

Research summaries edited by Paul Brandon

Katherine Deighton, who edited the *Progressive Forum* pages from Winter 1999 to Spring 2001, leaves us for Malaysia and marriage this summer. Paul Brandon takes over. Here he gives his perspective on six weeks as a volunteer Executive Assistant at the Henry George Foundation in London.

IMAGINE for a moment how exciting it would be for members of an isolated community to one day wake up and be able to walk across a newly built bridge. To connect with a land that they perhaps had only viewed from afar. Feelings of trepidation and fascination would be evident, with some willing to explore the new territory quicker than others.

Whilst working at the Henry George Foundation, responding to e-mails, researching on the internet and generally immersing myself into this world I have observed something just as interesting beginning to take place. A bridge has been built that is enabling a wide variation of groups and individuals to travel, discover and trade in ideas and thoughts that are making the cause of land value taxation (LVT) stronger by the day. The bridge is called *Progressive Forum*.

With the arrival of Friends of the Earth to our settlement we have gained almost instant credibility with many who have never heard of Henry George or his ideas. To be able to quote their involvement when speaking to someone making enquires on the phone about LVT is to immediately remove an obstacle of scepticism and establish a sense of trust. The impres-

sive list of names on the advisory board enables volunteers to construct letters or e-mails that can highlight people who are respected and experienced. To then be able to make them aware of the research programme that is diverse and interesting gives a new confidence to those of us in the front line. It is also worth remembering that this bridge is still only just over a year old and with the inevitable development and improvement of the website its traffic is sure to increase.

This has made me come to realise that supporters of Henry George and advocates of LVT are going to have to embrace some new ideas and approaches. This will undoubtedly bring challenges to those who wish to explore – and adventures to those who intend to discover. LVT or its equivalent will be part of a movement in the next 15 years that is more holistic in its approach to solving society's ills. This will inevitably open new horizons to us all, presenting a future that looks exciting, eventful and rewarding. As more use the bridge to explore it is inevitable some will decide to settle in our territory. Our value to the community will increase providing an opportunity to grow, evolve and progress.

British policy makers and the green tax shift

Shizuka Oshitani, a postgraduate researcher at Essex University, is undertaking this study of how political parties and pressure groups in Britain during 2001 are responding to the "green tax shift imperative". A report for the Henry George Foundation of Great Britain based on her findings is due this summer. Ms Oshitani is also completing a doctoral thesis, comparing the attitudes of British and Japanese policy makers to global warming. She considers the use of "resource revenues" for public revenue as one way of responding to disturbing global trends in pollution and economic injustice (See *Manifest tax shifts* by Tony Vickers).

CORRECTION

Tony Vickers writes: In the Winter 2000 issue of *Land & Liberty* under the headline "British HG Foundation 'has no quarrel with Lincoln'" (page 10) I repeated a statement that I had made at a Lincoln Symposium in October 2000 that "without the support to British researchers that Lincoln have given over the past five years there would now be no debate on LVT in the UK".

This statement did not – and does not – have the support of HGF's Directors. Nor, upon reflection, is it true.

Whilst the contribution of Lincoln-funded researchers has undoubtedly been crucial in recent years as a stimulus to wider public debate on LVT, the work over a far longer period by others, not funded by Lincoln, has also been – and continues to be – significant in fuelling this debate.

I apologise for any offence caused by this article. None was intended.

Preparing to pilot land value taxation in Britain

Tony Vickers, HGF chief executive of Great Britain, will report to Liverpool City Council and DETR at the end of 2001, with recommendations on how to implement a pilot of site value rating (SVR) in Liverpool. This study forms a part of a second David C Lincoln Fellowship in Land Value Taxation (LVT) awarded to Tony.

In his first Lincoln Fellowship, completed in December 2000, he conducted a postal survey of some 300 property tax "stakeholders" throughout Britain to establish the actual and perceived barriers to an implementation of LVT (now available in a report *Questions Around The Smart Tax* available on the internet at www.smarttaxbook.cjb.net or from the *Progressive Forum* for £3.50). This concluded that although there was support for LVT in theory, there was still a great lack of understanding of how such a tax could have the results claimed.

It was suggested that a pilot in one or two local authorities was essential before any reform of national property taxes could take place. Liverpool City Council have asked the British Government to be allowed to pilot SVR, so we may see some exciting developments in the not too distant future.

Layfield and Whitstable: 25 years on

Robert Young, a *Progressive Forum* member and tutor at the School of Economic Science, London, is looking back a quarter of a century to The Layfield Committee – the last comprehensive government inquiry in Britain into local councils sources of finance. He is currently studying files held by Layfield consultees as well as the published reports and contemporary press articles.

The Land Institute published the second "Whitstable Study" in 1974 looking into the likely impact and cost of introducing site value rating (SVR) in Britain. With SVR now the policy of the Liberal Democrats as a replacement for the Uniform Business Rate, it is once again at the heart of the debate with regards to sustainable urban development and good governance. Mr Young will seek to find out why the Whitstable studies failed to make impact in the 1970's and will be presenting his findings at a lecture later this year.