16 per family.

Secondly, he shows how subsidies and fixed prices guarantee that supply will exceed demand and generate large surpluses which must be "dumped" outside the EEC at the taxpayer's expense. Not only is this appallingly wasteful, it also creates havoc in the economies of many Third World countries. Generally speaking, the less developed a country is, the more dependent it is on agriculture for its national wealth. The greatest practical aid we can give these countries is to buy their produce, which is mainly food.

However, the common external tariff of the EEC means that this food is required to be very heavily taxed, so as to render it uncompetitive in the common market. So, not only can these Third World farmers not sell to us, the most sought after food market in the world, regardless of whether we (the British consumer) want to buy from them, they also face unfair competition in the world market because the EEC sells its surpluses at below the cost of production.

Not only is this bad for international relations, it is bad ecology and bad economics as well.



• Where should the bananas be grown? Not in Scotland?

Richard Body, *Our Food, Our Land* (Rider: £15.99)  
REVIEW by  
IAN LAMBERT

Ploughing up the North Yorkshire moors to grow wheat makes no sense at all when there are other countries, such as Australia and the United States, much better suited to the growing of wheat and with huge natural surpluses to sell in the world market.

Thirdly, Sir Richard shows how this support of agriculture causes further market distortions, by artificially boosting farmers' demand, for example, for fertilizers and pesticides, which in turn causes distortions in the demand for scientific research.

(In 1973 British farmers spent £37.7 million on pesticides; by 1986 the cost had rocketed to £450 million.) This then builds up an enormous range of different businesses, such as the chemical industry, and research bodies, with a vested interest in keeping the CAP going.

Fourthly, Sir Richard shows how the support of our arable farmers inevitably hits our livestock farmers, who tend to be the smaller holders. About one third of all our grain goes to feed farm

animals. So a high cost of grain means a high input cost for livestock farming.

One of the most interesting passages in the book is an analysis of the period from the abolition of the Corn Laws to the Second World War, a period when arable farming was not supported and when dairy farming thrived in Britain. Since entering the EEC, Britain has been forced to impose a new set of Corn Laws, and seen the demise of the small dairy farmer and the advent of the agribusinessman.

Fifthly, Sir Richard comes to the nub of the problem. The British tenant farmer loses out because all these subsidies greatly increase the lucrativeness of agriculture, which in turn only serves to inflate the value of agriculture land, which has risen one hundred times in the last forty years! This creates an enormous entrance cost for anyone embarking on farming and must be the principal reason why, although agriculture is booming as never before, there are now sixty percent fewer people occupied in farming than was the case forty years ago.

*This is exactly as Henry George would have predicted, the monopolisation of land in private hands acting like a wedge and separating the rich agribusinessman from the poorer small holder.*

SINCE the entrance costs are now so high, this puts tremendous pressure on the tenant farmer to increase his output, something which scientific progress has made possible through the use of fertilizers, pesticides, hormones and modern factory farming methods.

This then creates a treadmill, whereby advances in science enable land to become ever more productive, which only

pushes up rents and inflates land prices and creates ever increasing pressure on the farmer to make the land ever more productive. Forced to use ever more intensive and hazardous methods, the tenant farmer places the health of the public at risk. It really is as simple as that.

Quite apart from the fact that the dear old British farmer seems hardly to have been helped at all, in economic terms, at the end of the day, the sheer cost (the direct cost) of this insanity is truly staggering. In



• Ian Lambert

most of the years since Britain joined the EEC, the Government has paid out more in subsidies and other aid to the British farmer than the aggregate of all farm incomes for the year!

Put simply, it would have been cheaper for the taxpayer to support the farmer as if he were wholly unemployed, by paying directly to him his actual farm income for the year. (Sir Richard does not touch on the administrative costs, which hardly bear thinking about.)

The ecological harm caused by all this is already at frightening levels. Two hundred years ago Adam Smith commented that it would be perfectly possible, with the benefit of unlimited subsidies, to grow vines on the slopes of the Scottish Highlands. He considered this

to be economic lunacy and merely used it as an illustration of the benefits of free trade (in this case with France). What he did not comment on was the ecological consequences of providing economic incentives to people to grow vines in Scotland, since the example was purely hypothetical.

