

Property Pirates – Why are they given Carte Blanche?

by John Jamieson

Over the past seven or eight centuries planet earth became one great big commodity, to be exploited, plundered, desecrated and turned into a haven for “Property Pirates” protected by man-made laws that defy logic.

The term pirate suggests the buccaneers who sailed the seas, raping and pillaging to sustain a life of ease and luxury with the least effort.

Today’s pirates are a more intriguing breed. They also have a history of plundering treasure – but they never needed a heavily armed ship or a crew of dastardly rough villains. All they had to do was control the resource we know as land.

The Property Pirates understood planet earth has a finite supply of land. Anyone can see that when the universe was formed and this planet created, that was it. Over millions of years it evolved into a unique life-sustaining place on which life in all its forms can draw its sustenance.

Capturing the land allows Property Pirates to hold anyone without access to land to ransom.

Enforcing control of the land has driven legal structures to suit those in possession of large or choice areas, using the capacity for legal violence to secure their holdings.

Once it was seen this rare commodity could be kept as exclusive private property and held out of use, unless someone was prepared to pay the owner their asking price, the Property Pirates were in business – and what a business! Taking possession of something they never created – usually by overpowering the original inhabitants – became the new world order.

Many questioned the practice of land piracy. The

earliest references to land being for all to share as common property can be traced to the Old Testament, where the original Judeo-Christian land ethic was that of *koinonia* – land was God’s gift to the community as a whole for the *autarkeia*, or self-sufficient livelihood of all.

Property piracy can be traced back to Roman Law. It developed the exclusive ownership concept that legitimised the accumulation of wealth by a few at the expense of the many. Early Christian leaders all dealt with the question of land ownership and Roman law; they railed against the Roman concept of land ownership as “an exclusive and unlimited right to dispose of a thing to the exclusion of all others”.

Roman land law of *dominium* actually meant the ***legalisation of property in land which had been taken by plunder and conquest.***

We in Australia, and in many other countries where democracy is under-pinned by the rule of law, received our laws from the Laws of England, after the Australian land mass had been taken from the original inhabitants. English law was derived from Roman law, and this legalisation of property in land has gone unquestioned except by a few.

The Bible is quite clear the Earth is to be shared fairly and for the benefit of all. Despite this acknowledgement, until very recently there was no acceptance that people lived in Australia for an estimated 60,000 years before Sydney was selected to dump criminals and political agitators from England’s overcrowded prisons.

Australia’s aboriginal inhabitants practised communal land use for all their existence and had respected each other’s right to use the land without Roman Law. The Property Pirates from England

soon established their right by conquest and plunder, under the guise of *Terra Nullius*, to install property in land.

When we sit back and review the ever increasing gulf between the haves and the have-nots (i.e. those with obscene wealth and those living in abject poverty) here in Australia and elsewhere around the globe, it is quite obvious that access to land is what causes this rapidly growing economic disorder.

Property Pirates have taken over huge areas where the legalisation of property in land forms the basis of their economic system.

Challenges to these Property Pirates have been voiced for centuries. All the way back to the only 100 per cent honest politician that tried to educate the masses, Jesus of Nazareth, there have been people showing our economic system is tragically flawed.

One of Jesus' tasks included trying to restore the Old Testament intent of "The Jubilee", a period each 50 years when lands were returned to the original occupiers or their heirs. This meant preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release of captives and setting free the oppressed. The 'release of captives' were of debt slaves who had lost their land because they were unable to pay the mortgage. This was a crucial part of Jesus' task, re-asserting the land rights of the poor and displaced.

Unfortunately Christianity lost its mission of economic justice when it became the official religion of the Roman Empire and subordinate to the Roman Land Law of **dominium**. This is when the first of the Property Pirates, cloaked as 'Christians' went forward hand-in-hand with the land-grabbing plunderers and conquerors.

South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu is said to have remarked: "Before any Europeans came to Africa, we had the land and they had the Bible. We all bowed our heads to pray, then when we opened our eyes, we had the Bible and they had taken all the land!"

That great American statesman, Abraham Lincoln, told his fellow citizens:

"The land, the earth God gave to man for his home, sustenance, and support, should never be the possession of any man, corporation, society, or unfriendly government, any more than the air or water, if as much. An individual, company, or enterprise should hold no more than is required for their home and sustenance. All that is not used should be held for the free use of every family to

make homesteads, and to hold them as long as they are so occupied."

