

LAND and LIBERTY

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LV TOLSTOY
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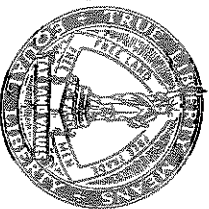
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• COVER PICTURE: Tolstoy at 80, riding at Yashaya Polyana in 1908.

Curbing havoc

A CLASSIC objection to a tax on rent is that it would lead to the over-exploitation of land. People, we are told, would be obliged to build skyscrapers in their gardens.

The reverse is the truth: the absence of a tax on land values encourages the misuse of land to the point where, during speculative booms, residential streets are bought up by land-hungry builders anxious to cut costs by increasing the density of developments.

Britain has been in the midst of such a trend for the past 12 months, and now it has spawned an anti-garden gobbling movement. It's called NIMBY: Not in My Back Yard.

Sir Rhodes Boyson created the organisation in the London borough of Brent, where residents complain that the character of their leafy streets is being altered by the builders who want to plant bricks instead of roses in the gardens.

LAND USE plans are not a rational solution to this problem.

Maryland, the U.S. state that has to cope with the sprawl of Baltimore and Washington DC, is a case in point. In a report called *Land Use and Abuse* it notes that the rate of land use change was more than double the rate of population growth during the 1970s.

"We are converting land to development at a rate which is at least twice what is necessary to accommodate growth. The major factor in abusive land use is low density residential sprawl."

The future is bleak, for "about 190,000 acres of additional residential land will be used from 1985-2,000."

The planners of Maryland naturally think that the solution is....more planning and coercive controls over where people live and work.

Planners, alas, never get it right. Because people's pre-

ferences are constantly changing, no sooner are their views monitored and expressed in expensively produced plans, than the market place signals a change in those wishes!

THERE IS a perfect solution. It's called land value taxation.

The multiplicity of people's needs determines the value of land; this in turn determines the amount that is paid in taxation. Major benefits flow from this fiscal policy.

• Land is used efficiently: there is no incentive to over-use or under-use land - people would strike the right balance, and be happy to pay for it.

• The renaissance in cities would lead to compact urban environments fit for enjoyable lifestyles for all, banishment for the ghettos.

• The tax burden would be reduced. Governments would not have to spend so much on providing inefficiently-used infrastructure such as roads, sewerage works and municipal schools and hospitals.

• The speculators who withhold land from use would be defeated, if the tax rate was high enough. Britain exempts vacant urban and agricultural land from the property tax. The U.S. and some other countries impose such a tax, but at deviously low rates. The speculators swat the cost off like a fly on an elephant's back.

The land speculation now sweeping most countries is the single most disruptive factor in the land markets. It is causing havoc in more ways than the immediate one of misallocation of land between different uses and users.

Sooner or later the policy-makers will have to resign themselves to the fact that there is only one lasting solution to that problem: a very high tax rate imposed on the economic rent of land.

WHEN YOU are on your death bed, your last words are accorded some respect. The beneficiaries of your will, for a start, are most anxious to hear the distilled wisdom of the benefactor.

When that benefactor is Leo Tolstoy, one of the greatest artists ever, you would think that the world would pause to listen and reflect.

And what were Tolstoy's last words? He rode on a train to his death, while fleeing from a wife who apparently hated him. On that train, he could have slumped back in anonymity, exhausted by a lifetime's creative endeavours, making peace with his maker.

Far from it. He announced to passengers in his carriage that he was Leo Tolstoy, and he proceeded to instruct them on the virtues of a fiscal policy articulated by an American social reformer, Henry George.

The policy was a simple one: a tax on the value of land. This tax, while efficient at raising revenue, had a moral significance for Tolstoy. It was the mechanism for abolishing an evil; the private exploitation of the resources of nature, which ought to be – which were – the property of all.

Right to the end, according to the latest biography¹, the wizened old man with the matted beard insisted on spreading the gospel according to Henry George.

Tolstoy's Georgist gospel



• Henry George

THIS WAS one of the rich legacies that the writer sought to leave mankind.

No-one denies that Tolstoy was a perceptive observer of society and psychology. His major works of fiction are suffused with the dramas of the 19th century, which symbolically represented age old actions (such as wars) and human strengths and frailties (such as jealousy and courage).

Today, universities provide ample scope for Ph.D dissertations on the artistic merits of the novels, and lecturers build their reputations by spreading knowledge about the works of the Master.

And yet Tolstoy committed the last half of his life to the facts of life. He swapped the role of the artist for the even more

HE TOOK IT TO THE GRAVE,

SAYS
FRED HARRISON

demanding mantle of the social reformer.

He was disgusted by the immiseration of the peasants, but could not see a practical solution until he received copies of *Progress and Poverty*² and the other works by his contemporary in the United States.

These books, according to his

own testimony, removed the scales from his eyes. Now he could see that a simple tax would release the energies of workers and banish poverty; open the gates to freedom, and diminish the power of tyrants who used ignorance to exploit the masses.

If people did not wish to believe Henry George, why should they not at least accord respect to the words of Leo Tolstoy on his death bed?

It did not suit the revolutionaries and anarchists to accord credence to Tolstoy's legacy: that would have endangered their plans for the Czar.

We have to presume that Lenin could see (as Karl Marx saw) that abolition of the mon-

1. A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988, £16.95, p.510.
2. New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1979.

opoly power based on the private ownership of land would have removed the need for the socialisation of capital.

So Lenin "contained" Tolstoy. He did this by praising the man as a poet and patronisingly dismissing him as a social thinker and reformer. That disgraceful treatment set the tone for all the biographies and literary critiques that followed throughout this century.

Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, we are invited to believe, strayed from the straight and narrow when he became a proselytiser for the American writer who was stirring the minds of men around the globe, from San Francisco to New York, from Edinburgh to Dublin and on to Sydney and the outback of Australia.

THE latest biography repeats the shallow assessment of Tolstoy's commitment to the land tax.

A.N. Wilson dismisses this dimension to his subject's life with a few glib phrases and pronouncements.

For example, Wilson - knowing that Tolstoy was a libertarian, who hated authoritarian governments - believes he can fault the writer by pointing out that a tax on land values implies the need for the State with machinery to administer the policy.

Not content with noting what he alleges is a contradiction in

Tolstoy's "muddled political thinking," Wilson proceeds to distort the structure of the State that would be required if the land tax were adopted.

For land taxes, the minimalist State is acceptable and sufficient to enable a free people to go about their affairs untroubled by authoritarian politicians or interfering monopolists who prefer a rigged market which favours an easy life and large profits.

