

LAND&LIBERTY

No 1231 Vol 121 Winter 2012/13

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ISSN 0023-7574



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letter from the publisher

Welcome to the second issue of Land&Liberty to be edited and produced by our guest editor from Denmark Jesper Raundall Cristensen. Jesper produced the last edition while spending some weeks in London, it was well received and he was so keen to produce another that we gave him free rein to produce a second following his return to Denmark - we hope you like it! As a publication normally aimed primarily at a UK readership this edition of Land&Liberty has a distinctly transatlantic focus as the three main articles represent the work of three American contributors. Jacob Swartz Lucas's animated video entitled "How to End Poverty" is the subject of the first by Jesper himself whilst Dan Sullivan and Alanna Hartzok speak for themselves.

Jacob retells Henry George's Savannah Story. Dan tells how, greed and selfishness in high places during the revolutionary beginnings of the United States of America gave rise to the economic injustices that lie at the root of the social and economic problems they, and the world, face today. Alanna's story encourages us to hope for better things to come with news of a more enlightened appreciation of political economy, by some at least, in academia and the World Bank and at the United Nations. In my mind I link these with a recent seminar that we hosted at Mandeville Place where our main speaker was another American, James Quilligan, who has gathered something of a following for his work focussing on the place of 'The Commons' in society.

At the seminar I took the term 'The Commons' to refer to things which need to be freely available to people if they are to fully participate in their community. The qualification 'freely available' is important to distinguish it from things that are naturally 'private property'. Such things are never 'freely available' to a person except it be by gift or theft. The simplest legitimate means by which a person comes by something that is theirs alone, or private property, is by producing it themselves, using resources that are equally available to others. More frequently it is by producing and exchanging something they have produced or providing a service in exchange for someone else's property. Either way it requires them to work. Dan suggests that 'the economic essence of slavery is that some are forced to work for the benefit of others'. He goes on to show how private monopoly in land and the supply of money obliges the mass of people to work for the benefit of others.

Similar observation and reasoning led Henry George to conclude that the issue of national currency money (legal tender) and the control of its supply is the exclusive business of Government whilst the legitimate business of commercial banking is limited to the safe-keeping and loaning of such money, and the making and exchange of credits on their own account (i.e. not backed by Government). At a deeper level though he reminds us that 'That which is unjust can really profit no one' whilst 'that which is just can really harm no one'.

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