



Lars Rindsig's view from the right

If people won't give us their hearts and minds (quite literally) we'll jolly well have to take them ourselves. This seems to be the logic behind the human spare parts appropriation programmes that an increasing number of Western governments are initiating. The debate raged in the Danish press in the autumn and has since appeared in the UK and America: should the government be able to nationalise organs from corpses? In Spain and other countries they don't debate – they act. If you have a kidney, they'll come and get it. Just like that.

It's not that it doesn't make a twisted sort of sense – rather like how, when governments decide they need money for public services, they raise it simply by grabbing the funds. It's the same simple reasoning used by Faith, the mean-girl character in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, once she fully fathoms her super strength and what it puts her in a position to do: "want, take, have".

This brand of government-sponsored grave robbery, in other words, is indicative of the way the basic concept of property rights is being – whether by intent or by folly – misrepresented and perverted and misrepresented and perverted again because of its continued removal further and further from how things ought to be. This is true not only in economics where (crikey are they ever) concepts are royally screwed up, but also in the realm of people. Like when forced labour is the accepted norm as long as you're forced to work for the military. Or when the state gets to lock you up on bread and water for keeping what's rightfully (if not legally) yours, instead of donating it to the taxman? Or when it's alright for the state to chop up the recently deceased, contrary to their own wishes and those of their bereaved families. What's next? – An impost on keeping your child alive in a respirator because the longer she lives, the longer you are preventing the excavation of her organs as a 'societal resource'? Utter brutal madness.

Forty-eight years ago Marilyn Monroe sang "My heart belongs to daddy". Miss Monroe's intentions may not have been as literal as L&L's in its interpretation of her catchphrase. But the way things are going, we're approaching a situation where we might all burst into a song of our own: "My heart belongs to Big Brother." Boo-boop-be-doo, indeed.

The very real need for organ donation, of course, cannot and should not be denied. One might consider it an imperative to help out our fellow man when in dire need of something that we ourselves aren't quite capable (being dead and all) of utilising to its full potential. "I leave my body to science" used to be an eccentric thing to put in your will, but it rather does make sense.

For all I care you can do with my soulless body what you will when I'm done with it, be it human repairs or fish bait. However I've long signed up as an organ donor, because – it seems to me – there's no good reason why my or anyone else's remains should not go to further use.

But, please, have the decency to ask first.

infrastructure and services to dependent citizens. Creating the *national money supply* in the form of profit-making loans to bank customers, encourages its investment in rising land values, not productive employment. Those, like the present tax system, are poverty-creating institutions that need reform.

Third, global warming and green taxation are now central concerns, as we face the 21st century threat of combined worldwide systems collapse – ecological, economic and social. We need to explain why land and tax reform is relevant to them. The answer is that people should pay for the value they take from using or preventing others from using scarce common resources. Among these are land sites as well as the environment's capacity to absorb carbon emissions and provide many other kinds of support.

James Robertson

On liberty

John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand
by Richard Reeves

Atlantic Books, 2007, 616pp, h/c
ISBN: 978-1-84534-643-6, £30

Many readers will know one poem about Mill, which is quoted in this book.

John Stuart Mill, of his own free will / On half a pint of shandy was particularly ill.

A few may know another, which is not.

John Stuart Mill / By a mighty effort of will / Overcame his natural bonhomie / And wrote Principles of Political Economy.

(It is lucky that Mill's grandmother abandoned the original more Scottish surname Milne). Between them the poems summarise what is still, probably, the prevailing view of Mill: a humourless, frigid pedant of hooded eye, black coat, and winged collar, as in the portrait by GF Watts, which glares out from the cover of Richard Reeves' book.

Reeves tells a different story: one which is well known to scholars, and partly known to anyone who has read Mill's self-bowdlerised *Autobiography*, but still needs to be told in the lively way this book does. There are some factual errors, but generally the book is reliable.

The picture Reeves paints is dramatic and rather sad. JS Mill was a one-boy educational experiment. His father proved that he could pump all knowledge into his pre-teen son, who was apprenticed to his father's colleague Jeremy Bentham at 14. But at 20 he suffered what he called 'a mental crisis' on realising that Benthamite utilitarianism was emotionally shallow. He started to read conservative thinkers like Coleridge; he wrote poetry criticism; he was for a while a friend of the violent reactionary Thomas Carlyle. He fell in love just once, but passionately, with Mrs Harriet Taylor. In the ensuing triangular relationship,

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The Evolution of Resource Property Rights by Anthony Scott. h/c £65

Traces the development of property rights over different kinds of natural resource from classical times through to the 19th century, and makes a special plea for the multiple-purpose and multi-owner management of resource rights.

