

The Earth Share Vision

by Jeff Smith

In Alaska, residents receive about \$1,000 per year as their share of the oil royalty. Yet oil is not the only potential source of Earth-Shares. There are many more natural resources, including surface locations, that people pay top dollar to own or use. Were we to collect all this natural rent, every member of society could receive \$4,000-\$8,000 per year.

Sharing land rent, this *gratis* profit, means of course that those few now hoarding it would no longer be able to do so. Society's gain would be the loss of oil companies, timber fellers, cattle ranchers, mall-&-sprawl developers, broadcast channel licensees, etc. So the richest and most powerful corporations may at first not see "geonomics" (the policy of paying neighbors for nature) as in their narrow interests. Yet the corollary of sharing Earth's worth (because it is ours) is to quit confiscating labor's wages and capital's interest (because they are not ours). Thus, were we to respect property — both private and public — we'd repeal taxes upon human effort and charge a fee for the use of Mother Earth.

Such a formula may be sufficiently balanced to win widespread support and overcome entrenched opposition. Cutting taxes while disbursing rent is an idea now being promoted by greens in Western Europe. Already, over a dozen nations have begun to implement the collection phase of the geonomic transformation.

Ending taxes, of course, would leave government unfunded. Citizens would have the choice of funding government with rent, or distributing the rent as a dividend to citizens and letting them purchase the social services that suited them — or some combination of the two. For the sake of both equity and efficiency, it may be best to fund from rent only the bare minimum of government: the defense of rights (e.g., courts of law) and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g. roads), and rebate all the remaining rent, empowering residents to choose their own teachers and doctors, etc.

Cutting out the government middleman while funding residual government with rent would result in a fundamental realignment of income distribution. First, taxes take over 40% of the average worker's income. Second, the natural rental portion of the price of housing, energy, etc., takes over 25%, according to UK economist Ronald Banks. The EarthShare rebates this expense to consumers. Third, inflation erodes income by several percent per year. Ending deficit spending ends the eroding dollar. And fourth, underemployment reduces wages. Charging the annual Deed Fee ends speculation in land, impelling efficient use of resources, putting more people to work. Totaling these four factors, geonomics would grant a

minimum of a 75% raise to those who most need it — enough extra income to both fund one's preferred social services and to shorten the workweek.

The Baby Boom generation has seen productivity more than double — yet is

the workweek now half as long? Instead, it is regaining its old sweatshop length and both parents must work outside of the home.

Geonomics is the organic method to convert automation and globalization into leisure for all. Techno-progress pushes up land values (as in Silicon Valley, Puget Sound, Japan, etc.). The Deed Fee collects this rent, and the citizens' dividend shares it. Thereby, geonomics automatically converts labor-saving into gains for all.

Environmentally, sharing Earth's worth sets up a potent incentive for conservation. Receiving a rent share flips off a switch, so people work less. Less output lowers site values and thus the CiDi. Less income flips on the switch, so people work more. More production ups location values, thus the CiDi, completing the cycle, *ad infinitum*. Finally, production and consumption are put in balance, reducing thru-put, the key to a geonomy, or a steady-state economy.

As natural rent is redirected, not only do entrepreneurs grow user-friendly, but workers and consumers, bolstered by the extra income, grow more assertive. Receiving an income not from labor but from bountiful land, right-brain, artistic people could shrink their workweek. Instead of people chasing jobs, jobs would chase people. Not only would wages rise, but activists could transform corporations into cooperatives.

Sharing rent reconnects people to the land. Knowing her as a bountiful provider, we'd become better protectors. Even more fundamental, the lengthened leisure would let us explore fully our unique potentials. We may even stumble across a sensible reason for being here. **GJ**

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