

George Bernard Shaw On Rent and Taxes

In his latest book, "Everybody's Political What's What," George Bernard Shaw, in discussing the land question, writes:

"Finally, I must insist that the crux of the land question is the classical theory of Economic Rent, dubbed by Ferdinand Lassalle the Iron Law of Wages. Like the roundness of the earth it is unfortunately not obvious. It is the pons asinorum of economic mathematics. Karl Marx, by an absurd reference to it in "Das Kapital," proved that he did not understand it. John Ruskin, after a very promising beginning as an economist by his contrast of exchange values with human values, was stopped dead by it. Yet Marx and Ruskin had more brains and keener interest in social questions than three or four average Cabinets or three or four million average voters."

"Thirty years ago I spent some months of my spare time writing a play called Pygmalion, for which, thanks to the Copyright Acts, I have been enormously overpaid in comparison with the actors and scenepainters and stage staffs who were doing all the work. Thanks to the invention of the cinematograph (which, by the way, I did not invent) I lately received a further windfall of 29,000 pounds, on account of my film rights. The financial result was that I had to pay 50,000 pounds to the Chancellor of the Exchequer within two years. And the result of that catastrophe is that I am now using my copyrights not to have my plays filmed and thereby give employment and enjoyment to my fellow citizens, but to forbid and suppress them in order to reduce my income to a point at which it will be possible for me to live on it."