Today, alas, the examples are wholly actual. Twenty-five percent of the North Yorkshire moors, and twenty five percent of the English countryside as a whole, have been drained for the purposes of agriculture at massive expense and great ecological (as well as aesthetic) cost.

THE ecological costs are something which we need to consider. David Ricardo defined rent as the return for the use of the original and indestructible powers of the soil. But now we know that the soil is not indestructible; far from it.

Georgists will have to learn to accommodate the perishability of the land in a modern policy of land value taxation. I suspect it is this issue more than anything else which is the reason why Sir Richard is not a Georgist. He is concerned that land value taxation will not sufficiently discourage over-intensive use of farm land and the consequent ecological damage. Of course, free trade — truly free trade — would promote the best, and ecologically most sound, use of farm land internationally.

But the question remains how land value taxation, which by not taxing improvements to land would thereby promote them, would effectively discourage all disimprovements to land. This is a question which Georgists need to take more seriously than they do at present.

The Georgist reader of "Our  
Continued on Page 60 ▶

Food, Our Land' may be disappointed not to find in it any advocacy of land value taxation. Do not be deceived, however. Sir Richard is actually a land value taxer by another name. Having conclusively shown that all this aid only inflates land values, he recommends that it be drastically curbed.

Such a withdrawal of aid would effectively be a land value tax — and it is much more likely to be implemented, simply because it would never be referred to as a land value tax. In fact, the true rental value of agricultural land (disregarding all the aid) is very low.

A land value tax — one based on value, not area — would bear only very lightly on agricultural land, and much more heavily on under-used city and suburban sites. (This is at least part of the answer to Sir Richard's dilemma.)

In the end, however, this book is a little disappointing. The analysis of the problems is brilliant and incisive. It is far from empty rhetoric. However, the proposed solutions, which sensibly include a major restructuring of the Governmental departments, do not seem to go far enough and are unlikely to fire the reader into action. (Somehow, I just cannot see Sir Richard heading marches of the angry British public on Ten Downing Street demanding free trade and land value taxation). But, if politics is the art of the possible, Sir Richard is certainly a politician. His solutions are sensible and practical and they deserve to be taken seriously by all of us.

Sir Richard's is a lone voice. He needs our support; farmers and agribusinessmen do not. It is as simple as that.

# Very unnatural to forget the non-polluters!

A NEW BOOK has just been published called *Costing The Earth* — for the second time in two years!

First time round, the book was edited by Ronald Banks and published by Shephard-Walwyn in collaboration with the London-based Centre for Incentive Taxation.



• Francis Cairncross

This volume was the work of a team of economists who estimated the annual rental value of Britain's land and natural resources — and recommended a tax on rent as the most effective strategy for conserving the environment.

The book was read by Francis Cairncross, the Environment Editor of the world-renowned news magazine, *The Economist*.

She decided to write a book, called — you guessed it, *Costing The Earth*. This has been published by Business Books at £16.99, a hefty price but worthwhile for the mass of statistical data and her analysis of ecological problems and how they might be resolved by governments and the market.

Ms Cairncross adopts the key principle of the *Inspirational Costing The Earth*. She argues it would make more sense to switch taxes away from the incomes generated by labour and capital. Governments, she



• Ronald Banks

using the value of natural resources — such as the rivers and skies, into which they dump their waste.

But she fails to generalise her argument to encompass all users of natural resources, including those who are non-polluters. This is not an error displayed in *Costing The Earth* Mark I.

Adam Smith spelt out the terminology for this policy long ago, and it boils down to paying rent for the use of a natural resource.

In the limited case identified by Ms Cairncross, we are talking about the great "commons" that have yet to be effectively privatised.

But fear not, Shephard-Walwyn is about to publish a book called *Commons Without Tragedy*, edited by Prof. R.V. Andelson.

