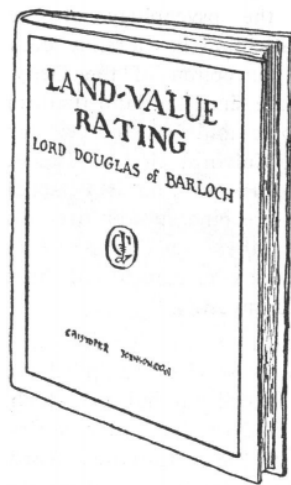


WHAT THE REVIEWERS SAID

Below are extracts from reviews of the new edition of *Land-Value Rating* by Lord Douglas of Barloch, K.C.M.G., published by Christopher Johnson Ltd. at 3s. 6d. and 6s.



STRONG STUFF AND LUCID

LORD Douglas pursues with fervour and with considerable logic the argument that the rating of land

values should supplement—or possibly supersede altogether—the existing system of rating in this country. This book is most thoroughly recommended to anyone whose acquaintance with the present rating system over a period of years has endeared him to the present system with all its faults. Lord Douglas describes the present rating system as “a complex structure which is incapable of rational defence” and many members and officers of Local Authorities would agree with him.

“He dismisses suggestions that the present system might be replaced or augmented by a form of local income tax by the statement that land-value rating is based upon a principle far more fundamental than ability to pay. It is based, he states, upon benefits received by the community from a value which is altogether created by the community, while ability to pay is, at best, only a rule of expediency to be applied in default of any more far-reaching principles. Certainly this is strong stuff but the argument is fairly and lucidly presented . . .

“Lord Douglas, whose qualifications to deal with this subject are considerable, is confident that the burden of a tax on land-values would fall wholly on the land-owner and that it could not be shifted by him to anybody else. He is convinced that the system would work and points out that in some countries it has worked for many years. He does not, however, explain how the system which he advocates might alter the rating burden as between one Authority and another. He has mentioned the suggestion that rates in the various London Boroughs might be equalised, but does not explain how his own solution to the problem of raising local revenues would deal with the problem of London, and the problems of the other large conurbations. In areas where the astronomical site-values are confined to the city centre, the city would presumably have the whole benefit of this site-value to finance its own schemes. This might accentuate the difference between richer and poorer Authorities and the result might be that a clamour would arise among the richer outlying suburbs of some of our County Boroughs that they might be included in

the County Borough so as to share the “loot” from the rich land owners whom Lord Douglas would milk to provide the income to finance all L.G. services.

“One conclusion of the author, with which very many people would agree, is his statement that every increase in subventions from the Central Government tends to increase central control and that those who value freedom and local initiative may well wonder whether the time has arrived to call a halt. However much we may wish to call a halt, one fears that the proposals set out in this book, which have a long history of commendation by economic experts, will continue not to find favour with successive governments. The book is one which should be studied not only by Her Majesty’s Government, but also by anybody inside or outside Local Government interested in the creation of new forms of local revenue.

Allan Royle, Town Clerk, Wigan.—*The Municipal Review*.

APATHETIC LANDLORDS

“This persuasively argued essay is aimed at convincing the reader that a form of local taxation or rating, to be preferable to the present system, would be one based on land values and not on the rateable value of the property built on that land.

“The most convincing argument for the non-specialist reader (and there are deployed here some skilful arguments of interest to economists and public administrators) is that unused land, even if it is a valuable site in the centre of a congested modern city, at present pays no rates. Furthermore, property that has been allowed to decay is assessed at a lower rateable value, whereas property that has been improved is penalised by having its assessment raised. One consequence of this system is that apathetic landlords are not stirred into action, as they would be if their land paid rates at the same level as neighbouring sites.” — *The Times Educational Supplement*.

REJECTION AND A WARNING

“There is a lot of good stuff in Henry George, but mixed with it there is some subtle poison, some space virus, which makes men’s minds swim at first and then dulls them into an apathetic and unreasoning acceptance, not of an idea, but of a notion . . .