For Mr Wilson, however, Tolstoy's policy implies "an all-powerful state," which was "understandably discarded".

Proceeding in this negative vein, Wilson notes: "Lenin, watching from abroad, was completely fascinated by the 'really glaring' contradictions in Tolstoy's works, ideas and teachings. Lenin was chiefly struck by the contradictions between the incomparable artist and the 'landowner obsessed by Christ'. He was unimpressed by the 'worn-out sniveller' who beat his breast and boasted to the world that he now lived on rice cutlets."

And so the process of assassinating his character and discrediting his philosophy proceeds apace.

Tolstoy thought he had broken away from the world of fiction, after being exposed to the insights offered by Henry George. Now, he thought, he could really contribute something to the labourers who eked out a mean living from the soil as tenants on the vast estates of the corrupt aristocracy that controlled Russia.

He was wrong. His biographers have chained him to the world of fiction. They will not allow him to break out into the real world, where the level of rents ensured the permanent pauperisation of a large part of the population.

Why, pronounced Wilson,

MIGHTY

A LONG FELT need for a comprehensive encyclopedia on economics has been answered with *The New Palgrave*.* This ambitious project in four big volumes is accompanied by an ambitious price (£450, \$600). The opus contains over 4,000 double-column pages with contributions by nearly 1,000 economists.

This work, though calling itself a dictionary, is indeed encyclopedic in scope. Its forerunner, *Dictionary of Political Economy*, edited by R. H. Inglis Palgrave, first appeared in the 1890's; it was a somewhat smaller work in three volumes and was rooted in a classical approach.

What about *The New Palgrave*? Economist Mark Blaug, though one of its contributors, wrote a short book criticizing it. *Economics Through the Looking Glass*, contending that it has a "distorted perspective." His main critique is that it blows up out of all proportion an obscure economist, Piero Sraffa, who developed an obscure theory of value.

In his economics, given an assumed wage-rate and production technology, we may derive all relative prices without reference to demand. This is developed through a series of complex equations. Sraffian theory may have a few dozen followers throughout the world, but Blaug finds that it dominates the Palgrave. Neoclassical economics, which is the mainstream, is short-changed, he contends.

Mark Blaug claims to be "one of the few people in the world to have read each of the four volumes of *The New Palgrave*

even "Tolstoy's later diaries are stupendously tedious, full of the usual old reflections about Henry George's land tax..."

There is a conspiracy to



• Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky

UNFAIR TO THE MAESTRO

BOB CLANCY looks at an outsize economics bible

from cover to cover," and this is his conclusion. I confess to having only browsed through it, but even so, I frequently came across references to "Straffian theory."

Of what significance is this? Straffian theory bolsters Marxian theory, says Blaug, to which the editors are quite partial. Eliminating demand, the way is open to calculating a perfect planned production without any reference to the vagaries of consumer demand.

Blaug's corollary criticism is that the editors' bias is toward "mid-air economics" with little relation to economic actualities. "Empirical evidence" is deemed unworthy of attention in Straffian economics (one is reminded of Marx's castigation of "vulgar economics" which paid too much attention to facts).

Ordinary people are overlooked (Marx's "lumpen-proletariat"?), in favor of economic theoreticians talking to one another from mountain peak to mathematical mountain peak. Blaug notes the omission of many topics relevant to economic life. The editors themselves say they have omitted certain topics in the old Palgrave as being "only remotely connected to economics." One is "land tenure systems". Too down to earth?

Of course, in a work of this magnitude, one will find a wide range of topics, and Blaug admits there is "gold amidst the dross." One will find much information about many things; for instance, there are articles on 700 economists.

Apart from Straffian econ-

omics, I noticed some things, especially in comparing the old Palgrave with the new. In the old one, "*laissez faire*" is given several pages, both with reference to its theory and its practice (classical respect). The new Palgrave gives it less than a page and only with reference to the origin of the phrase (Straffian/Marxian disdain).

It is agreed in the old and the new ones that it originated in a reply by the businessman Legendre to the question put by Louis XIV's minister Colbert. "What can we do to help business?" The reply: "*laissez-nous faire*."

Neither article translates the phrase and the inference is that it means "let us alone." Both favorable and unfavorable reactions accept this interpretation. But Legendre's phrase literally means "let us do," which raises a whole different spectrum of meaning.

It could mean, "Make straight the ways. Create the conditions that will enable us to perform effectively with a minimum of obstacles." This is what Henry George meant when he spoke of "true laissez-faire."

As for Henry George, we must note an improvement in the new Palgrave over the old. George is not given an entry at

all in the old one, but has a page in the new one. This is far less than the 15 pages given to Adam Smith and the 21 pages given to Karl Marx and his economics, to say nothing of the numerous Marxian articles throughout the volumes. George gets a little bit more via articles on the single tax and land tax, about one page each. All three are by Mason Gaffney and are reliable guides.

The old Palgrave does have an article on "single tax." After giving a fair account of it - the abolition of all taxes save that upon land values - and the reasons given for it, the article concludes with a jolting sentence: "Economic prosperity could not survive the carrying out of the proposal, as the mainspring of individual energy would be broken."

Just like that! No explanation, no argumentation, no demonstration - especially curious, since the single tax claims exactly to release the mainspring of individual energy. So Palgrave has come some way, if not a long way or all the way.

Gaffney's article on the single tax traces the roots of the idea to the Physiocrats and the classical economists such as Smith, Ricardo and Mill. This places it in its proper context instead of writing it off as an eccentric tax proposal.

George also wrote on production and distribution, business cycles, free trade, ethics and economics, value theory, and many other broad topics. May we hope that the Palgrave of the 21st century will take note of all this and provide more generous coverage?

ensure that the Master's reflections on the real world remain indecently buried with this body.

That conspiracy is based on ignorance: this is the most

benign interpretation we can offer for what is a discreditable attempt to deny to the new generations of readers' access to the wisdom that underpins the

philosophy of one of the greatest modern artists.

The world continues to pay the price for failing to listen to the last words of the Master.

THERE ARE signs that at last the persistent reluctance of the Russians to admit that their economic system does not work, is wavering, and it appears that the man mainly responsible for this is Mikhail Gorbachev.

He has decided that the first step towards solving his country's problems is to drag them into the daylight and talk about them, and he is encouraging his own people to join in the discussion. It is also to be hoped that among the first to benefit from this new frankness will be those who have paid with their liberty for openly criticising the government.

In *Living with Glasnost* the authors* give an account of their many interviews with people in all walks of life, and they have also had access to official statistics to an extent which would have been impossible a few years ago.