George: Political Ideologue, Social Philosopher and Economic Theorist by Laurence S Moss (ed). p/b £19.99

Can we imagine a reworking of the entire theory of capital based on the idea of georgist monopoly rents? Part of a series of 'Studies in Economic Reform and Social Justice' of the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* (see next issue for full review).

cities of Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, the City of London, cheap food, law and order, a navy that commanded the world's oceans, an empire on which the sun never set, victory in the Napoleonic wars and then in two world wars, water that was safe to drink, the world's first railways, half-way decent roads, old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, better and better housing and the National Health Service, among many other things..."

This traditional constitution may be amended, but substantially it should be maintained, as Peter Osborne says in his excellent book, *The Triumph of the Political*

Class: "This is why the presence of our great institutions – judiciary, Parliament, civil service, a free press and (in the private sphere) the family – have such profound importance. They offer protection against the populism that is such a potent feature of the democratic system. They stand for values – fairness, decency, protection of minorities, freedom under law – which inevitably come under strain in a democracy". The theme of his book is countering the onset of tyranny of the political class, given the strains which democracy brings with it.

Tradition thus has a leading role to play in civic affairs. We should all work to maintain it

in the face of increasing populism, the herald of tyranny, which Plato says is the probable outcome of democracy. Our precious heritage of freedom – our gift to the civilised world – depends on tradition, particularly in the form of the rule of law. Despite bad press, privilege, aristocracy and monarchy have enduring roles in the constitution of modern Britain. **L&L**

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Mr Taylor went to his club on nights when Mr Mill came round. Mill married Harriet in 1852; she died in Avignon in 1858. Mill dedicated the rest of his life to overpraising her memory, holding her jointly responsible for his great works *On Liberty* (1859) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869). He exaggerated as regards *Liberty*, but she had certainly helped to radicalise Mill, making him more socialist as well as more feminist.

Like any other radical political economist, Mill believed in land reform. He did not need any push from Harriet; he simply followed directly in the footsteps of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, for whom he had worked in his infant prodigy years. They all shared a very simple view: income from landownership was unearned; it rose and fell for reasons that were irrelevant to the landowner's efforts ("falls into their mouths as they sleep", said Mill). Therefore it was appropriate to tax it more heavily than other income. Mill rejected land nationalisation, but only on pragmatic grounds ("I think it will be a generation or two before the progress of public intelligence and morality will permit so great a concern to be entrusted to the public authorities"). How far have

public intelligence and morality progressed since 1871? Would you entrust land ownership to the public authorities? These remain open questions. In words that might delight Ken Livingstone and either delight or alarm Boris Johnson, Mill concluded: "If the Grosvenor, Portman and Portland estates belonged to the municipality of London, the gigantic income of those estates would probably suffice for the whole expense of the local government of the capital."

Iain McLean

Rebirth

New Life in Old Cities
by Mason Gaffney
Robert Schalkenbach Foundation,
revised edition 2007, 50pp, p/b
ISBN: 0-911312-92-7, \$7

This booklet gives an interesting insight into the growth or decay of American cities over the last hundred years. When, in the 1920s, New York City exempted residential buildings from the property tax while maintaining the tax on land values there was a surge in building and population, creating a city attractive to people and business.

Vancouver under a 'single tax' mayor went further than any US city in exempting buildings, and grew much faster: it quintupled in population after exempting half and then in 1910-1918 all buildings from the above-the-site property tax. It remains one of the most beautiful and livable cities in North America.

Historically, the depression of the 1930s; the fact that the single taxers died or retired, that there seemed to be few heirs to Henry George's ideas; and in many cities selfish vested interests put economic justice aside, had a negative impact on reform.

Perhaps the work going on today will reverse this and restore land value taxation to its rightful place in the canons of taxation.

Geoffrey Lee

'Orange' Peel

Robert Peel
by Douglas Hurd
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007,
440pp, h/c
ISBN: 978-0-297-84844-8, £25

Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister from 1834-5 and 1841-6, cleared hundreds of archaic criminal laws from the statute book. He created

the modern police force whose constables 180 years later are still known as Bobbies. As a freetrader he repealed the Corn Laws, splitting the Conservative Party.

Curiously, although he was never Chancellor, Peel did largely draft two major Budgets. Inheriting a large deficit from the Whigs, he consulted Gladstone who suggested reviving the house tax. But Peel realised he would never get this through. Deviously circulating Gladstone's paper to other ministers – so that what he did propose, the reintroduction of income tax, would seem attractive by comparison – Peel got his way in the 1842 Budget, with the real Chancellor sitting meekly beside him.

If the climate had been right this would have been the ideal moment to introduce land value taxation, but as an immensely rich landowner, lvt was not something he ever contemplated.

Gladstone, however, Peel's disciple, retained an interest in the land question and read Henry George's *Progress & Poverty*, and eventually introduced a form of lvt into the Liberal Party's programme, where under the LibDems it continues to this day.

Geoffrey Lee