

letter from the editor

That a wealthy nation cannot adequately house its citizens indicates a profound malfunctioning in the economy. For homes are the foundation of society, and the present housing crisis indicates problems that lie deeper than the economy. They lie in the modern conception of society itself. Competitive individualism has gradually eroded the sense of community, and the loss of community has gradually eroded the household as a place to raise a family. This in turn is destroying the institution of marriage. Children are being raised by single parents who lack adequate means of providing for them. It is widely recognised that these children do poorly in education and are unable to integrate with their peers. Being vulnerable, they easily become the victims of drug trafficking and are exploited by drug lords. All this follows from the present housing crisis in the UK. It is leading to a decline in birth-rates and the prospect of a declining population able to support state pensions or the health needs of the elderly.

Government interventions, no matter how well meaning, prove ineffective. Children from disrupted homes cannot thrive in education no matter how much help they are given. Poorer families do not prosper with free school meals, even though they may provide necessary nutrition. Provision for nursery care, in order to allow parents to work, does not provide the security and social grounding real home parenting provides.

The housing crisis is destroying society from the bottom up. It is the most obvious indication of social decline. It is destroying the family, the basis of community where responsibility is first nurtured through sharing. The housing crisis is also destroying country towns and villages through the purchase of second homes. Second homes raise the value of property for outsiders and investors and drives local inhabitants out, leaving schools and other local amenities without support. From April 2025 local authorities are able to charge double Council Tax on second homes. An 'empty homes premium' has also been introduced where double Council Tax is charged if a home has been empty for a year, or four times the annual charge if the home has been empty for 10 years. Some local authorities are using the extra income to build affordable homes for local inhabitants. The acquisition of second homes is a direct means of the more wealthy creating poverty where it did not exist before. It is also an indication that the more wealthy have no care for the wider community.

The breakdown of families, the shortage of homes and the rise in second homes are all direct consequences of the commodification of land, labour and money. The commodification of land, labour and money have become the impersonal replacement of actual

communities, where citizens only have contractual relationships. The economy becomes parasitic upon society, draining it rather than contributing to it. The modern financial system is sustained by the ever-rising value of land and assets, while contributing nothing to the actual production of wealth. Society ends up serving the financial system rather than the system serving society.

Yet there seems to be an incapacity to see how a wealthy country can be following a path that leads to increasing poverty. Talk of raising or lowering taxes, or of immigration, or the emergence of AI, all miss the point since the situation would be the same without these factors. At root an acceptance of homelessness has grown, similar to the same acceptance in the nineteenth century when the poor were blamed for their own plight. It was then argued that society was not responsible for the welfare of its citizens, and that government intervention into disease and poverty was none of its business. Yet incremental improvements have happened through government intervention. To lift the poor out of poverty and to improve the health of the nation benefits everyone. There is a simple principle known down the ages: take care of the whole and the parts will care for themselves. This principle applies equality in medicine, in agriculture, in the family, the town and the nation. It is the key to economic justice, as opposed to blind market forces. There is no doubt in any economic modelling that a land value tax would remove the commodification of homes and return them to the basic elements of human life and the family and allow all citizens to have a home. A wealthy society that accepts poverty and homelessness in its midst is a society that lacks the wits to perceive and reflect upon itself. It is also a society easily open to misleading ideologies and cruel policies. Nothing is more fundamental than how a society lives in relation to the land, the direct gift of nature provided by nature for all. Once we distort or abuse our relation with the land we distort society itself and invite a host of social ills.

A land value tax is not a silver bullet that can solve all societal problems, but it can lay a foundation upon which economic equality and social integration can be built, and which cannot be eroded by land monopoly. Coupled with concern for the environment and the growing interest in self-determination in local communities, a land value tax would contribute to a transformation in the way economics is commonly understood.



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