

Review of *Who Owns Britain*

(The Progress Report)

"Who Owns Britain". Published 29th November 2001. by Kevin Cahill, ISBN 086241 912 3.

reviewed by John Burns-Curtis

The Land for the People

Kevin Cahill has taken 13 years of brilliant investigative research to complete this book, "Who Own Britain", and uncovers an aristocratic/Tory party conspiracy to keep the land in the hands of the chosen few. It exposes a conspiracy of gigantic proportions. Kevin started his research after being tasked with the aristocracy in the first Sunday Times "Rich List." He came across brick walls of misinformation, lies, and no information at all. The Land Registry still only notes half of England's land, after being in existence for 76 years. Kevin has worked in both the Commons and the Lords and is fully familiar with the working of these chambers.

He uncovers the successful conspiracy to take out of circulation the second Domesday Book, the 1872 Return of Land Owners, that documented who owns what. The aristocratic landowners, through their House of Lords influence and Tory party connections, successfully took the second Domesday book out of circulation, and attempted to prevent a similar one being done just before WW1, causing the then Liberal government to restrict their powers in 1910. WW1 prevented the census from being completed. They did not want the people to know how much of the land the privileged few owned. Out of sight, out of mind.

The 1872 Second Domesday book covered the current UK and the Irish Republic, which were all one nation at the time. What Kevin Cahill does is compare Ireland right now to the UK. Ireland re-distributed land and the results are all too clear to see. The Irish economy is booming and most of the wealth, contrary to what people think in the UK, is internally generated, not via handouts from the EU. There is no estate over 5,000 acres in Ireland.

The UK currently is uncompetitive in many areas, not because of the high valued pound, it is the high rents that prevent foreign companies setting up here. Also UK companies will think twice before opening a branch or depot simply because of the high rents due to the high land values, brought about by the artificial shortage, created

by the appalling situation of land being in the hands of too few and backed by a highly restrictive planning system.

The economic boom in the Irish Republic is fuelled by land re-distribution. People build larger and better homes than in the UK, as land is cheaper so more money is spent on the structure and internal fitments, improving their quality of life and creating a larger construction industry, which is by nature is manpower intensive securing jobs.

In 1872 "most" of the Irish people owned "nothing at all". During the famine almost all the population also owned "nothing at all" (the 1 million dead was due to land ownership and laws not the potato blight), with Ireland almost wholly owned by a few large landowners. Since having self rule, the Irish now have more home ownership in percentage terms than the UK, with larger houses and houses that do not have between 50%-75% of the value being the value of the land. There are some anomalies around Dublin. They also do not have unnecessarily restrictive planning laws that act against the interest of the masses and favour the chosen few as in the UK. The more sensible planning system assists the land-redistribution and the economy as a whole.

In 2001 52,000 new homes were built in the Irish Republic which has a population of 3.4 million. The UK, with a population of 60 million managed a mere 170,000. The House Builders Federation indicated that highly restrictive planning laws curtail much needed housebuilding in the UK.

Rents for industry, commerce and domestic are cheaper as a result, attracting external investment. Their economy is growing at a faster rate than the UK and clearly appears a permanent trend, not a temporary boom.

Put all this down to land ownership. Giving the people a stake in their own country, and not under the tyranny of landlords. A country, which they are expected to die for in times of extreme crisis.

Land reform was promised to the UK people after WW1 by the Liberals, and after WW2 by Labour. "A land fit for heroes". All failed to deliver. We are suffering today as a consequence of not tackling the underlying fundamental problems. Land and its ownership.

It is a startling expose of Britain's most valuable asset - its land. Kevin Cahill's investigations reveal how the 6,000 or so landowners - mostly aristocrats, but also large institutions and the Crown - own about 40 million acres [the UK has 60 million in total], two thirds of the country, and have maintained their grip on the land right throughout the 20th century. The book argues that our present system of

landownership is of material detriment to the vast majority of homeowners in the UK, imposing taxes on homeowners while many of the wealthiest landowners in the country pay no rates and actually receive money in the form of grants and subsidies for owning land. Cahill's arguments are supported with 80 pages of tables, maps and statistics.

