

JUSTICE AND FREEDOM

RAMIFICATIONS OF GROUND RENT ASSESSMENT

Proposed by Henry George in 1879, in his masterwork, PROGRESS AND POVERTY

The vital, pervasive need for the full assessment of ground rent (the superiority of any given site, used to best advantage, over marginal land - the poorest in use):

1. The assessment is ethical, as rental value is created by nature, population and community development, without individual effort, and should therefore go exclusively to support public services; not to personal income, nor to support monopolies, as with underassessed natural resources, business and residential sites.
2. Land assessments reduce the need for taxes on current labor and labor products, and on savings and improvements (past labor products), which taxes essentially constitute slavery - levies on an extension of one's person (excess income of monopoly excluded).
3. With full assessment, the sale price of land (capitalization of the unassessed rental - "the unearned increment") would become nominal. There would be almost no first cost to acquiring vacant land for any purpose (only the cost of improvement, if any) - business, residence, schools, churches, parking and play spaces, highways, local and national parks - an incalculable social gain; a loss only to dog-in-the-manger land speculators, who have no ethical right to God's footstool, however innocently or not they may have acquired what is needed by, and therefore belongs to all mankind. Many now profit by the rezoning of land - usually not in the people's interest. None of the fertile soil in Du Page County, Ill. is zoned for farming - a widespread, dangerous situation. It has been proposed that Mississippi R. water be pumped to barren West Texas, 300 ft. higher, for irrigated farm land and urban communities, to benefit land speculators, pump and pipe firms, to the detriment of the lower Mississippi area; also that water be brought from Canadian rivers to California; even that an iceberg be towed there, for water. 11 Bills in Congress, to destroy the Indian Nation, include stealing their needed water, and any lands that whites desire, to benefit speculators. To ensure proper land use - to retain fertile soil for agriculture, world forests (34 % of rainforests already destroyed), and reforest where necessary, preserving Indian Nations throughout the Americas - horribly abused, with existence threatened, we must end speculative profits in land.
4. All land would be forced into its best use, to pay the assessment, ending hoarding and speculative pricing, bringing sites down to their true rental value, equalizing this factor of production, and so tending to equalize production costs (as labor and labor products cost about the same to all). This would assure surplus job opportunities, in the only way possible in a free economy; providing equal access to the earth, on which all must live, and on which and from which all wealth is produced. Everyone would enjoy his natural right to exercise his faculties and support himself. IT IS NOW LEGALLY POSSIBLE TO EXPEL NONLANDHOLDERS FROM THE EARTH, simplifying their exploitation.
5. The ample choice, in which land seeks producers, instead of the reverse, as now, would automatically enable everyone, without discrimination, to work for himself, for or in cooperation with others, at his skill level, in a safe, ethical, non-polluting occupation, of the type desired, obtaining a wage equivalent to his production - his true wage.
6. Producers could move onto better land, now available, thus raising the level of marginal land, and so the basic wage - production on marginal land (and the related stairway of wages, for higher skills). This also saves farming on land with uncertain rainfall, or too steep a slope, subject to drought or washout; and saves businesses and residences from being built on floodlands, subject to periodic loss. Development would be compact, with no fertile idle land, or vacant lots (privately owned) in cities. Travel would be shorter; no utilities going past vacant sites; no need for cramped, psychologically harmful high rises on overpriced land. Houses and three-story apartments would be viable.
7. Choice of occupations is the only means of avoiding unethical, dangerous work, such as nuclear power, deforestation, procedures used in coal mining, cotton mill, asbestos, chlorinated hydrocarbon, or other hazardous production; sadistic repression of men, women and children, in every type of detention, sadistic torture of 64 million laboratory

animals a year, frivolous, endlessly duplicated, needlessly prolonged (often officially required until death); useful results from which could usually be obtained by mechanical means. Organically grown foods would be produced close to markets, without pesticides, and with few preservatives. The choice would also develop producer and consumer cooperatives as standard business structures. Favoritism, creating monopolies would end. Law is useless.