Hopefully, Ms Cairncross will read that — and follow up *Costing The Earth* with her own *Commons Without Tragedy!*



*A HISTORIC* trip to the *USSR* by four advocates of land-rent taxation may boost the chances of success for President Gorbachev's perestroika.

*IAN BARRON* reports

PLANS to expose the Soviet Union to the fiscal policies of American social reformer Henry George were advanced by a four-man delegation that visited the USSR in May.

The trip resulted from initiatives that were taken at a conference in New York last summer. This was convened to study the way in which land-value taxation would facilitate the transformation of the socialist system into a market economy grounded in equity and efficiency.

Lectures in Moscow and Leningrad and in Estonia, one of the Baltic countries, have resulted in invitations to establish a series of Henry George schools, says George Collins, the Director of the Henry George School of New York.

On returning to the US, Mr. Collins told *Land and Liberty*: "There was enthusiastic interest in the proposals to collect rent as the primary, if not the sole, source of revenue."

"Victor Shcheglov, of the Moscow City Planning Institute, told me, 'I like Henry George. His ideas make sense and they are just'. He wrote a proposal in which he said his aspiration was to establish a series of schools in the Soviet Union similar to ours in the US. But first he has proposed a revisit by western Georgists in the Fall, to provide training in both Georgist economic philosophy and land appraisals."

"The chairman of the Agricultural Committee of the Supreme Soviet said that land rent collection would be just what he needs as head of a collective farm in Siberia which now has to pay most of what they earn to the central Government in Moscow."

But before the Georgist model of the economy can be implemented, the Soviets have to establish a system for measuring the annual rental value of the land. This is where Ted Gwartney, another member of

# Georgists'

## mission to

### USSR is

## successful



• **Ted Gwartney**

the delegation, may make a fundamental contribution. He has offered to resign from his job as an assessor in California and work in the USSR.

Funding for that project will have to come from the West, and an application has been submitted to the Lincoln Foundation.

Its president, Mr. David Lincoln, told *Land and Liberty*:

"Gwartney is preparing a proposal for the Lincoln Foundation outlining a programme to begin the training of Russians in appraisal and valuation techniques."

THE ACADEMIC in the delegation was Nicolaus Tideman, a professor of economics who has worked hard to establish contacts with politicians, civil servants and university economists in Eastern Europe.

Prof. Tideman provided the theoretical insights into LVT when the Americans met members of the Economic Reform

Committee of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow.

Practical experience of property tax reform was provided by Steven Cord, whose campaigns have resulted in a dozen cities in Pennsylvania switching to a two-rate tax, in which the burden is shifted from buildings and on to land values.

It was during their visit to Leningrad that Ted Gwartney was invited to help in appraising the city's land by the mayor, Anatoly Sobchak. As a pilot study of what was involved in turning the market into a tool for assessors, Gwartney worked with politician Sergei Belyaev, developing an approximate land value map of the Leningrad district that Belyaev represents.

The team also visited Pushkin to study that town's attempts to assess land for tax purposes. Reports Prof. Tideman: "We could see that assessing land in the Soviet Union is a much different thing than assessing US land, because there isn't a market in land."

"Enterprises and activities that use land can be asked to pay for what they use, but there is no objective market standard by which the size of the charges can

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# Wild-life pays the price

By T.A. ENDE

KENT in south eastern England, is a beautiful county and is often referred to as "The Garden of England". Twice every 25 hours a "bulge" sweeps across the Atlantic Ocean and causes immense tidal activity when it reaches the "Continental Shelf" of Europe and turns into a current.

Today's tide coming up the English Channel meets the previous tide coming down the east coast off the North Foreland and this causes a rise and fall of the surface of the water in the Thames and Medway river estuaries of as much as 13 feet.

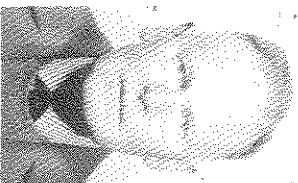
These tides sweep through London to its western extremity at Teddington, each time registering a rise and fall of the river and we are reminded of this by a place of alcoholic and other refreshment called "The Tide's End".