This opens the doors of the Soviet Union to reveal how its people live, love, work and play, so that we can begin to understand some of their problems and compare them with our own.

In every nation the well-being or otherwise of its people reflects in large measure the success or otherwise of its economic system. To quote from the book: "Article 40 of the Soviet constitution guarantees the right to work the quality of the job offered and minimum wage."

It also guarantees the right to choose one's kind of employment, subject to capacity, education and training. There is also a "right to rest", contained in Article 41, which governs hours of work.

But rights never come without duties, for, as Article 60 lays down, "it is the duty of, and a matter of honour for, every able-bodied citizen of the USSR to work conscientiously in his chosen, socially useful occupation, and strictly to observe labour discipline. Evasion of socially useful work is incompatible with the principles of socialist society."

These are great ideals, as is Marx's concept of the State expecting "from each according to his skill, to each according to his need." But human nature being what it is, self-interest too often insists on overruling ideals, so that a popular idea prevails that as

Warm winds off Russia?

GLASNOST with
Robert Miller

all the wealth of the Soviet Union is produced by the people and therefore belongs to them, then they are morally entitled to help themselves to a little bit of it now and then for personal use.

This idea must have been in the minds of those who drafted the criminal code, whereby offences against the State carry much more severe punishments than offences against the person.

Crimes against the person in Russia (e.g. robbery with violence, burglary) are few compared with those in the West. One reason may be that there is so little worth stealing from the average household: hardly any hi-fi equipment, videos, computers, microwaves and so on, which our own uninvited visitors find so irresistible.

Mr. Gorbachev will have to deal with corruption in the public services, then domestic problems like alcoholism, sexual ignorance and irresponsibility resulting in unacceptably high numbers of abortions and abandoned children, drugs, gang violence and other examples of what some still regard as imported "Western bad habits."

But although it is true we all do wrong and foolish things and our problems appear similar, causes can differ widely; theirs are more likely to be overwork or extreme boredom.

In too many cases both married partners find it necessary to work, often putting in much overtime, in order to subsist. Leisure time is thus drastically curtailed and family life suffers, and this must account for a high divorce rate: 35 to 40%, with consequent serious psychological damage to their

children. (The percentages in the minor states of the Union are much lower).

A little private enterprise has been allowed here and there, and the desire and the will to succeed in business and enjoy the good life are manifest. There is also a thriving black market, particularly in goodies smuggled in from the West - the under-the-counter revolution.

So if only Mr. Gorbachev could see his way to channel this spirit of enterprise into the building industry and establish a system of site value rent (he should find it comparatively easy, there are no land barons to oppose him) he might be well on the way to solving his problem of inadequate and overcrowded housing, and provide an example we may one day care to follow.

But let us not be over-expectant, merely glad that reform has at least begun. In their concluding words, the authors say:

"The fact is that both our societies are seriously afflicted by sickness. Both face huge difficulties, generally of different natures but of equal urgency. And without drifting into a simplistic belief in 'convergence', it is possible to see opportunities for each of us learning something from the other.

"Of one thing at least, there can be no doubt, if only by looking at the logic of economics, that is the sincerity of the Soviet leaders' wish to throw off the shackles of the past, not only on the domestic scene but also in international relations.

"For, if glasnost is one cornerstone of the perestroika, the removal of the enervating arms burden is another."

* Andrew Wilson and Nina Bachkatov, Harmondsworth: Penguin, £3.99.

THE FLOOD that devastated Bangladesh recently is vaguely attributed to irresponsible peasants who cut trees on the slopes of the Himalayas, allowing the rain to wash the soil down the valleys, silt up the rivers and burst the banks.

Similar disasters are being monitored throughout the world, from the Amazon basin to West Africa and across the Indian continent.

Until 100 years ago, tribal societies observed cultural practices which ensured an inter-generational conservation of their natural habitats. That way lay survival over evolutionary timescales.

QUOTE by Nalini Javal, an eminent Indian environmentalist: "We need a proper land-use policy, yet the land-use board has not even bothered to meet for years. We are facing ecological disaster. These floods are a clear sign."

Why, today, are peasant societies on the Himalayan slopes cutting down the trees and jeopardising their safety and ignoring the needs of the next generation?

Why are the spindly-thin pastoralists allowing their cattle to over-graze the Sahel and turning large swathes of Africa into a desert?

Why do the landless farmers of Brazil rip up the jungle to grow food, only to watch their acres turn into dustbowls?

The answers are not to be found in the immediate needs for food, heat and shelter, but in the destruction of cultural practices which go back to the origins of colonisation by the European powers.

Ancient systems for nurturing the ecology were destroyed by the European's insistence on a transformation of land tenure. When ownership rights supplanted use rights, people were banished from their traditional

PRACTICES IMPROPER

• "Natural" disasters continue to devastate large regions of the globe. PAUL KNIGHT argues that they are man-made, and will not be banished until we come to terms with the need for an ethic of ecology that transforms property rights.

territories; the rootless poor owed no allegiance to the coercive society which impoverished their lives, or to the ecological environment in which they could not claim rights of access.

And so was created a tragedy of global proportions, which will wreak havoc against our children's children.

Yet the commentators, in trying to analyse the causes of the devastation, emphasise human greed and ignorance and the procreative proclivities of today's perpetrators, not yesterday's culture wreckers.

But rather than confront the cultural consequences of property rights, the world's "peacemakers" buy the easy way out with money. This has happened in Brazil, where the landed elites monopolise millions of acres of arable land while the peasants, the worker ants of that society, feed off the dung heaps of the big cities.

The World Bank generously donated \$400m to fund a road which was supposed to help the landless. Peasants were told they could cultivate strips of up to 100 acres along the highway that

sliced through the Amazon basin. The rain forest was uprooted in favour of melons and corn. Within two years the soil was dead; the farmers moved on in search of food, and the nutrients of what was once a primeval forest were gone forever.

THE Indian government reports that over 3m acres of forest land are lost every year. The nation spends \$250m a year on curbs and flood compensation, but little is done to enhance the access rights of peasants to the land, which is the one guarantee of effective conservation.

An area of rain forest the size of 200 football pitches is being destroyed every minute. Rather than confront the cultural roots of that fact, the world's financial institutions willingly pay money to postpone the day when nature will force us to add up the ecological balance sheet.

At the same time, no restraints are placed on the multinational corporations that denude fragile ecosystems like the Indonesian rain forests, which have been home for man and animal for millions of years. The corporations exploit for short-term profit on the basis of ownership rights that are not circumscribed by reciprocal responsibilities to man or nature.