8. Increases in production and savings cause producers to bid up artificially scarce sites until prices absorb all the gains, benefiting landholders, rather than producers, as noted by Ricardo, and by Churchill, 100 years later. The basic wage is everywhere below the subsistence level. Producers can keep their gains only when land prices are nominal.
9. Ground rent could support cities, with revenue left for other government branches. Lloyd George: "What would we do with all the money?" His Liberal Party tilted in that direction before World War I. The Labor Party proposed it as a great social reform, until world depression in the 30's drove them from office. Aware of our only ethical revenue source, the public would cut expenses requiring taxes on labor - enormous graft, a vastly overblown bureaucracy, largely useless, and even less needed in a just economy; countless idiotic projects (THINK TANKS); enough armaments to blow up the world.
10. In justice, federal lands, foundations, public and private schools, charitable, religious and other organizations should pay for community services rendered - reflected in ground rent. Their exemptions force unethical levies upon others; and threats of cancelling tax exemptions renders them impotent to work for serious reform. (THE RELIGIOUS EMPIRE)
11. Surplus jobs, at fair wages, would minimize thievery, prostitution, broken homes, rape, runaway children, retarded children, malnutrition, mental illness, dissipation, arson, violence, vandalism, sickness costs and premature death, shady business practices, political corruption, wife and child abuse (by ending much frustration, and by enabling wives to support themselves). It would end Third World exploitation, by others, and by their dictators, leaving no purpose to armaments greater than needed for domestic security; with violence rare, as in Scandinavia, and police unarmed, as in England. Racial and religious tensions would be reduced, and free trade promoted, between nations and within nations, reducing tariffs, quotas, embargoes; eliminating professional and trade union restrictions, intended to ameliorate monopoly impositions - now ended.

Government furnishes one-third of college revenues, controlling (with monopolies) teaching and research. Up to 80% of research is for the military, cutting consumer goods. Henry Commager noted, 4-17-79, that actual military expenditures are \$ 120 billion, compared to some \$ 70 billion when at war - our first peacetime excess. (President Eisenhower warned us against military control of government; evidenced by their blocking of the McCloy-Zorin agreement, pushed by President Kennedy, to reduce nuclear stockpiles; by their unauthorized bombing of Hanoi, blocking President Johnson's attempt at a negotiated peace; and by their refusal to destroy our stockpile of bacteriological weapons, ordered by President Nixon. Congress and trade unions (ignorant of job creation, and unwilling to end monopolies) support excessive military spending. - Editorial, SATURDAY REVIEW, 5-12-79)

As a civil right, schooling would be voluntary, many parents teaching children at home, often in a better environment; with students using resource centers, rather than classrooms, to the extent preferred. An average 12-yr.-old can learn, in four months, essentials of eight grades. Students would have the incentive to learn what is needed for assured work, and whatever else they desire, saving much money and frustration; and could marry when biologically ready, partially supported, if necessary, as in Denmark. ENVIRONMENT, Jan./Feb., 1979: We could increase gas usage 20% in two years. By doubling it, we could end all oil imports. There are new natural gas fields in Alaska, Canada and offshore in the Atlantic; and gas can be obtained from about ten other sources, some forever renewable - the logical bridge to solar power. Vested interests of oil, coal, electric and nuclear power block these developments, which could feed into existing gas lines and home appliances. Mandated conversion of gas burners to coal burners would cost \$ 45 billion. Gas produces 8 times the BTU per dollar investment that coal plants do. We could abolish the 20,000 person, \$ 12 billion Dept. of Energy. (Nuclear power is criminal and unneeded. Enormous possible savings in many energy intensive industries (THE MENACE OF ATOMIC ENERGY) are ignored, as is our 50% or more acknowledged waste. Government should operate our power, in the people's interest.