

# LAND & LIBERTY

Established 1894  
Volume 105 Number 1185  
Winter 1998

## CONTENTS

EDITORIAL  
Lording it over nature 2

GLOBAL WARMING  
Ian Barron 3

ZIMBABWE  
Land grab would hurt landless  
Paul Knight 4

WORLD BRIEFS 5

GEORGIST ACTIVITIES IN  
AMERICA  
Ted Gwartney 6

### THE L & L DEBATE

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
*The role of rent.*  
James Robertson 7

THE LANDSHARE  
*A response to Citizens' Income  
proposals.*  
Mary Lehman 11

BOOK REVIEWS 14

**COVER:** Police break up a demonstration by native Indians protesting against the abuse of nature by multi-national corporations.

*Editorial Office:*  
177 Vauxhall Bridge Road,  
London, SW1V 1EU  
Tel: 0171-834 4266  
Fax: 0171-834 4979  
E-mail: HGF\_IGU@compuserve.com

ISS No: 0023 7574

*Annual Subscription:*  
UK: £12, USA \$20, Canada \$25,  
Australia \$25

*Publisher:*  
Henry George Foundation  
of Great Britain Ltd.

## EDITORIAL

# Lording it over the rites of nature

IF WE cannot save the skylark in the fields of England, the global crisis associated with the environment is hopeless.

The British government has decided to pay £200 an acre to farmers who agree to leave their land uncultivated. Or: they will be paid £8 an acre for using fewer chemical weed killers. This is the deal for saving the skylark.

Who has the right to kill skylarks? Farmers, evidently, are entitled to threaten wildlife with impunity. By paying them rent to desist the community acknowledges that they are the proprietors of that wildlife, and that the rest of us have to pay ransom to save the skylark from extinction.

*This is the philosophy* that environmental activists condone, and which they employ in their struggle with governments to formulate a strategy for protecting the environment.

*This is the philosophy* which will defeat the objective: altering mankind's relationship with nature.

*This is the philosophy* which undermines the aspiration to create a sustainable social lifestyle.

Farmers who kill wildlife should pay compensation for the privilege. They should pay rent for the right to kill on the land they occupy. They should pay a heavy tax for the use of pesticides which poison the environment.

The natural environment is abused because the users of land and natural resources have been allowed to nurture a psychology of ownership without responsibility.

But society is also culpable. Through the failure of collective political responsibilities, we have shown ourselves to be derelict in our obligations to the living environment. By default, we have conspired with the Lords of Life.

The British government regards its policy towards the skylark as an experiment which is supposed to influence the Common Agricultural Policy. It has embarked on a programme with flaws in the philosophy.

A new ethic is required. One that respects property rights. But rights that have to be modulated, so that they are consistent with justice and with life itself. The fate of the skylark is symbolic. The outcome will also determine whether we respect ourselves, as human beings.

*But the PUBLIC debate has barely begun.*