“It is declared that under the system at present in operation in Great Britain, the persons who have to bear the burden of local taxation are the occupiers of immovable property, whereas under the rating of land-

values the persons who would bear the burden would be the owners of land. The second is a hypothetical remark because we do not yet have a system of rating of land values, but no confidence can be given to its correctness if it is supposed to follow from the first statement because that is manifestly false, or at the very least naive.

"When reference has been made in this column on many occasions in the past, to the way the burden of local taxation is shifted from the occupier of immovable property, it has largely been by reference to well-known phenomena — such as "equating" in the case of rented property, and, indeed, it might be said that under the present system the only occupier who bears the burden is one who is also an owner. Even that would not be altogether true, but it would be a good deal nearer the truth than the bald fallacy upon which so much of the argument in favour of land-value rating is built.

"Considerable space in this book is usefully devoted, I am glad to say, to the importance of making a land valuation for the whole country and even to the use of land value maps for this purpose. Unfortunately, there is a great danger of those matters being linked in people's minds and the invaluable baby of land valuation being thrown out with the bath water of single taxism — for really confirmed Henry Georgites, it should be remembered, expect that all revenue could be raised by a single tax on land . . .

"The reason why I have devoted so much space in this column to this matter is because I strongly suspect that some extensive, if not radical, change is about to be introduced into our rating or land taxation system, and investors in property ought to keep alive to it."

Bryan Anstey — *The Stock Exchange Gazette*.

DISMISSED

" . . . the book can be dismissed as superficial pleading for a particular cause and as unworthy of consideration by anyone who wishes to study the possibility of additional taxes on land, which the author suggests, or for those genuinely seeking information about possible improvements of, or alternatives to, the present system of rating." — *The Chartered Surveyor*.

ASK YOUR M.P.

" . . . in essence, the system taxes land rather than buildings and use made of the land. Vacant plots scheduled for building would be taxed right away, whether the land had buildings on it or not, whether buildings were let or empty.

"Such a scheme ought to get the backing of every builder in the land: no one could afford to hold on to likely sites waiting for the best possible offer.

"Lord Douglas is a solicitor and an administrator; he is unfortunately inclined to camouflage the timber with trees. Few voters will vote for a change unless they have

a simple black and white cause put before them; I wish I could see it here, but do buy this book and read it over the holiday.

"And it wouldn't be such a bad idea to ask your would-be M.P. at the next election what he knows about land-value rating." — *The Master Builder*.

PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

" . . . this book should prove helpful to local authority officers wishing to make an appraisal of land-value rating or who are faced with questions about it.

"The main argument is based on the work of Henry George, who in his classic work, *Progress and Poverty*, put the case for land-value taxation in such eloquent form that the idea was subsequently taken up in many parts of the world. The principle has in fact been put into practice in many towns of the Commonwealth.

"Many local authorities, notably Glasgow and the L.C.C., were at one time active in the promotion of this rating reform, and the idea is still current among quite a number of local authorities . . ." — *Surveyor*.

CONCISE AND UNPRETENTIOUS

" . . . one crucial element in the discussion of this subject is the relationship between taxation and ability to pay. The author contends that rates are in the main based on ability to pay, whereas land-value rating is based upon a principle far more fundamental than ability to pay, namely, benefit received from the community in the shape of a value created by the community. Ability to pay is said to be only a rule of expediency to be applied in default of any more far-reaching principle . . . This short and unpretentious volume will serve to bring the case for land-value rating concisely within the reach of all who may wish to consider it . . ." — *The Local Government Chronicle*.

From Our Book List

RECLAMATION OF AN INDUSTRIAL SUBURB

A detailed examination of how land-value rating would affect Fitzroy, a slum-blighted industrial city in central Melbourne. Produced by the Land-Values Research Group at the request of the Fitzroy City Council, this extensive study, lavishly illustrated and supported with compelling statistics, deserves the careful attention of members of local authorities, students and propagandists for local taxation reform. Large 4 to art paper. 38 pages. 96 photographs and map. 3s. 6d.