* A useful summary of the issues appears in Brian Morris, *Deforestation in India and the Fate of Forest Tribes*, The Ecologist Vol.16, No.6, 1986.

The manifesto

THE leaders of Project FATE - Focusing Attitudes Toward Empowerment - have issued a ringing manifesto to introduce their concept of Mandela, Mass: a new municipality. Here's how the manifesto reads:

"Mandela is a new city that would be formed by incorporating Greater Roxbury into an independent city. Mandela is also an ideal: independence. It is about power and control. Power to control the land we live on; power to control the schools that educate our children; power to control our environment; power to hold our elected officials accountable to the people they represent.

It also means taking responsibility for our community: getting involved in the decisions that affect our lives; joining together to build political, social, and economic institutions that can deal with the serious problems we face; saying that we won't wait for someone else to solve them; using our talent and resources to bring other resources to our community; building something we can proudly leave to our children.

This is our chance to stand up and be counted in a way that just isn't possible within the City of Boston. Did you know that in the 1983 election for mayor, Mel King lost by a wide margin (2 to 1) even though he had more than 99% of the black vote? Independence is a way for us to rep-

resent our own interests instead of hoping that a system and politicians with other agendas will look out for us.

Taking control over our community - taking responsibility - will also give us a solid foundation on which to build pride in our community and ourselves. Taking on the responsibility for our own affairs demonstrates that we are more than just tired of waiting for promises that won't be fulfilled; more than sick of settling for second best - we are ready and willing to build our own future!

The effort to gain an independent city is not about fanning the flames of racial conflict. We can be for ourselves without being *against* others, and that is exactly what incorporation is all about. We think that we can handle our affairs better than any one else.

Independence would give us a victory in the struggle to build positive images and positive attitudes in our community. It would help us to transform the belief that we can't change the conditions we live in; the belief that politicians who are not accountable to us will look out for our interests every time; the thought that someone else should take responsibility for creating change and managing our affairs; the attitude that we should settle for second best. Independence gives us a way to control the land we live on and the community we live in."

FULL TO THE PEOPLE

PROJECT MANDELA, ment of the working Massachusetts, to arr
PAUL K

DESPITE the billions poverty-stricken areas of States continue to suffer poor quality of life.

In a bid to break into coloured population of the mile area of Boston, is dwellers of this area of affluent citizens want to by 1992.

They point out that City more democratic if Roxbury incorporated into an incorporated into an incorporating forces behind the n above, who has been in Roxbury Incorporation I

"Mandela is an attempt real estate in Boston upon communities of colour. Thelves with, among other

The name Mandela Nelson and Winnie Mandela apartheid leaders. The f are fighting a system with States and copied by the desperate struggle. They final name will be chosen but for now Mandela is incorporation message f GRIP argues that if residents would mean "

POWER



political attempt by a segment of the population of Boston, to gain political power for itself. HT reports.

Dollars of Federal aid, the major cities in the United States have high unemployment and a vicious cycle of deprivation the city of Roxbury, a 12.5 square mile city controlled by the white, elite to create their own municipality.

All representation would be split from Boston and the city.

It is one of the major motivations. Says Mitch Chanellis, with GRIP (the Greater Boston Council) for more than a year.

Municipalize some valuable land which resides most of the city's are proposing to fund them through land value taxation."

been chosen in honour of a, the South African anti-apartheid struggle. GRIP assert: "They were invented in the United States by the Afrikaners. Theirs is a land value and we need them. The people use a referendum, working title used to carry the word."

dependence for the 150,000 people in have a decision making

LVT taxation

MANDELA'S "founding fathers" have carefully studied the problem of revenue raising, and have opted in favour of a tax on the value of land. Project FATE (Focusing Attitudes Toward Empowerment) reached the following conclusions:

City government can raise revenues through taxes, fees for services and licenses, and fines, as well as through assistance from the state and federal governments. We think that a bill should be introduced in the state legislature to allow Mandela to adopt a land value tax. Such a tax would shift the burden of taxation entirely to land.

Right now, taxes are assessed separately on land and buildings, and improvements to buildings are taxed as well. A study conducted recently for Project F.A.T.E. by the Henry George Institute shows that the adoption of a land value tax would immediately lower taxes for property owners in Wards 9, 12 and 14 by 15%. (These are all included in Mandela). The reason for this is that the holders of vacant land would have their taxes increased significantly under a land tax system. Their research also revealed that there are no serious legal obstacles to establishing such a tax.

The use of a land value tax in other cities and towns has encouraged development for two reasons. First, speculators have been discouraged from holding land since they have to pay a significant tax on vacant land. Secondly, development is encouraged since taxes are assessed against the land and not the improvements on the land.

The land value taxation system supported by Project F.A.T.E. would not only have the effect of lowering the taxes of present home owners immediately. It also would eliminate taxes on any improvements. This would be very significant for you as a home owner, since you could increase the value and beauty of your investment without worrying about the additional cost of an added tax burden. Your tax would only increase as the value of land throughout Mandela increased.

role in how public lands are disposed of - instead of the advisory role we have now with the downtown government. We would be able to decide how public lands are divided between different uses such as health care, child care, parks, etc."

Financing the new municipality is a major issue. GRIP argues that it would need - and could raise - \$350m in revenues. City officials say this is an underestimate: that \$450m would be needed to run services. But while the controversy continues on how much is required to fund the new municipality, the leaders of GRIP have discovered the virtues of a new approach to the property tax (see story above).

Irish State betrayal

BE IT feudal or monarchic, centrally planned or market oriented, democratic or fascist, the acid test of government is its ability so to order a nation's affairs that its citizens can get a livelihood.

By that criterion, the government of Ireland is the worst in the world. For 160 years now, a livelihood has been denied to half the nation which, as a result, starved to death, rotted in dole queues, or emigrated.

The performance of native government over seventy years, has been no different from that of the preceding colonial government. The number of people able to get a livelihood has continued to decline since 1922 as it did before that and is now less than at any time in the past 250 years.

Half the population is still forced to emigrate as it was before 1922. Since then, 1.5m people have been driven out permanently. Annually, 60,000 people are now born in the Republic; and annually 30,000 are forced to emigrate.

In the 70 years before 1920, the incomes of those left in Ireland rose more rapidly than any others in Europe. Since 1920, they have been rising less rapidly than all other European incomes. Unemployment is three times greater now than when independence was gained.

The most singular accomplishment of the State since independence has been to clock up the largest public debt relative to Gross National Product in the world. It is relatively speaking, three times greater than that of Peru, the most debt-ridden country in the world after Ireland.

