

IN THE United States a large number of people do not enjoy rights of citizenship, because the laws infringe true political liberty and eliminates the potential for widespread economic well being.

Constitutional and legislative law suppresses the most fundamental birthright we have as human beings, that of equal access to nature.<sup>[1]</sup>

*This has been accomplished by force and fraud, in total disregard for moral constraints.*

Claims to exclusive ownership of nature cannot be justified when we as individuals are beneficiaries of a bounty we had no part in producing. Even the value-free analyses of the economist recognizes that nature has a zero production cost, its economic price having nothing to do with the expenditure of human labour. And yet, the law sustains claims to nature, in effect allowing title holders to extract wealth from others in return for access.<sup>[2]</sup>

Political power thus possessed translates into economic power, and through some convoluted logic, titles to nature are grouped with the fruits of productive labour as "private property". The end result is a society in which citizenship based on equality of opportunity is impossible and the creation of a large, impoverished class of people is inevitable.

France in the 18th century, Ireland in the 19th and

# Stolen hearts need repair

Russia in the 20th provide the historical experiences of upheaval against landed aristocracies. Marx himself finally recognized that landed monopoly power was at the root of monopoly capital; and, as one should expect, it was the landless peasantry of Russia - and not the worker proletariat - who brought Marxist-Leninism to that society.

Only when denied access to nature did the landless resort to labouring, if they could, for money wages - a narrowing of options that increased their vulnerability to the peaks and troughs of the new plague, "business cycles," as well as the oppression of "robber baron" greed.

FRAMING this issue in terms modern Americans can appreciate has been made very difficult because the concentrated control of nature has been fused with a similar degree of control over industry and finance. Despite this fact, the majority of Americans continue to believe there is plenty of opportunity for almost anyone to rise to the top. Those who have benefited do not understand what is, at bottom, the cause of their advantage.

The wealthy, even those who have struggled from poverty to get there, quickly forget their past and join those who herald the status quo. In fighting off attempts at reform, they have used wealth to gain political power and, when their interests are threatened, rally the population to support anti-democratic and anti-republican policies in both the domestic and international arenas.

Alongside "nationalism" we have as a consequence

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## REFERENCE POINTS

1. *J. A. May 1983 report by TOWN & COUNTRY (p.176) indicates: "About 3 percent of the population, or 7 to 8 million people, own 55 percent of the total land, and a full 95 percent of the 1.3 billion acres of privately owned land in this country. Our reaction to similar statistics in "third world" societies is to call for land reform, while most of us are unable to see any connection between the concentrated control over nature and the large numbers of unemployed in the industrially-advanced countries.*

2. *The cost of acquisition of territory has come with a tremendous cost in human lives and the destruction of produced property. History is a story of land grabbing through three primary means - force, fraud and theft. By*

*what right did the monarchies of Spain, France or England issue grants of land occupied for thousands of years by another race of people? The aboriginal tribes, for their part, had no concept of selling titles in the earth; theirs was a collective (if exclusive) form of control at least with equal access provided to all tribal members.*

3. *The right of all people to share in the bounty of the earth is the basis for the so-called "Law of the Sea" developed to harvest the sea bottoms. The United States has thus far refused to sign the treaty because private interests are opposed to paying leasing fees to the United Nations (which would then be distributed internationally on the basis of population, according to one version of the treaty).*

notes as "money-good". But senior Congressional politicians have strong reservations. One of them described support for the notes as issuing "the Federal Government's gold credit card".

Observers are beginning to

**FACT: S&Ls, now down to 2,770, are the principal lenders in a home mortgage industry worth \$1.3 trillion (million million).**

note that, in the face of a major economic crisis, the crooked deals in real estate could limit the scope for remedial action. For the constraints on action now not only include the Third World debt's impact on US banks, and the budget deficit on the Federal government, but also the huge amount of lenders' money tied up in the 511 insolvent S&Ls which are still trading and notching up new losses at

the rate of \$1 billion a month.