Jesus was crucified by the Romans; Abraham Lincoln was assassinated; probably by Property Pirates.

In more recent times, Winston Churchill, the famous World War II leader who many say saved the world from the fascist dictatorship led by the German Adolph Hitler, spoke on 17 July 1909 at the Kings' Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland:

"It is quite true that land monopoly is not the only monopoly which exists, but it is by far the greatest of monopolies – it is a perpetual monopoly and it is the mother of all other forms of monopoly. It is quite true that unearned increments in land are not the only form of unearned or undeserved profits which individuals are able to secure; but it is the principal form of unearned increment which is derived from processes which are not merely not beneficial, but which are positively detrimental to the general public. (My emphasis)

"Land, which is a necessity of human existence, which is the original source of all wealth, which is strictly limited in extent, which is fixed in geographical position. Land, I say, differs from all other forms of property in these primary and fundamental conditions... All the while the land monopolist has only to sit still and watch complacently his property multiplying in value, sometimes manifold, without either effort or contribution on his part."

Alfred Deakin, Australian Prime Minister 1903-4, 1906-8, 1909-10 made it quite clear where he stood: "The whole of the people have the right to the ownership of land and the right to share in the value of the land itself, though not to share in the fruits of the land which properly belong to the individuals by whose labour they are produced".

Before the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced, a very wise and experienced Minister in the Menzies Liberal Government wrote "Towards A New Society". Sir Allen Fairhall entered parliament in 1949 as the Member for Paterson. He spent 20 years in the House of Representatives, 11 as a Minister. His book criticised GST-style tax reform, urging instead abolition of the present destructive tax regime and replacing it with a uniform impost on the unimproved capital value of land.

In "The Earth Belongs to Everyone", Alanna Hertzog presents a formidable case for the wholesale review of taxation. She draws on a lifetime journey confronting the ever-widening gulf between the

extremely wealthy 1% and the other 99% facing rapid declines in income and their capacity to survive - in a world where the population is likely to grow to over 9 billion people by 2020.

Here in Australia we have the opportunity to make real progress in genuine tax reform that will lead to a much more egalitarian society, where social justice is not just a dream, but a reality. Implementing the recommendations of Phillip Day in his 2005 book *"Hijacked Inheritance - The Triumph of Dollar Darwinism?"* there can be major progress toward the New Society Sir Allen Fairhall envisaged, that Alanna Hertzog sees for the USA and which Winston Churchill offered direction to as far back as 1909.

Until all voters start to understand what underpins the road to social justice and starts treating the Earth as common property, which we all have an equal stake in preserving, there will be an ever widening gulf with the 1% who are obscenely wealthy and control the land.

The 99% will simply be slaves to debt, eking out an existence picking up crumbs that fall from the table of the Property Pirates.

It's time the young generation got into the act. In a few short years they will all need a home of their own and a small plot on which to build it.

Property Pirates demand a huge price for the parcels of land they ration out. Faced by a land price beyond

their means, young couples must rent, and even that is a big hurdle.

Today we see how efficiencies in the building trades can build a good house for around \$150,000 to \$180,000 and there are pre-packed houses built in China to Australian building standards coming onto the market at \$75,000 - \$100,000 fully assembled with all furnishings, white goods, kitchen-ware and media items installed. But if you can't get land to build it on, because of the price demanded by Property Pirates, what can you do?

There are a few quite fair minded and reasonable land-owners who could offer a land lease arrangement, but why not the government supposedly elected "by the people, for the people"? Any government of whatever political persuasion has the capacity to adopt the tax reform that creates building sites based on land value taxation. If elected officials understood how Property Pirates rort the system, they could take charge of the land question and remedy this.

The first major political party that decides it wants to govern the people for the people's benefit, ahead of Property Pirates, will find the going tough.

However, take a leaf out of the way Hong Kong and mainland China operates and you'll soon see why the Chinese are now establishing the new "Asian Empire". In China, the government controls the land.

Men like Henry George are rare unfortunately. One cannot imagine a more beautiful combination of intellectual keenness, artistic form, and fervent love of justice.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) Physicist