

Zimbabwe  
Premier  
blocks  
trip to  
Vancouver

# NKOMO DEBT IN 'BANNED'

A POWER struggle in Zimbabwe prevented Joshua Nkomo from delivering a speech on land economics. Dr. Nkomo, who has fallen foul of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, was prevented from flying out of Harare for Vancouver, British Columbia, where he had been invited to deliver a keynote speech at the Canadian conference staged by the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade on May 18-24.

Dr Nkomo was about to depart when he was told that his passport had been mislaid and that he could not leave the country. This was the latest obstacle placed in the way of Dr. Nkomo, the principal leader of the guerrilla movement that fought for independence from British colonial rule.

Power is now in the hands of Mr. Mugabe, who is pressing ahead with plans for a one-party socialist state in which he is guaranteed power in perpetuity because he is a member of the tribe with an overwhelming majority in the country.

A COPY of Dr Nkomo's speech was sent out of Zimbabwe



● Robert Mugabe

through the Canadian High Commission.

In it, he focused on Henry George, the American economic philosopher, who argued that land belonged to everyone and that this proposition could be turned into reality through the fiscal system.

"Without land, man's existence

is out of the question, so it would mean that if any individual owns the land, he has power to subdue the rest," Dr Nkomo intended to declare.

"On this score we would like to agree with Henry George when he says that it is morally wrong for land to be private property. Private property in land is morally wrong, first because it denies land to mankind in general, second because it provides a primary way for non-producers to levy a toll on producers.

"The propertied classes become the exploiters as they are the ones who will decide on the method of distributing the wealth thus created.

"Only labour can produce

## Dislocating communist economies

SIR, Henry George wanted to tax only land. In a communist country that would seem unnecessary, as all land belongs to the state. So speculation or sloppy use would seem impossible. However, even under communism people pay rent, which is what a land tax amounts to anyway. But their rent is kept artificially low, so the government has to raise money by other taxes. There is a sales tax and generally even an income tax.

Communist rent is set low to help the poor. It is certainly a break for them in the short run, but it amounts to a dislocation of the economy, which can get worse over time. Thus, a family with very low rent is apt to cling to a residence even after the breadwinner's job is shifted to another part of the city. The government may eventually adjust the home to the job, but the process takes time. The application may get bogged down in red tape for years.

Moreover, people in low-rent homes may put up with deteriorating conditions till they have no real bargain. And where a unit is sub-let, the occupant can exploit by setting the rent high. Fred Harrison in his book *The Power in the Land* reports such profiteering in Belgrade.

If the government charged the full rent on the value of the land,

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it would have to pay the workers better wages so that they could afford to pay the rent. The government would break even, and so could afford the higher wages.

Stores, factories, and mines could continue to be run by the communist government but should pay the full rental value of their land sites (about 8%). This would be an incentive for managers to do a large and efficient business. Factories anyhow would pay rather little, as they are generally not on prime land. Mines should contribute according to the property value of the subsoil product: oil, iron, etc. Assessment would be hard under communism, because of the absence of a free market, but might be done by comparisons with capitalist countries.

With all land thus tapped for rent, communist nations during peacetime should not need any other taxes. And this would be a mighty relief for their labouring workers.

*Tertius Chandler, Berkeley, California*

# TO GEORGE TALK

**EXCLUSIVE by  
Ian Baron**

value, and George recognises this when he says that there can be no rightful exclusive possession of a product in which labour has not been exerted.

"Land value is always a socially created value, never the result of action by the owner of the land. Henry George says that this is a value that must be taken by society; otherwise those who comprise the social whole are deprived of what is rightfully theirs.

"George advocates a tax on land - to charge the owner for the value of the benefit he receives from society. The state should play the tax collector, as enjoyment of private property is made possible by the state."

According to Dr. Nkomo, who spent some of his freedom-fighting years in prison, "The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe air. To let other men own land and deprive others of the land is tantamount to saying that they have a lesser claim to life."

But Dr. Nkomo's analysis does not follow the Georgist critique straight down the line. Like Mr. Mugabe, Dr. Nkomo appears to favour the Marxist line. For in his speech, he would have made two other key points:

- None of the means of production which presumably includes capital equipment should be privately owned; and

- The working class has a "revolutionary role" in transforming society through class struggle.



● Joshua Nkomo

Dr Nkomo regards Henry George's analysis, written at the same time as Karl Marx wrote *Capital* in the British Museum, as limited. For the American thinker proposed social evolution along a reformist path.

DR NKOMO also intended to analyse plans to resettle black Zimbabweans on land that was owned by white farmers.

"In pursuing its commitment to land redistribution, the Government of Zimbabwe has met with difficulties resulting from

constitutional provisions inserted in 1979.

"Legislation has now been introduced to repeal and replace the Land Acquisition Act 1979. One result of the repeal is to relieve the state of the obligation to pay compensation in foreign exchange for land acquired from Zimbabwean citizens."

Dr. Nkomo intended to end his speech with a detailed analysis of the way in which land value taxation could be formulated to boost output and reduce unemployment. The policy, in his view, "should not be seen simply as a revenue raising measure".

## MARXIST SPENDING SPREE

**SINCE independence, some of Zimbabwe's Marxist leaders have gone on a property-buying spree. Result: some of them now own more than the 50-acre holdings that are allowed under the rules of the ruling Zanu (PF) Party. But following a recent decision, all land over 50 acres is to be confiscated and handed over to the party, according to a report by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation.**