

The International Union for Land Value Taxation newsletter

As the World Burns

By Mike Curtis

Greetings Voters:

Today inflation is down, but ever present; housing rents keep rising faster than wages; and homeownership is progressively harder to achieve. Heat waves and severe weather are increasing, and the conflict in Ukraine portends a nuclear war. All this, and another recession is on schedule for 2026.

In spite of this, it is possible that the next election will be decided over whether women have a political right to an abortion. As important as it is to people on both sides it looks like the big donors, the landlord monopolist billionaires, are simply using abortion as a way to sway the voters while preserving their unearned incomes.

Right now, the polls show Donald Trump and Joe Biden tied in popularity. Whether it is racism, nationalism, fascism, or a new version of Elmer Gantry, the world has seen these movies before.

Trump has promised his working class followers he will make America Great again, again. They will all be proud to be Americans, and they will have Bully Trump as their alter-ego

Trump says we can't afford to raise the Minimum Wage — which would raise all wages by the same amount. He says we can not afford national healthcare in spite of the fact that national healthcare would cost far less per person than Americans pay now. Nonetheless, tens of millions of workers did and will likely vote for him again.

What he thought America could afford was a tax cut for the rich and the super-rich, because, with their tax savings, he thought they would make job creating investments.

And, If he gets elected again, he will increase the focus on Law & Order and finish the wall. Then, no un-educated person from Latin America will be able to waltz across the border and compete with Americans for the lowest paying jobs. He will do his best to see that no African American who is trying to get a job, buy a house, or go to college will get any preferential treatment because for more than a hundred years the government allowed their ancestors to be enslaved. And for another hundred and fifty years after that, governments maintained a cruel caste system (Jim Crow) that oppressed their descendants.

Trump has not put forth any policy that would force more land into production — yielding jobs, raising wages, or make housing more affordable. Nor has he said how he will prevent the next recession. But, if he gets elected in 2024 his followers will feel like citizens of “A Great America again!”

Now, what are Joe Biden and the Democrats offering? A decrease in the cost of some prescription drugs, an increase in the Minimum Wage, more affordable college for those with a scholarly aptitude, and more welfare for those who actually need it. These programs ameliorate some of our social problems, but the only reason the Democrats look good, is because the Republicans are so much worse.

Biden and the Democrats could stand for shifting taxes to the value of land. That would create the incentives needed to bring about more jobs and housing in the free-market. And, depending on how widely it was applied, it would ameliorate or even prevent the next recession.

However, the reality is: The Democratic Party stands for a kinder gentler form of exploitation. By comparison, their policies are far better for the working class. But, both the Republican and Democratic parties fully endorse the exploitive institution of private property in land.

The value of land, which includes oil, other minerals, and the airwaves, results from the diversities of nature and its exclusive possession. Title to land is necessary to secure to the people who make them, buildings and other products made upon it.

The increase in population permits greater divisions and specializations of labor and economies of scale. This multiplies the results of labor via trade. The infrastructure and public service enable denser populations and more efficient cooperation, which increases productivity proportionally and therefore, the value of land.

Because land is essential to life, and its value is socially created, its title confers a measurable advantage. Therefore, it is an equitable source of public revenue — a charge for the value of the benefits received. Because the value of land increases in harmony with the evolution of community and the increasing needs of social growth, it is a natural source of public revenue.

Yet, neither party acknowledges land as a common opportunity. It is called property, and treated as a foundational institution, as though justice permits one person to own the land on which another must live — where one person may take a large portion of what another produces by virtue of their title deed to the gift of nature.

The Democrats are willing to limit exploitation by insuring to workers a minimum standard of well-being: Minimum wage laws, occupational safety, and rent controls. But, in spite of the fact that it would incentivize an increase in the number of jobs and units of housing; in spite of the fact that it would actually increase the potential income and the selling value of land, the Democratic Party does not support a local (state, county or city) shift to land value taxation.