Ray MacSharry [Finance

BY RAYMOND CROTTY

Minister, now Ireland's Commissioner in the Common Market] turns his back on this cock-up and makes his way to Brussels to collect the loot the Irish politicians regard as their entitlement for serving their dynasties and their parties by betraying the nation. Miracle Mac has brought order to the Irish public finances – forsooth! He has secured a lull in the storm in the ocean of public debt in which the nation wallows.

How brief and misleading this lull is will be evident next year when the public sector borrowing requirement will be once more well in excess of £1 bn and when, with free movement of capital, the State will no longer have a captive supply of savings.

A lull has been bought in the storm of the Irish Public finances at enormous cost. Redundancy after redundancy puts as many on to the dole queues as are removed by the emigrant ship and the hounding by officials of applicants for assistance.

Like Scrooge, the books are balanced – more or less and for the time being – but the body politic withers. And all for nothing; a futile effort to curb a public debt that has for long been out of control.

But not to worry. Hospital wards, school classrooms, factories and shops may close, but there is a brand new prison to incarcerate the wretched victims of this utterly unjust, utterly corrupt and utterly inefficient socio-economic order.

At a cost of £40 million to build and £2.5 million a year to operate,

it will hold 120 wretches, at a weekly capital plus current cost of £1000 a week per inmate.

WHY, for 160 years, have half the Irish failed to get a livelihood in Ireland? Are we shiftless morons, unworthy of a livelihood – we Irish who have contributed vastly more than our share to the growth and development of the world outside this island?

Are our fields barren or our waters sterile? Are we located in some out-of-the-way corner close to the antipodes?

It is sufficient to pose these questions to realise that these matters have no bearing whatever on the problem.

Colonialism was the cause of half the Irish being denied a livelihood for a century prior to 1922. Failure to rid our nation of the abominable heritage of colonialism has been the cause of the continuing denial of a livelihood to half the Irish.

The flags, the symbols and the songs of colonialism left in 1922; but the essence remained. The nation's land and the nation's money have continued to be appropriated for the profit of a privileged elite and for the destruction of the nation post 1922 as they were pre 1922.

The privileged 1% who possess half the nation's land have its use for nothing – freer now than at any time since that land was stolen from the nation. While the nation's poor are charged by the moneylenders 500% for their borrowed pitance, the privileged borrow from the banks at negative real interest rates.

While land and capital are thus free for the privileged, the labour for which workers

EUROPE CASH PLEA

receive a low price costs the user a high price, because of the imposition of the wage taxes such as Pay As You Earn (PAYE), and the further erosion of depleted wage packets by VAT and by the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which doubles in many cases the cost of the foods on which Ireland's poor spend nearly half their incomes.

The casualties of this arrangement are not the workers who, by union action, can have their wages and salaries adjusted to allow for the taxes and the CAP.

The real casualties are, directly, that half of the nation which cannot sell its labour for a pitance, but for which users have to pay a high price.

The indirect casualties of this social order are the Catholics of Northern Ireland whom a Protestant statelet tries to batter into submission, to prevent the North being absorbed into such a patently inequitable and inefficient South.

The beneficiaries are, in the first place, the milk and beef barons – the 1% of the nation who own half the nation's land and almost all its milk quotas.

Next are the commercial and industrial operators who have used the capital made available to them for free, first to replace labour which has been made dear by PAYE, VAT and the CAP; and more recently to invest it abroad.

Then there are the bankers who have grown grotesquely rich and powerful by expanding the nation's money from £150m 30 years ago to £17,000m now.

And on top of the obscene pile are the Cosgraves, the deValeras, Fitzgeralds, Lemasses, Springs, O'Malleys and all the breed of Irish politicians who, through 70 years of dastardly naïve government, have ravaged the nation to create their dynasties and to

MARCH/APRIL

RAYMOND CROTTY has, for almost 40 years, campaigned to have Irish land taxed, as Henry George advocated nearly 110 years ago.

His work has been mainly in research and publication, beginning with *Irish Agricultural Production: Its Volume and Structure*, published in 1966 by Cork University Press.

That argued that the best way to secure efficient farming in Ireland was to tax land so that only efficient farmers would remain in possession of land.

Other works of Crotty's are: *Cattle, Economics and Development* (Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau, 1980) which, based on several years' experience in the Third World, showed how the land tenure system imposed on those countries by colonialism resulted in their pastoral resources being wretchedly misused.

The Irish Land Question and Sectarian Violence, was a Henry George Centenary Essay, published by the Economic and Social Science Research Association.

Ireland in Crisis: a Study in Capitalist Colonial Underdevelopment (Brandon, 1986), and *A*

Radical's Response (Poolbeg, 1988), followed.

All of these are principally concerned with the harmful effects of the system of private ownership of land, which was everywhere in the colonies imposed by the metropolitan powers and which has everywhere been retained by the colonies following independence.

Crotty has consistently opposed Irish involvement in the European Economic Community, principally because closer integration would lessen the chances of a land tax being introduced in Ireland.

He has successfully challenged in the Irish courts the Single European Act, which is designed to expedite the integration of the EEC. In a succeeding referendum, 30% of the electorate sided with Crotty against the combined political parties.

Raymond Crotty is now contesting the elections for the European Assembly, or Parliament, in June.

• Donations to Crotty's campaign should be sent to: The Crotty European Parliament Election Campaign Fund, c/o Trustee Savings Bank, 70 Grafton Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Given the widespread opposition in Ireland to closer EEC integration, and Ireland's proportionate representation system of voting, he feels he has a good chance of winning one of the 15 seats allocated to Ireland in the European Parliament. Should he do so, he would be the first advocate of a land tax to win a prominent position in Irish public life since Henry George's supporter, Michael Davitt.

This could be a first major step, 110 years on, towards implementing the taxation of Irish land which was originally urged by Henry George and which an increasing number of Irish people are now beginning to favour.

Crotty urgently needs financial support for his election campaign. He will be opposed in that campaign by the established political parties, all of which favour zero taxation on land but heavy taxation on labour and enterprise. The campaigns of those parties, but not Crotty's will be heavily subsidised by the EEC.

make of Leinster House, with its sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, brothers, widows, cousins, nephews and in-laws a den of nepotism to which, by contrast, the English House of Lords must seem a place of Jacobean rectitude.

HOW HAVE these abominations survived? Two things have made it possible. First, the half of the nation who have consistently

been denied a livelihood here have emigrated, to change their place of residence rather than the diabolical social order that denied them a livelihood.

