

# Land&Liberty

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## letter from the publisher

OUR EDITOR observed to me recently that people who write to and for Land & Liberty are inclined to be polemic. I wasn't sure what that meant so I checked in the dictionary. Polemic apparently derives from the Greek polemos—war, and the noun means 'controversial argument or discussion: argumentation against some opinion, doctrine, etc.' On reflection I think the editor is right—we are polemic. We do argue against conventional opinion and doctrine. We do so because we are convinced that such thinking is responsible for the economic and environmental mess that is now obvious to all but the most determined denier. It is now not only one small boy who is prepared to observe 'the emperor has no clothes'. We have seen 'the cat' i.e. the critical significance of land and land value in all its guises. We have seen the injustice and damage that is wrought by a tax system that fails to collect what the community produces but which takes from individuals and groups what they produce by their own enterprise and effort. To many of us that have seen 'the cat' it is so blindingly obvious that we find it difficult to understand why so many clever people ignore or deny it. So we try to present evidence of its existence and significance from as many different points of view as possible.

Where we more often manage to stimulate debate and argument however is between ourselves. We do not disagree much about the cat itself, which may be hidden from view by the leaves and branches of the tree it was tempted or forced to climb, but rather how to get the cat down from the difficulty it now finds itself. In this edition we hope to stimulate such debate with an article by Dr Adrian Wrigley. He suggests a way of collecting land rent for the community that avoids the enforcement of any obligation that individuals might be under to render it. His land value covenant solution seeks to promote voluntary cooperation and a contract between land owners and the community. We anticipate and await reasoned responses.

An opinion that commonly pervades economic thinking is that self interest is a sufficient explanation for economic activity and that it is sufficiently converted into general or communal interest by Adam Smith's famous 'hidden hand'. A free market doctrine may then excuse any neglect by government. Henry George, of course championed free trade in things produced by people's work—there the market works. He recognised however that intelligence of a higher order was also required for the allocation the life preserving gifts of nature that no person produces. He observed that selfishness was not an invariable motivator for human action but altruism was just as normal and was more evident where justice prevailed. George considered a more universal aspect of human nature to be that people seek to gratify their desires with the minimum of toil and trouble or exertion. He saw how this applied irrespective of the quality or complexity of the desires that people seek to gratify. The restoration of justice and the cultivation of wholesome desires were thus of primary importance.

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