Corresponding to the phases of the moon there are "spring tides" and "neap tides" and from the map it can be seen that the Kent "flats" are exposed at low water. Beneath their surface live lug-worms, ragworms, and clams and on their surface live cockles, mussels, winkles, whelks and oysters. In the mussels are found tiny pearls.

Gulls and snipe tread busily in their search for the sustenance the flats yield to them, and when I heard the snipe calling to one another as they flew over the house-tops by day and by night, it seemed to me that, unlike the gulls, the snipe live rather by reference to the tides than to the movements of the sun. When the flats are covered, flounders and crabs leave muddy trails, and those crabs which have not a protective shell on their backs retire into whelks' shells for protection.

The salt marshes adjoining the flats are covered during the "spring tides" and once a year become ablaze with white and pink "everlasting" flowers. Many square miles of salt marshland

• T.A. ENDE, who has owned property in five British counties, came out of retirement recently to arrange the sale of a slice of the Kent countryside. Here, he reflects on the fate of the birds and bees that get in the way of land speculation.



have been turned into agricultural land by building around then a "sea wall" with "dykes" or ditches to drain them of stormwater.

Most of the island known as "Sheppey" is salt marsh reclaimed from the sea but there are low hills along the north shore with red clay cliffs fronting the Thames Estuary. A number of building estates was laid out in this century and special railway trains brought purchasers to auctions held on the site.

Over a period of 20 years I located "lost" plot-holders on those estates, and sold the land purchased from them to local builders, in some cases with planning consents from the local authority and complete plans and all other consents for the erection of residential villas.

I EMERGED from retirement to bring into the market six plots of land with planning consent for the erection of three residential houses for the beneficiaries of the estate of their grandmother and their father bought in 1907 for £90 freehold. Each plot has a frontage of 20 feet and a depth of 140 feet. At that time the newly-laid-out estate was comprised of open fields.

Since then the foresight, energy, talent and labour of generations of men and women have put in a water supply, drainage, gas and electricity supplies; roads in many cases have been made up and smart residential property has been erected; parades of shops have arisen alongside elegant public houses and res-

taurants; schools, places of worship, and public libraries have appeared, and for those few families who have no motor-car, there are bus services, with special bus service facilities for schoolchildren.

I doubt if the beneficiaries of the estate comprised in those six plots or their predecessors in title have visited the site a dozen times since 1907, but after nine years' delay caused by local authority and Whitehall obstruction, with planning consent from the local authority for the erection of three residential houses on them, the site has been sold to a builder for £95,000.

Piling for the foundations will cost him £30,000 and when the road is made up, there will be £15,000 for road charges. These costs and the cost of building will be passed to the purchasers of the three houses. The site has been cleared of all foliage and a number of trees of 50 or 60 years' growth and all the wild life that goes with them have been ejected — birds, bees, butterflies will disappear and much underground life will also disappear beneath foundations and "tarmac".

In 1907 an agricultural labourer's wage was 15s. (75p) a week. Now it is £140 a week. This is a multiplication of 187 times the 1907 wage.

If you deduct £5,000 for the expenses of bringing the land into the market, £90,000 represents a multiplication of 1,000 times the price at which the land was bought. It is true that the vendors of the land will pay tax on the sale, but agricultural labourers also pay tax.

IN 1879, the American economist, Henry George, published *Progress and Poverty*, which swept the world and was translated into all the leading languages of the world.