It is not because Democrats want to speculate with idle land; that is not practiced by the majority of either party. They are against land value taxation because at some time in the far distant future, all taxes might be shifted to the value of land. And, at some time after that, the full rental value of all privately held land might be collected throughout the entire

country for the equal benefit of all the people — just as Henry George advocated.

And if that happened, the income from the ownership of land would fall to zero. No individual or corporation would then enjoy an income from the bounty of nature; no individual would be able to capture wealth that was not the result of individual or corporate productions, but was the synergistic results of the conscious and subconscious cooperation of the community as a whole. It is the abolition of this unwarranted exploitive income that conservative Republicans and liberal (kinder, and gentler) Democrats find un-acceptable.

Nearly a trillion dollars a year is spent on education, yet the majority of people do not know that private property in land, and the non-use and under-use it engenders, is the cause unemployment, low wages, and the high cost of housing.

Land value taxation at full value would make land a common asset with employment, rising wages, and affordable housing for all. But the Democrats, who will not endorse it, are willing to spend a trillion dollars a year on welfare, even more than is spend on the military, as a humanitarian gesture, and a way to keep beggars, crime, and communicable disease from so reducing productivity that the income from land would fall even more.

We can look for a charismatic savior and elect him or her president, but there is little evidence that has ever brought about a just society. We have a system where adults can vote and collectively choose their representatives. Few places have rank choice voting, and few issues are decided by referendum, which would bring us closer to democracy. But, when the majority of the people agree that something is of paramount importance, governments generally deliver.

The voters must think for themselves. They must distinguish the natural opportunities from the products of human endeavor; wealth that is privately produced from that which is socially produced; businesses in which all can compete, and businesses which are in their nature monopolies and must be socially owned and government run. Then they

can elect those who will legislate and govern in the best interest of the people.

There is no evidence that the natural world has not provided ample resources, and then some, for all the people who are on this earth right now. And I have every reason to believe: With common ownership of land (via land value taxation), free migration, and free trade, all the peoples of this world could live happy, productive, and prosperous lives without degrading the earth and its environment.

Ukraine & the Israeli Palestinian conflict

By Mike Curtis

What about Ukraine? Making war on another country is mass murder which includes conscripted soldiers who are killed on both sides.

By the end of WWII, Russia (AKA The Soviet Union) had the worlds largest army. Ever since, they have been in a contest with the United States over who would rule the world.

You may remember, in the 1950s Russia sent weapons to North Korea, and the 60s to North Vietnam, to fight the Americans. In the 80s the United States sent weapons to Afghanistan to fight the Russians.

Now, the US is sending weapons to Ukraine. It's not equal to 10% of the money that goes to the annual US military budget, but it has killed and ruined the lives of countless people, and greatly increased the profits for the weapons makers.

I'm reminded of Tennyson's Charge of the Light Brigade. "Theirs is not to make reply, Theirs is not to reason why, Theirs is but to do and die."

It was written during the Crimean war In 1854 when Britain came in on the side of the Ottoman Turks. Why? It was for the purpose of weakening Russia, and maintaining Britain as the world's biggest Super Power. "The more things change, the more they remain the same".

The Ukrainian government says it is fighting for its sovereign right to exist as a nation and the freedom of its people. Yet, they are enslaving all men from 18 to 60 in order to achieve that freedom. And, if Ukraine wins, the landless soldiers, who are still alive, will likely go right back to working for and paying rent to the same landlords as before.

The news says that Israel has just suffered the largest terrorist attack on record. That is an attack against unarmed civilians in which more than a thousand people were killed and more than a hundred were taken hostage. Terrorists would use airplanes, bombs and every other weapon of modern warfare if they had them, but they don't. They kill innocent unarmed civilians in the most cruel and savage way imaginable, because terror is the weapon they are able to deliver with the greatest effect. They are often misguided and fanatical, like many suicide bombers. They are not cowards, as they are often labeled; they commit acts of terror believing it will defend or liberate the homeland of their people against foreign occupation and exploitation, or displacement or extermination. The anti-terrorists drop bombs and use tanks to kill and level building. They inflict far greater terror — fear and death upon innocent civilians than the people they are reacting to — because they can.

