

On Land Speculation

By ARTHUR DOWE (New South Wales, Australia)

Bernard Rooney, in his reply (GJ No. 53) to Craig Cringan's previous article on land speculation, does much to clarify this issue. But I think that both Cringan and Rooney are ignoring, or under-stressing the basic fact that land speculation is itself an effect and not a cause of underproduction or depression. It results from the greatest of all injustices in modern society - political diversion of the economic rent, which is the community's, into private pockets, and from consequent taxes.

So it is purely academic, and even diversionary, to discuss whether speculators are to blame. The real cause is misgovernment, and the cause of misgovernment is public ignorance and apathy. There is a strong analogy between slave owners and land speculators. Both disappear when justice is substituted for injustice.

Land speculation is a form of crime against society, but it is the crime of ignorance and apathy in not identifying and removing the cause. The speculators should have the moral integrity to perceive that they are receiving the incomes of other people. But the general community is equally guilty of this.

Let us devote our energies to removing the cause, not just discussing the effect of land speculation.