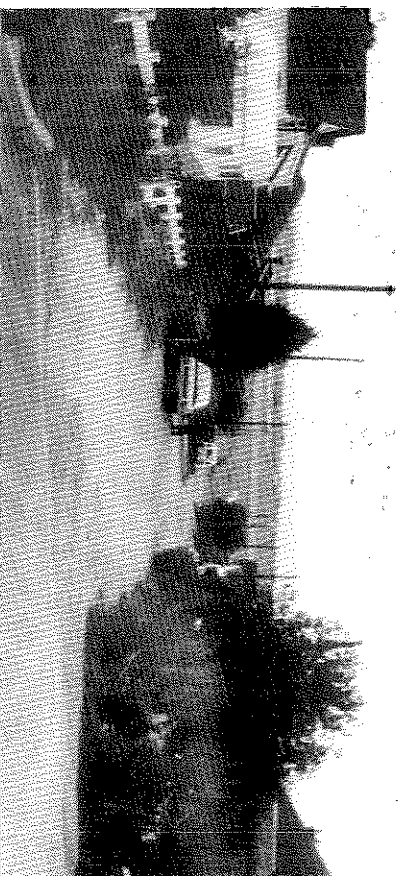
In it he propounded as the

enigma of our times that manufacturing processes cheapen all the time, but poverty always marches with progress. He said that the cause of this is that the amount of wealth distributed to landownership always increases out of all proportion to that distributed to labour and capital until labour and capital can no longer unite on land to create wealth, and industrial depression follows.

He defined capital as "that part of wealth which is set aside for the production of more wealth or wealth in course of exchange". It includes buildings, plant, machinery, tools, stock, transport, agricultural boundary fencing and walls, agricultural estate roads and drainage, and of course "stock" includes livestock, seeds and manures.

The farmer grows the grain; the miller manufactures it into flour; the warehouseman stores and packages it, and distributes it to the retailer. Once produced to the customer, it becomes wealth in his hands but ceases to be capital, because it is no longer "in course of exchange".

Henry George wanted a welfare state within a free enterprise society. He divided government into two parts; political and social. Political government would today consist in the defence of the realm and the sea and always; maintenance of a civil police force and the courts of justice, and suchlike matters and would be reduced to the absolute minimum necessary



• The site in Sheppey, Kent, where the butterflies will miss out

to maintain the common right of the public and the right of the individual to enjoyment of the Sovereign's peace and the laws of the land.

Social government would consist in doing for mankind the things which it is not practicable for mankind to do except on a collective basis, such as irrigation and drainage, local and trunk roads, railways, ports, aerodromes, education, public health generally, hospital treatment, libraries, registries, welfare of the aged and infirm and provision of open spaces and recreational facilities.

He recognised that for any sovereign State to provide such facilities would require great expenditure and that revenue would have to be raised to pay for them.

In his monumental speech delivered in 1882 at Delmonico's Restaurant in New York, Henry George is reported by the *New York Times* to have said: "I pro-

pose to abolish all taxation which falls upon the exertion of labor or the use of capital or the accumulation of wealth, and to meet all public expense out of that fund which rises, not from the exertion of any individual, but from the growth of the whole community".

He claimed that there are ultimately only three possible sources of revenue: rent for the use of land (excluding buildings); wages for labour (including salaries and directors' fees), and interest paid for the use of capital. He wanted to take rent as the sole source of revenue.

We have seen how, in Kent, landownership has been able to profit a thousand times from "the growth of the whole community".

A single tax on all landed property, charged on the occupier, whether freeholder or tenant, is borne by the freeholder alone or proportionately with any other person claiming under him who can exert a profit-rent against an assignee or under-tenant.

#### ◀From Page 61

be justified. One consequence seems to be that Soviet valuers of land tend to use a relatively small number of categories of land value".

IT WAS then on to Estonia for Collins, Cord and Tideman, where they instructed the politicians on the virtues of LVT as a tool for jump-starting the ailing economy.

An important day's session took place at the Estonian State Land Department whose head,

Tombet Tiits, proved to be extremely sympathetic to the fiscal reforms advocated by the Americans.

After hearing Tideman's comments on a draft of a land tax law for Estonia that his department had prepared, Mr. Tiits invited the American professor to develop an alternative draft - which he did.

In his report to the New York-based Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, which had partly funded the Soviet trip, Prof. Tideman states: "There is widespread interest in the Soviet

Union in taxing land. Some of that interest comes from people who understand the importance of not taxing buildings.

"Even without our encouragement, some implementation of taxes on land can be expected to occur. But those who are interested in taxing land care very greatly for the insights and support that Americans are able to offer.

"And our contacts in the Soviet Union can be expected to increase the extent to which land is taxed and to result in better land tax methods".