It is expected. In the years after the World Trade Center attack the United States caused the death of far more innocent people than the terrorists did on 9/11.

I am reminded of the slogan of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: "If you want peace work for justice". It is a simple idea, but what, exactly, constitutes justice?

The Israeli conflict, no less than the Ukrainian war, and all other armed conflicts, is being fought over the control of land. The history of the world is marked by one conquest after another. It can be thought of as a contest between the right of self-determination and the opportunity for imperial domination and exploitation.

In the case of Israel it is displacement, the migration of a landless people in an attempt recapture an ancient homeland, so they may exercise their right to self-determination, denied them in much of the world. The forced

displacement of the current residents is rationalized and asserted using many legal and historical references. One was the purchase from titleholders who did not live in the houses and farms that were purchased. The Palestinian tenants who lived on and worked the land since time immemorial have been evicted, ordered to leave what they believed was really their land. So, for this and many other considerations, both parties believe they have a moral right to the land.

From the perspective of ethnic proportionality, many Americans are anxious about 12 million undocumented hispanic immigrants who came across the southern border, and are still coming. That's about 3.5% of the population. In what is now Israel and Palestine the population went from a small minority of Jews in 1900 to the overwhelming majority at present. And both peoples feel the land is theirs by virtue of their historical occupation. In the case of the Palestinians, they never left. In the case of the Israelis, their ancestors were forcibly dispossessed.

Looking at the history of the Middle East, and particularly what is now Gaza, it is not only one of the oldest communities in the world, but it has been fought over, conquered, destroyed, and rebuild so many times it would be easy to imagine there is no solution. History is so full of migrations, conquests, resistance, displacements, and exterminations that one might suppose in the long arc of history, this conflict is just one more.

The United Nations has gotten a lot further than the League of Nations, but they aren't even debating the all important question: What gives any nation the right to exist as a nation and secure its borders — let alone expand them.

How much effort has gone into "The right of self determination", The right of every ethnic group to occupy a sovereign territory and practice its culture and traditions? It is unlikely that any nation state exists today where the ancestors of its present population found the land uninhabited. But if they did, would that give them a divine right to occupy it and exclude all others? Have the Palestinian semites no right to a sovereign place of their own?

The United Nations is a forum. It has no sway over the Super Powers, but it can facilitate consensus of mutual benefits. The United Nations is where they could have negotiated the removal of the Russian Missiles in Cuban and the American missiles in Turkey. They could negotiate NATO's encirclement of Russia, and the Palestinian's right to a homeland. But, As far as I can see, right now, might still makes right. And that is exactly how the United States experienced Manifest Destiny — all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. For 50 years it included the Philippines, with 17 million people.

Right Now, a hundred million people are suffering from wars, and Hundreds of millions more are hungry. But, there is no evidence that the natural world has not provided ample resources, and then some, for all the people who are on this earth right now. It is on the earth that we are born; from it we live and produce all that we consume; and to it again we return. The earth is our common heritage, and each and every person has an equal right to the bounty of nature.

The nation state (control of territory) is necessary for ethnic groupings to facilitate democracy and cooperation (infrastructure, public service, the preservation of order, and the administration of justice). Title to land (exclusive possession) is necessary to individuals and corporations who make improvements and conduct business.

In both cases exclusive use also confers an advantage. Therefore, the value of the advantage should be paid to all others in order to satisfy their equal right to the same portion of the earth. If that payment was required, hoarding would stop, and there would be plenty of land to go around. Free migration would insure that no country increased in population until it reached the point of diminishing returns in productivity, and no country would remain so sparsely populated that it was deprived of the synergy that comes with the increase in population. Free trade would enable the vast diversity of nature to be enjoyed equally by all the people of this earth — maximizing the potential of the resources and the benefits of cooperation. Finally, human efficiency would be so increased by this arrangement that we could live and produce without degrading the earth and its environment for future generations. []