- Tells the story of the "Lost Domesday", the Returns of Owners of Land of 1872, until now the only comprehensive record of landownership ever compiled.
- Updates and examines who owns what in all 118 counties of Britain & Ireland.
- Compares landownership in Britain and Ireland then and now, highlighting how Britain 70% of land is still owned by less than 1% of the population.
- Reveals the immovable vested interests of Britain's landed aristocracy.
- The myth behind the alleged scarcity of land - less than 8% of the country is developed.
- The ongoing failure of the land registry - 76 years on, up to 50% of the land in England is still not registered.
- The scandalous under valuation of the Crown Estate and its role as the next Government sell-off.
- How the Church of England has "mislaid" 1.5 million acres it owned 100 years ago.
- The startling accumulation of land by the Royal Family, who now own or control the equivalent of an average-sized county in England.

SOME FACTS:

- * The UK has 60 million acres of land in total.
- * 70% of the land is owned by 1% of the population.
- * Just 6,000 or so landowners -- mostly aristocrats, but also large institutions and the Crown -- own about 40 million acres, two thirds of the UK.

- * Britain's top 20 landowning families have bought or inherited an area big enough to swallow up the entire counties of Kent, Essex and Bedfordshire, with more to spare.
- * Big landowners measure their holdings by the square mile; the average Briton living in a privately owned property has to exist on 340 square yards.
- * Each home pays £550/ann. on average in council tax while each landowning home receives £12,169/ann. in subsidies. The poor subsidising the super rich. In Ireland where land redistribution occurred, there is no council tax.
- * A building plot, the land, now constitutes between half to two-thirds of the cost of a new house.
- * 60 million people live in 24 million "dwellings".
- * These 24 million dwellings sit on approx 4.4 million acres (7.7% of the land).
- * Of the 24 million dwellings, 11% owned by private landlords and 65% privately owned.
- * 19 million privately owned homes, inc gardens, sit on 5.8% of the land.
- * Average dwelling has 2.4 people in it.
- * 77% of the population of 60 million (projected to be more in new census) live on only 5.8% of the land, about 3.5 million acres (total 60 million).
- * Agriculture only accounts for 3% of the economy.
- * Average density of people on one residential acre is 12 to 13.
- * 10.9 million homes carries a mortgage of some kind.
- * Average value of an acre of development land is £404,000. High in south east of £704,154, low in north east of £226,624. London is in a category of its own.

* Reservations of land have been place by builders to a value of 37 billion to build the 3-4 million homes required. The land reserved is almost wholly owned by aristocrats; with none of it on the land registry. This land is coming out of subsidised rural estates, land held by off-shore trusts and companies and effectively untaxed.

All figures are referenced and verifiable.

The failure to re-distribute land in the UK is one of the prime factors why the UK under-performed during most of the 20th century. The artificial land shortage in the UK ramps up land prices, seriously affecting the availability and quality of homes, commercial space, etc. Under 1% of the population own 70% of the land, something you expect from a third world dictatorship -- an absolute disgrace in a modern educated country. This situation led the Sunday Times editorial on the publishing of the first UK "Rich List" to equate the UK with a banana republic.

The book has compiled information that is not even available to government departments. It is a brilliant piece of work.

Tony Blair has kicked the parasite hereditary, largely landowning, peers from the Lords, now to redistribute the land. If we can spend money on redistribution in Zimbabwe, and start the ball rolling in Ireland in the late 1800s then we can do the same in our own backyard, improve the economy, and give social justice to the people at the same time.

I advise all to read it, and absorb the raw facts that we as a nation are being ripped-off good style. That is you, me and everyone else, except the chosen aristocratic and large land owning few. Something has to happen ASAP to rectify this gigantic injustice which would create a more stable and stronger economy as experience in other countries as shown. The kicking out of the Lords of the parasite hereditary peers by Tony Blair is the first step - the total wealth of the 66 hereditary ejected Lords, who are predominantly large landowners owning the equivalent of 4.5 average sized counties, is a whopping £16 billion. Now to do the business....

Our thanks to John Burns-Curtis for sharing this review with The Progress Report.