

capital which will only squeeze out cash and profit, interfere in self-government, and remove assets, or abandon them once they lose their value or ability to generate profit. Third World countries are under enormous pressure to privatize, which will leave them hostage to foreign capital, as does foreign debt, and without essential government services.

4. Western-style capitalism is inherently at war with publicly-owned lands and related resources that are - or ought to be - utilized for the common good. It is inherently at war with the environment because environmental protection costs money and reduces profits. It is at war with the poor at home and in poor nations.
5. Rigid ideology and hypocrisy concerning public policy are dangerous to the beneficial use of land. Major economic, demographic, social and political dynamics must always be addressed. New ways, free of doctrine or a desire to deceive, can be found to create a land policy which is best for the people of the Russian Federation. My advice would be to be flexible, resist foreign influences including foreign capital, the demands of international banking which have further impoverished and indebted the Third World and other recipients of their loans and programs. Find new forms of protecting the public ownership and interest in all the land that best serves the people.

Start with the assumption that public ownership of land is best and accept variations only to meet clear and important common needs of the people.

The people of Russia ought not to succumb to the western ideology that all development and consumption is progress for the good. That assumption is the principle cause for the ravaging of the earth and its environment, the excessive consumerism of societies, the conflict, militarism and violence that dominates the planet today.

BOOK REVIEW

Land, culture and psychology linked by land policy

Land of Freedom

Fred Harrison

Land Policy Council, London, £3.00.

There is a wisdom about this booklet that belies its small size. It presents a penetrating, enlightening and heartening analysis of the problems affecting Russia, and reflects how the President must help the people renew their links with land. Like Russia there are western societies who have also suffered an identity crisis, cut off as their people are, from a proper relationship with land. Yet their leaders do not think to consider that the role of land could be the cause - and the cure - of their many problems.

The author, Fred Harrison, is well known to readers of *Land and Liberty* who appreciate that it is his love of morality and land economics that mark him out and put a stamp on everything he writes. The nature of the challenge in Russia today is clearly and patiently set out, and the solution stated. The philosophy of freedom, he writes, must not entail a rejection of, or domination over, nature. Freedom must be defined in terms of our ability to liberate nature and therefore ourselves, in the quest for self-realisation through a peaceful and prosperous community. In the new Russia the people who occupy land should pay the full rental value to the community, the revenue would then return to the people in benefits received. Thus the debt to nature would be discharged.

Between 1993-5 Harrison researched widely in Russia, conducting numerous interviews with many people, many of whom expressing the wish to enjoy a revival of their culture.

Harrison wades in to make clear the roots of Russian traditions, from the first Romanov who came to power in the 17th century: Mikhail Romanov convened in 1613 a national body, the Assembly of the Land, but it was to be short lived.

By 1645, the second Romanov (Alexis) abolished these land-related institutions in favour of centralised bureaucratic control, the model that has lasted 300 years. So it is that with the exploitation of the people has come the enslaving of the land - the policy inspired by European influence and mainly used to finance military adventures. Later Peter the Great added his destructive influence and raised taxes to ruinous levels.

Today the author warns the Russian people about allowing others to define their national identity for them; they must question whether western institutions and laws are today consistent with their own psychology and ecology, and in particular whether the set of property rights which relate people to each other and to the natural environment will bring that elusive freedom. In 1992 Harrison became a Consultant to Russia's Ministry of Construction. Representatives of no less than 100 member-cities of the Union of Russian Cities endorsed the fiscal strategy described in this essay. He has worked with municipal governments to develop a distinctively Russian solution to the controversial problem of property rights, rejecting the Western model of public finance. It is, he makes clear, inappropriate both for the people of Russian and, indeed, for people everywhere.

His chapter on The Paying-for-Benefits principle is required reading for anyone seeking to give a moral lead on public issues today; Harrison casts a beacon of light on how Russia might yet turn from national depression and gloom to restore herself in the great business of living.

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