

No one else can be bothered to calculate total natural surplus exactly. Can we?

CHAPTER 30

DO WHAT OTHERS WON'T? NAIL DOWN RENT?

*Alfred E. Neuman: What, me worry?
So, if they won't worry, should we?*

NOW WHAT? QUIT, OR KEEP AT IT?

Hear them? Noisy posterity becomes an irritating taskmaster, insisting present peoples correct their economies. A lot is at stake for future generations, as each current generation fouls its nest and battles with each other.

Most of what afflicts us is not only misguided economics. Nor is it just politicians passing into law shortsighted policies. It's also our narrow-minded customs regarding "something for nothing," etc. (Ch 2).

Solving all that depends on addressing one obscure issue – determining how much we spend on the land and resources we use. That lone datum, if widely known, works wonders.

- Investors and savers can find better forecasts (Ch 28).
- More people can see how bountiful economies are (Ch 24) and lose their poverty consciousness.
- Prosperity helps de-motivate our senseless mistreatment of one another. The future could breathe a sigh of relief.

CAN'T COUNT ON THE COUNTERS

Those who *can* calculate the total won't; no expert or official source has supplied a realistic estimate for the worth of Earth in America. No mainstream economist uses the statistic in their theories nor as an economic indicator. Despite reliable prediction being the essence of science, they ignore geonomists who do forecast accurately (Ch 20).

Nobody should ever have to apologize for their curiosity, yet some in the discipline question our quest. They bring up objectivity and impartiality, like people in glass houses hurling stones. Their stifling behavior is maddening; it's what Melville's *Billy Budd* felt, being mute, unable to

be heard. Eventually it drove him insane. Fortunately, the road to that sad outcome is blocked to us by you, our dear reader.

If someone did the hard work, perhaps a solid stat for all of society's spending for nature and privilege could motivate a critical mass of researchers to upgrade, to geonomics. Such things happen in the realm of science; eventually, Leviathan can be turned. The old beliefs that generate psychological dissonance no longer comfort the mind. Overcome resistance to the new paradigm and the once-ridiculous becomes mainstream. Most new ideas begin as heresy.

CAN'T COUNT ON THE REFORMERS

There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.

– H.D. Thoreau

While our problems are dire, our activists flail about blindly. If ever they are to solve chronic and pressing problems, agents of change have to see the big picture. Part of that picture is rent, the surplus that an economy naturally and unavoidably cranks out. Who that stream rewards, and what they do to capture it, shapes the world.

Environmentalists, for example, want our species to befriend Mother Earth. Yet it's not rational of them to let land be such a fat profit-maker and expect a law that "just-says-no" to development to succeed. Ordinary citizens are moved by the bottom line, so the planet needs profit on its side. Then, even if for no other reason but to save money, most would spare ecosystems.

A figure for how much we spend on the nature we use helps other problem solvers better see how economies work and, when they don't, what to do about it. They might advance policies that redirect rent, so it'd no longer reward waste but only efficiency. Again, the public would save and befriend reform.

CAN COUNT ON A GADFLY

The public has a right to know the amount and could put the knowledge to good use. President Theodore Roosevelt not only endorsed the public recovery of land values (a little historical footnote), the "Roughrider" also inspired his readers: "It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed." And when the going gets tough, the tenacious gadflies get going.

Recall Bertrand Russell's conjugation: "*I am stalwart. You are stubborn. He, she, or it is pigheaded.*" You can see where they slide me in, and where I place myself. Philosopher Lord Russell, the person who scored the highest ever on math in the entrance exam to Cambridge without ever previously going to school, eclipsed Teddy by proposing that government pay the citizenry dividends from the recovered rents of sites and resources (another historical factoid).

Once you know that rent rules, how can anyone let go of this quest? The few who grasp that our spending for land and resources creates problems now, perhaps solutions later, are the ones who must press forward and drill all the way down to the most serviceable number for the size of all rents. We'll see this through to the end. Go over the heads of the data-keepers. Issue a rallying cry. Intertwine counters and demanders. Determination feels so much better than despair.

AN ENDGAME STRATEGY

If on my watch things worsen drastically for humanity, it won't be because I failed my responsibility to make rent knowable. Once we make an intriguing figure available, we'll have laid the groundwork for specialists to refine it. We'd have an authoritative statistic for all spending for all kinds of land and privilege.

Some open-minded agents of change are curious to know how much society spends on the land and resources it uses. And some cutting-edge researchers are willing and able to calculate rent's role and size. Even if no deep-pocket person or foundation steps up, in this e-era of sites like Kickstarter, money may no longer be an obstacle.

No worries. We'll *unearth* the worth of Earth in America. Plus Privilege, too.