# Trumped by the market

HE WAS lionised in the Eighties as the man with the Midas touch. He had an ego to match the gullibility of the bankers who could not wait to pour money into his hands to finance the next deal.

Donald's name was magic, and he made sure everyone knew it: TRUMP went up in lights, just to remind an awestruck public that the boy had made it Big.

With an inherited \$25m, he went on a spending spree, financing acquisitions with borrowings and using the escalating value of property as collateral.

According to estimates by *Forbes* magazine, assets worth \$3.7 bn compare with \$3.2 bn he owes. With declining values, Trump is heading for a negative net worth, while struggling to generate cash to pay the interest on his loans.

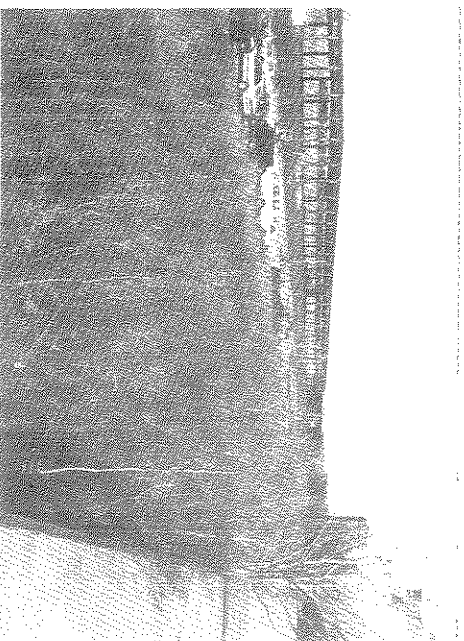
Trump placed himself on the classic escalator. Property prices were supposed to rise fast enough to cover the cost of borrowings. He paid little attention to history, which is full of land booms — and slumps.

Now Donald Trump is trying to keep his dream afloat by selling bits and pieces to pay his creditors.

Should we care about the fallen idol? Yes, because his personal fate is tied up with the social welfare of Manhattan, where he worked most of his deals.

SYMBOLIC of the man — and the Eighties — is the 100-acre derelict site on the west side, the biggest drain on Trump's cash flow.

When he bought it for \$110m in 1985, the



• One-hundred acre disaster — Trump's controversial site Penn Central trains had already stopped shunting into the yards alongside the Hudson River.

Trump values the land at \$650m. Last year *Forbes* estimated the site as worth about \$200m. How do we explain the enormous discrepancy? Differences in expectations.

Donald wanted to build Trump City there, with buildings offering 14.5m square feet of rentable space, including a shopping mall and a 150-storey tower. Wealthy nearby residents objected.

In March, he announced revised plans in an effort to win support from the city government and civic groups. Under a tentative compromise, the developments had collapsed to 8.3m square feet, to include 1.8m square feet of motion picture and TV studios.

Rental income has been drastically revised down, along with the capital value of the site.

Trump may be struggling with his bankers, but so far no-one has pointed out that he and his kind are not the real victims of the economic crash.

The artistry of his land deals caused the price of real estate to soar and led the economy into a price-and-cost structure that could not be sustained.

Manhattan is a granite outcrop, but Trump built his glitzy towers on the quicksand of speculative values.

When the market could take no more, his empire had to crash.

## ◀From Page 57

helicopter gunships, fighter bombers, and napalm to destroy a 500-person guerrilla insurgency. It is estimated that the army killed an additional 6,000 to 8,000 people in the process. Similar conflicts occurred in Nicaragua and Honduras, and — with less violence — in Costa Rica.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of the consequences, the struggle for equitable systems of land tenure go on, and where victories have been won, there also have been victories for the environment. During the first five years

after the Nicaraguan revolution, the Sandinista government instituted a program of land reform which successfully halted all rainforest colonization projects.<sup>12</sup>

The struggles of Appalachian farmers to preserve their lands from large coal companies in Kentucky, Brazilian rubber tappers to continue their sustainable cultivation of the Amazon, and Hopi Indians to keep Big Mountain from the steel jaws of the uranium mining companies are lights in the darkness. Support for these and other just systems of land tenure is support for a healthy environment.