Second, the State, which is merely the projection of the colonial administration decked out in tricolours and harps, has commanded the resources of the modern nation State of the West,

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IT WAS IN the seventeenth century that the people of Europe first made significant and lasting contact with the "Indians" of the New World, whose ancestors probably crossed the Bering Strait from Siberia in Late Pleistocene times.

There was a gap of 10,000 years between the Indian culture of what are now Canada and the United States, which was comparable with the European Upper Palaeolithic, and that of the newcomers, whose technical equipment, especially in weaponry, would give them an overwhelming superiority in physical power.

Unfortunately, the latter's ideas in the realm of political economy were in direct variance with those of the people they found in possession.

Whereas the Indians still held to a primitive and true conception of land as a common inheritance, the Europeans, after passing through the feudal period, during which were still preserved some traces of the old Germanic tribal freedoms, had returned to the fateful Roman errors of private property and monopoly in land; and the resulting apparent over-population was impelling them, as it had impelled the Romans, to expand at all costs. The conflict that ensued is still in progress at the present time.

For example, it was reported in the *Vancouver Sun* (November 3, 1988) that the Supreme Court of Canada was about to begin a hearing of a case that "could set the stage for re-establishing aboriginal hunting, fishing and resource-use rights at their Pre-Confederation status in every region of Canada where those rights are not explicitly defined in treaties".

It began in 1984 when a Musqueam fisherman was charged with violating regulations governing net lengths. He put up a persistent defence, and went on in 1986 to win his case in the Court of Appeal of British Columbia.

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Canadian culture conflicts

By DAVID REDFEARN

which ruled that "aboriginal rights include a fundamental right of Indians to fish".

This was not enough for the Indians, but too much for British Columbia's sports fishermen, hunters and outdoorsmen. More importantly, *it was too much for the commercial fishermen and canning companies*, who have been using Indian fishermen as cheap labour. The results of the case, which could be far-reaching, will be awaited with interest.

From a similar motive of preserving the last remains of the traditional Indian way of life, Chiefs of the Mount Currie and Lytton Indian Bands are, according to a report in the *Financial Times* (November 18, 1988) appealing to the shareholders of Fletcher Challenge Canada for help in resisting the block felling of tracts of forest in the Stein Valley to the east of Vancouver.

The company has offered as a compromise to reduce by 45% the area of each block cleared; but the Indians are seeking a total cessation of logging operations in the valley.

The Chief of a Lillooet tribe said "They are our traditional homelands. We never signed any treaty. We were never beaten in war. We never made any agreement with the Government which would abrogate our rights. We want to maintain our forests in their natural wilderness state".

The Indians are up against it. Fletcher Challenge Canada is the second largest forest products group in British Columbia. Its pulp

and paper-making, saw-milling and logging operations have annual combined sales of the order of £1.12bn. It had a tax-paid profit in 1987 of £91m! It is with this kind of enterprise that power and influence lie.

Fletcher Challenge Canada and the commercial fishermen and canning companies of British Columbia have this in common, that they are among the 20th century representatives of big business founded on mainly rent-derived and land-monopoly-dependent accumulations of capital, which had its origins in the seventeenth. As Christopher Hill¹ puts it: "Industry was ceasing to be primarily the affair of the small master craftsman and the free miner: the London capitalist

and the enterprising landowner played an increasingly important part".

SUSAN George has devoted a book² to showing how land-and-capital monopoly, now grown to full size, exerts its great strength to achieve a maximum return for its shareholders, with a minimum regard for the well-being of the population in the places where it operates.

Though recognising that present systems of land tenure are the root cause of the growing division between the rich and poor of the world, and awarding first place to land reform in her suggestions about what needs to be

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LETTER

Keep your 'Turnover Tax'

ROGER DOUGLAS, New Zealand's Minister of Finance, was in Vancouver, British Columbia, on 27 November, 1988 to address the Canadian Tax Foundation. News reports were universally complimentary.

On the personal level it is easy to respond to the ebullient Roger Douglas. It is not as easy to respond with enthusiasm to his economic recipe, the principal ingredient of which is said to be the Value Added Tax – the dreaded VAT!

The VAT is a tax levied throughout the chain of production. In New Zealand it has been renamed the Goods and Services Tax (GST). It could equally well have been named the Turnover Tax in that it resembles the "turnover tax" that has been applied for decades in the U.S.S.R. The Soviets have certainly found their TT productive of revenue. One suspects its "productivity" is the feature attractive to other bureaucracies as well – weightier by far than considerations of efficiency, say, or equity (though the latter is always given lip service).

Canada's Finance Minister Michael Wilson is, like Mr. Douglas, a pro-VAT accountant. With the re-election of the Mulroney government, including Mr. Wilson, I was prompted to read Roger Douglas' *Toward Prosperity*,* which was published in 1986 in New Zealand.

Toward Prosperity may be read partly as the biography of a man, partly as the description of an idea, a political party, a process. Or it may be read as a handbook for politicians. The story moves swiftly. It is personal, direct, interesting and even engrossing at some points.

* *Toward Prosperity, People and Politics in the 1980s: A Personal View*, by Roger Douglas and Louis Callan, David Bateman, Auckland, 1987.

Roger Douglas has been able to dissipate somewhat the stench of VAT (in my nostrils at least) in several particulars. Reassuring on the philosophic side are: 1) his unwavering commitment to individuals as opposed to institutions; 2) his abiding concern for the low man on the totem pole; 3) his respect for the allocative function of the market; 4) his insistence on linking the tax and benefit systems; 5) his apparent grasp of the land question. Arising from these concerns, New Zealand instituted welfare and other measures along with the GST, thus tempering its regressive effect.

Reassuring as well, since his coming to office in July 1984, is the drastic and proven simplification of tax imposts within the New Zealand revenue system, not to mention the dismantling of a host of subsidies to industry and agriculture. To accomplish such changes requires clear-headedness and conviction. Even in a unitary and comparatively small country it cannot have been easy.

If British Columbia could cut itself off from the land mass of Canada and drift a few hundred miles toward Hawaii it could be another New Zealand. However, B.C. is at the mercy of a federal administration that is hell-bent on instituting VAT while it gives little promise of mounting the counterpoint measures. In any event, there is less hope that such measures will be taken in a federal state.

It would be valuable to have a New Zealander's assessment of Mr. Douglas' program and accomplishment even though the experience would not be directly adoptable in Canada. As it is, when Mr. Wilson gets through with us I fear Canada is going to have the worst of both worlds.

Mary Rawson,
Vancouver, B.C.

