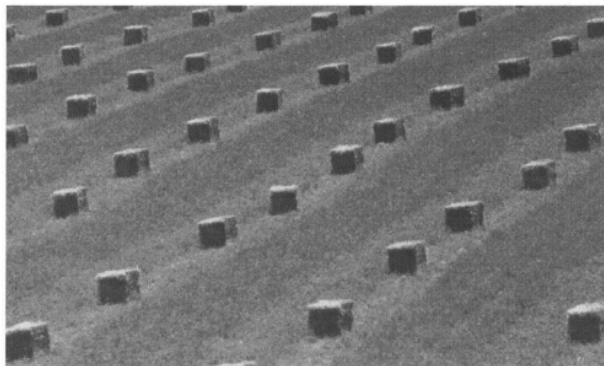


Your views



Agricultural land: what rate tax?

Green Party erodes its pledge on land value tax

Tony Vickers (L&L Summer 2001) states that the land value taxation policy of "the Green Party of England & Wales" hasn't changed significantly since the 1997 general election. Its official policy has changed. Ten years ago the party conference voted for a new land section for the Manifesto for a Sustainable Society (MFSS) which is the compendium of party policy. The land section proposed gradual, complete implementation of LVT.

However, at the Green Party's 2000 conference an additional taxation part was added to the MFSS. This defined what is now Green policy on LVT. It states: "LVT will be introduced to replace the Council Tax and the National Non-Domestic Business Rates" and "agricultural land will be taxed at a low rate so that intensive farming is not encouraged or basic food prices forced to rise". Three amendments that would have kept party policy as it was (that LVT would gradually increase until there would be a 100 per cent collection of the annual rental value of land) all fell. The Green party has no interest in LVT. Green economists support LVT but the party ignores their opinions.

What is required are clear LVT political alternatives, but exciting new movements or parties will only come through if we have electoral reform. All LVTers should support Roy Jenkins's proposal for partial PR, so distinct LVT alternatives can be put to the electorate. Perhaps HGF and/or the Progressive Forum should become partner organisations of Make Votes Count?

Martin Childs
Orpington, Kent



Payment for privilege

Apropos the letters by Messrs. Giles and Boorman, both of Australia (L&L Autumn 2001), land rent is not "payment for service" but payment for privilege enjoyed – that of having, temporarily, sole right of possession and use of something which does not belong to anybody, and to the use of which nobody has any absolute right.

If it was recognised in law that the land did not belong to anybody, but was subject to the administration of the state, that entity could perfectly well charge

a fee for its possession and you can call it whatever you like. But it would be better not to call it a tax since, if the politicians are permitted to tax one thing, then it is difficult to stop them taxing another and what we want to do is to end taxation altogether. So there must be no exceptions.

Robin Raynham
Isle of Wight

Regenerating Scotland

I must take issue with the concept in Ian Mason's review of Alastair McIntosh's *Healing Nationhood* (L&L Spring 2001) that "a simple

and practical fiscal reform is more likely to follow from than to be the cause of a spiritual and cultural regeneration".

Addressing the Scottish Executive in May 2000, I pointed out in a letter, with regard to certain legislation it was proposing, that it took "as [its] standpoint, the concept of a discriminatory, first and second class citizenship for the people of Scotland: i.e. that some are owners of the earth, while others have to pay them for the right to be here".

This status of second-class citizenship is the fundamental fact of life, born of present land tenure, for the great mass of the Scots, and it is clearly impossible to hope for a "spiritual and cultural regeneration" among a people so grossly held down in this way. To try to state otherwise is to aid in the great cover-up of what is no less than the mutilation of a people's soul.

This great cover-up is financed by such conjured-up terms as "the stakeholder society", and purported policies of social inclusion. Indeed, in its on-going rush to blind the people, the Scottish (as it is called) Parliament has actually conjured up a Minister of Social Inclusion!

Spiritual and cultural regeneration will follow, as day follows night, once there is restored to the people of Scotland their essential dignity, and equality of status – which can only be achieved by the restoration to them of a direct stake in their own land. The Australian Aboriginal people got it right. "Land," they said, "is kinship, family and clan. It is the basis of life, identity and spirituality," – and the Scots know this just as well.

Shirley-Anne Hardy
Pitlochry, Perthshire

Can a leopard change its spots?

Georgists have always presented the case for their right to freedom – of action, of speech, of movement and of trade – in a context of respect for the rights of others. In the modern world it is proper to qualify the right to free trade with the right of government to interfere if it considers public

health to be at risk. If there was free trade at present, I don't think millions of livestock would have been slaughtered in Britain on a voluntary basis. And, thankfully, the Australian government would not permit the import of such health threatening consumables from Britain. But to suggest that Georgists abandon the term, and maybe the concept, simply because certain promoters of powerful bureaucracies are uncomfortable about personal freedom beggars belief. Western parliaments did not abandon the word "democracy" when the Soviet satellites chose to strip the word of its time honoured meaning, did they?

Henry George stressed time and again that free trade would be of little general benefit without equality of access to land by means of the public collection of site rent. It is distressing to note that the new people are demoting that basic Georgist call. We note (L&L Spring 2001, page 5) that taxes on carbon/nuclear fuel, minerals, toxic chemicals aimed at the big corporations take precedent. I am not convinced that the same enthusiasm is evident for collecting the site value of all land upon which stand houses, shops and small businesses.

Indeed Mr Lefmann (L&L Spring 2000) expresses considerable concern that "companies



No need to change these marks