



Regulars

18 Books

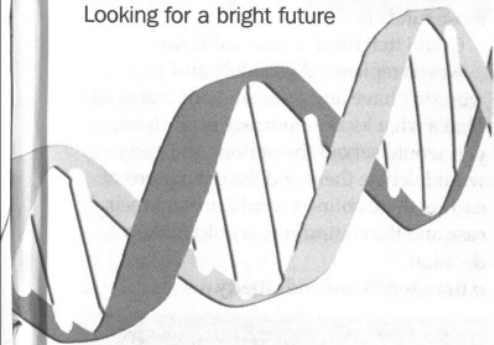
Who Owns the Sky? Peter Barnes;
Double-cross, Ron Banks
Soil and soul, Alastair McIntosh
Globalisation for the Common Good,
Kamran Mofid – plus book offers

21 From the archives

Uncovered, the first *Land&Liberty* editorial

22 Last word

Looking for a bright future



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First word

STEWARDSHIP IS A word which until recently was used mainly in a workaday sense, as a synonym for management. This secular use came from the old title steward – originally a person who managed the domestic concerns of a family or institution. And with wider application, that prosaic meaning lives on.

But the notion of stewardship is an ancient and profound one. It has Mosaical and biblical foundations. Now the advent of green consciousness has brought the rediscovery and fresh application of the original concept. Stewardship is a key idea developing in at least the more progressive areas of our Western world view.

The word's meaning is now generally understood in much deeper, broader, and more specific terms than simply and purely management. The dictionary tells us that stewardship is "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care – eg stewardship of our natural resources".

So the modern concept of stewardship includes ideas of care, responsibility, and trust. We also see it has a primary application to our use of common resources. Nowadays perhaps it is almost conventional to see mankind as the steward of life on Earth, in symbiosis with it, as Dubois put it, like some grand gardener for all the world.

Stewardship is in fact mankind's duty of care. It is the duty, entrusted to us in common, to apply our powers responsibly to the care and the wellbeing of life. The duty arises correspondingly with our irreducible birthright to our own lives. It is entrusted in the individual and in every level of community. It is a duty which, writ large, requires the world community to act globally. In our individual hands, it is a duty which cannot be detached from our daily lives.

In 1992, nearly 1,700 of the world's leading scientists, including the majority of Nobel science laureates, issued an appeal that served to crystallise the concept of stewardship. The World Scientists' Warning to Humanity alerted us that humans and the natural world are on a collision course. "Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish.... The earth is finite.... We are fast approaching many of the earth's limits. Current economic practices which damage the environment cannot be continued... A great change in our stewardship of the earth and the life on it is required." The scientists' warning stands.

In this issue of *Land&Liberty* we will explore just what great change in our stewardship of the earth is needed. We ask just what reform of current economic practices will be the necessary precondition to pulling away from this fatal collision course.

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