HENRY GEORGE SESQUICENTENNIAL CONFERENCE

A CELEBRATORY conference to mark the 150th birthday of American reformer Henry George will be held in Philadelphia, the city of his birth, from Saturday July 29 to Sunday August 6.

This will be the 18th conference staged by the International Union for Land-Value Taxation and Free Trade, and will be held jointly with the Council of Georgist Organisations.

Plenary papers have been invited from scholars, which will then be published by the Centre for Incentive Taxation in England in conjunction with Shephard Walwyn Ltd.

The conference will be held at the University of Pennsylvania. Charges:

- Conference fee: \$40 (£22.50)
 - Accommodation: \$395 (£220).
- LU bookings should be through 177 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 1EU, England. CGO bookings should be through their New York office.

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done, she has apparently not heard of Henry George's solution of taking rent for public revenue, which has already achieved some satisfactory results, even in partial applications.

The existence of this contrast between the states of the very rich and the very poor in Canadian society suggests a good reason why the Indian tribes are reluctant to forsake their old way of life, and adopt that of the white man.

One is reminded of Henry David Thoreau's story³ of how Winslow, afterwards Governor of the Plymouth colony, paid a ceremonial visit to Massasoit, an Indian chief, and how, during a stay of two days and a night, was given nothing to eat but his and his companions' share of two fishes, which were all that his host had in the way of food.

The Indians evidently considered that an apology was no substitute for a meal; so they all tightened their belts and said nothing. On a subsequent occasion the visitors were fed sumptuously.

If you lead the primitive life, in fact, you are

Murder of a champion

SAO PAULO: Landowners have gunned down the 44-year-old farmer who has opposed the exploitation of the Amazon rain forests. Francisco Mendes was assassinated at his home in Xapuri, in the state of Acre, by the son of a cattle rancher.

The 21-year-old assassin's father is reported to have had a land dispute with Mendes, the founder of the Union of Forest Peoples, an alliance of Indians and rubbertappers.

Mendes championed traditional methods of living and working in the forests, and he organised the blockade of machines sent in by landowners to clear the trees for cattle farms. See Page 23.

EDINBURGH: Landowners are being given hundreds of thousands of pounds in return for not planting trees in special nature conservation areas.

The payments are made by the Nature Conservancy Council, which Scottish environmentalists predict may pay millions of pounds more to landowners who have discovered a loophole in the law.

Explained Mike Thornton of Friends of the Earth (Scotland): "The NCC's policy is an ill-conceived device for giving large cash handouts to well-off landowners for doing nothing."

One Scottish farmer is quoted by *The Guardian* (Dec. 31, 1988) as stating: "It's a famous scam which a lot of people are taking advantage of. If you've got a nice meadow or some open peatland, you apply to afforest it. Because it's a site of special scientific interest, you get rejected and you get compensation."

all hungry together when there is no food; but, in a city, you can go hungry while others gorge themselves.

Henry George, in a memorable passage⁴, stated that, though "he was no sentimental admirer of the savage state", if a choice were possible, he considered it would be wiser to choose to be a savage in preference to being a member of the lowest classes in such a country as Great Britain.

Probably the Indians of British Columbia suspect that most of them would be consigned to the lowest classes, and feel the same.

Let us imagine, however, a Georgist Canada, in which land was available on equal terms to all, rent was devoted to public needs, wages were a full equivalent to the value created by labour, and capital was accumulated wages rather than, as now, accumulated rent.

I suggest that, in these circumstances, the temptation to opt out would be minimal, and that the problem of Indian lands would sooner or later solve itself.

A successful start has already been made with site value rating in some British Columbian cities.

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and these resources have been added to substantially during the past 40 years when the State has on average borrowed every year the equivalent of 8% of current GNP.

It is because these two circumstances no longer obtain that there is now hope of change in the process of national retrogression or underdevelopment that has obtained here for five centuries, and during the past 70 at least as much as in earlier years.

Emigration is no longer so easy. To squeeze out the half the population denied a livelihood it is now necessary to have a reservoir of 250,000 unemployed persons compared to a normal reservoir of 50,000 in the past. That five times larger pool of unemployed gives rise to new financial and political strains.

That is one consideration. The other is that with borrowing, it's a long road that has no turning; and the State's apparently limitless capacity to borrow has now been exhausted. The public debt is way beyond control. Within the next five years it will bring crashing down the entire public finance system of the country. With that crash will go whatever power and prestige the State and those who control it command.

It is in that context that it has become peculiarly timely and relevant for the nation – workers and workless – to unite to end the cursed situation where only half the nation can get a poor and insecure livelihood. The necessary reforms are easy to identify.

- Immediately abolish the status of unemployed. That can be done overnight by paying to every resident citizen, unconditionally, a basic income or national dividend in excess of

present unemployment assistance.

- All deterrents to employment should be removed or offset. That means abolishing PAYE and VAT. The £5 per person per week that the CAP costs should be offset by appropriate taxes on the produce particularly of large farmers.

- The ample means to finance these essential reforms include:

- (a) The £1.6 bn of the nation's tax revenues which politicians are now using, along with new borrowings, to service the debt which they created to establish and sustain their family political dynasties;

- (b) A revenue-maximising tax on all the nation's land, both urban and rural; and

- (c) A revenue-maximising tax on the financial system such that its controllers would cease to usurp the nation's prerogative of expanding its money supply.

THESE measures are technically, economically and financially possible. The task is to make them politically necessary.

Those who are denied a livelihood here can contribute most towards bringing that about, by acquiring – and creating in others – a clear and burning awareness of the inequity, inefficiency and mindlessness of the present situation.

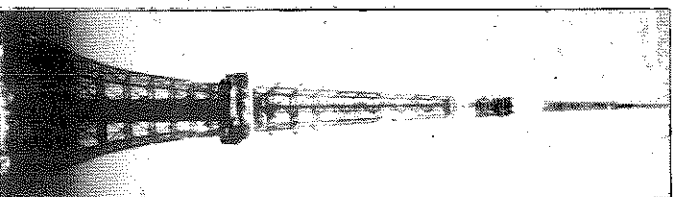
They can help by supporting persons and movements concerned to bring about fundamental change which would end mass unemployment and mass emigration.

They can help to bring about change by withdrawing support for a State that is the enemy of the nation in that it denies a livelihood to half its members.

The half who are denied an opportunity to work can help to bring about change by making it impossible also for the other half to work.

And like Marx's workers of the world, Ireland's workless should remember that they have only their £35 a week dole to lose, and if they cannot immediately win justice and reason, they will at least be assured of a £1000 a week stop in the State's newest prison.

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Tokyo Tower: Sky-high land prices

posed basic land law and the prevailing national land use planning law must be studied. In order to reduce land prices, the government must possess the power to enforce such a reduction.

At issue is the possible sale of the former Japanese National Railways land lots, which is frozen for the moment. How the government handles the sale will foreshadow the attitude and determination with which it will handle the basic land law.

Land must be treated as a public property. If the government repeats the blunder of provoking land price hikes by the sale of the former JNR plots, not much can be expected of the basic land law. The proposed legislation should not become a bureaucratic plaything.

LAND AS PUBLIC PROPERTY

• **ROCKETING** land prices have provoked heart-searching in Japan. But while the talk is radical, the political action may be too cautious. The Mainichi Daily News, in the editorial commentary which is reprinted here, insists that land is public property – and without a recognition of this fact, proposals for revision of the laws of property will fail to meet the challenge.



THE NATIONAL Land Agency is preparing a basic land law, and plans to submit a bill to the next ordinary session of the Diet. To discuss the contents of the law, a private consultative panel to the agency director general has been inaugurated, headed by Shuzo Hayashi, former Cabinet legislative bureau director.

While there is no reason to object to a basic land law, it should be substantive enough to be worthy of enactment. What should its basic principle be? It should, in the final analysis, aim at securing a broad understanding among the people that land is a public property.

An ad hoc advisory group compiled a report on land policy last June which proposed that the following principles should guide future policy:

1. land ownership is accompanied by the responsibility of land use;
2. in the use of land the public good comes first;
3. land use must be planned;
4. profit from land development must be returned to the community, and
5. the burden should be borne equitably according to the use of the land and the benefit derived from it.

The government has included those points in its outline of a comprehensive land policy which the Cabinet adopted following the report.

These principles will reportedly be incorporated largely intact into the proposed basic land law. That is fine, as long as it is understood that they are impossible to realize unless the people accept the prime position that land is public property.

Public property is different from ordinary goods, whose prices are determined by market mechanisms. Land, as public property, should not be left to the mercy of market. Public restrictions and intervention

will be needed to control the use of land as public property and land transactions.

As present, land is private property, and as a rule is left to the mercy of free market price mechanisms. Public intervention is carried out on a limited basis only after land prices have skyrocketed, and thus there is no preventive effect.

It follows that if the government is to pursue strict land price policy, it needs to change the people's perception of land from private to public property, and this should be made clear in the basic land law.

In addition, in order for the perception of land as public property to take root, the law may set the reduction of land prices as its medium- and long-term target.

The advisory group report rightly specified that efforts should be made to reduce land prices. But the government's subsequent outline of comprehensive land policy makes no reference to land price reduction.

The need for that is obvious. Land as public property makes it improper to expect windfall profits from increased land prices. Japan is one of the few countries in the world where land is allowed to remain a target of speculation.

In Tokyo, a corporate worker must devote more than eight times his annual income to buy a condominium. According to an international comparison, residential land prices in Japan are ten times higher than in Europe or the United States. This prevents an improvement in the quality of life, for which better housing is indispensable. Additionally, exorbitant land prices in Japan also impede its structural adjustment to meet the demands of internationalization.

Possible relationships between the pro-

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If a gift, then please put the name and address to whom it should be sent as well as your own.

NAME: _____

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As a gift: Please print name and address below.

Sesquicentennial

Souvenirs



1 8 3 9

1 9 8 9

Headscarves in 100% polyester and ties in polyester satin with a Henry George motif have been produced to celebrate the 150th anniversary of his birth. The adjacent drawing gives an artist's impression. They are available in the following colours:

Scarves

Fabric

White
 White
 Pale blue
 Pale blue
 Navy
 Maroon

Head print

Navy
 Maroon
 Navy
 Maroon
 White
 White

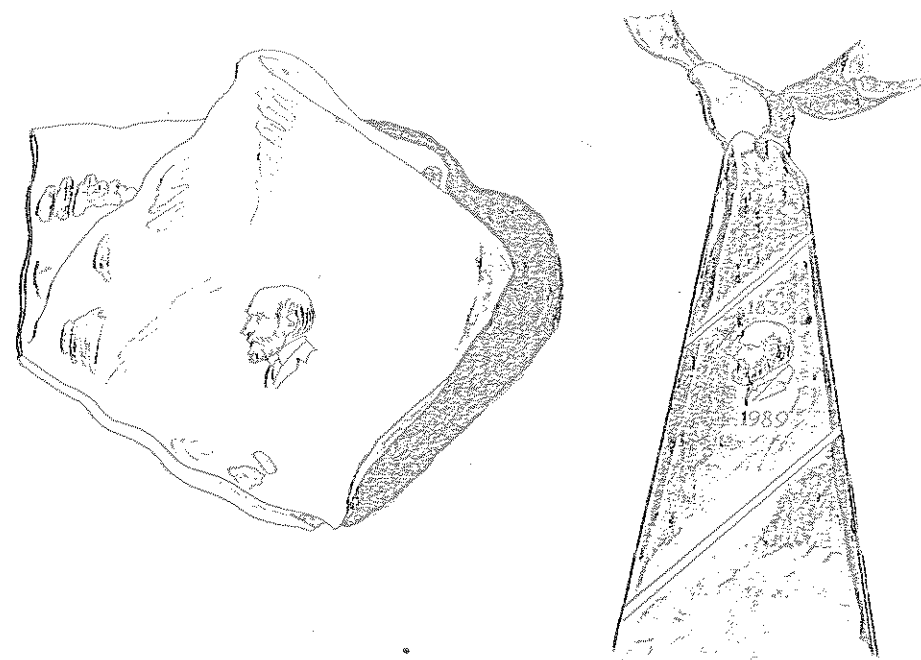
Ties

Fabric

Navy
 Navy
 Dark green
 Dark green
 Maroon

Head print

Gold
 Silver
 Gold
 Silver
 Silver



Cost for Scarf or Tie is £4.50. The equivalent in other currencies is as follows:-

USA \$8.00 Canadian \$9.75 Australian \$9.50

Price includes postage and packing.

(Cost in Philadelphia in Conference week of remaining stocks - if any - will be USA\$10.00)

Cheques in all currencies should be made payable to

The International Union

To: International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade
 177 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, SW1V 1EU England.

I enclose _____

Please send to address overleaf

_____ ties printed _____ on _____

_____ - do - _____ on _____

_____ scarves printed _____ on _____

_____ - do - _____ on _____

I will accept a second choice of

or