Congress is reluctant to launch an industry-wide lifeboat operation, now, because of the costs involved. George Gould, the Treasury's Under-Secretary for Finance, says the Reagan Administration is "not in the mood for a budget-busting bail-out."

But the next president, Bush or Dukakis, will not be able to sidestep the financial timebomb.

experienced "nativism," racism," "knee-jerk anti-communism," and, currently, "protectionism." For both the privileged and the politically powerful, the idea that the earth is the birthright of all mankind is an extremely dangerous one. If accepted, one must also conclude that the sovereign state itself has no moral basis for legitimacy.

In terms related to immigration policy, for example, justice requires that the very concept of immigration be discarded. All territorial movements by people must be recognized as mere migrations. Thus, any restrictions imposed (other than for health or safety reasons) infringe upon the fundamental right of access to nature.

Political citizenship under such circumstances is an empty promise. And compared to the injustice of denying each his birthright, all other obstacles to citizenship pale into insignificance.

Our economies have evolved through the use of force to institutionalize monopolistic and morally-bankrupt claims to the earth's natural bounty. A good deal of political theory in support of this arrangement has been little more than a rationalization of privilege.

*Justice requires that an equitable system be implemented to share out the value of nature.*

Sovereign states must end privilege and protect the right of all people to freely interact. This would be achieved by using the competitive bidding processes of the market to determine which individuals are granted access. Governments would act as agents to collect the revenue for deposit into a global fund, earmarked for periodic, equal distribution to all.<sup>[3]</sup>

The present system penalises people for being born to the wrong parents in the wrong places. This raises the parallel issue of our responsibilities toward one another in society, and in the larger community of mankind.

Here again, justice must be the objective. My actions must not infringe upon the liberty of others. Taking legitimately acquired property from others obviously exceeds the moral bounds of my liberty. And yet this moral prohibition is inconsistently reinforced by our laws.

Liberalism has, in fact, taken us beyond the primary role of government to prevent criminal infringements on liberty; the Liberal agenda has included a wide range of policy initiatives that specifically create privilege by licensing what can be done and by whom.

It should be self-evident that such licenses are inherently monopolistic; and, as day follows night, command prices in the market place because of their monopolistic character. In the same fashion, titles to nature are inherently monopolistic and titleholders benefit in the same way. No individual can create these economic values; aggregate needs generate an economic price in licenses just as they do for nature.

We see this most clearly when artificial limits are placed on the number of licenses issued (as for taxi medallions or liquor stores), so that those who have political influence or, more rarely, get there first, secure a tremendous advantage in the marketplace - an advan-

tage the quality of their labour did nothing to create. If justice is to be served, then, my responsibility to others in society must be not to infringe upon their liberty and to compensate them for any privileges or licenses by which I benefit.

Extending these principles of citizenship to the family requires a gentle hand on the part of government, for the family is a less resilient microcosm of larger social, political and economic units. The state must take a very cautious approach in its intrusion on family life or risk further damaging a survival-directed equilibrium that injustice has already nearly destroyed.

The appropriate level of government responsibility is most difficult to establish where the interests of children (and other "incompetents") are involved. I would suggest that those unable to provide for themselves through no fault of their own must receive greater protection under law than is necessary for normal, healthy adults.

Acknowledging the need for a "normal" degree of disciplining of children by parents, for example, adults (and to a somewhat lesser extent, incompetents) must be held accountable for physical and mental abuse of others. In saying this, I also suggest that our experience demonstrates that centrally-planned and administered programs infringe on liberty.

A reasoned response is to establish a needs-based voucher system (funded by revenues from the above-mentioned "global fund" but carried out to the greatest extent possible by private agencies). In my view, this would be the most efficient and most equitable method of providing societal support to people in need.

WE ARE also struggling to deal with the problem of children having children. There has been almost no attempt made to reconcile teenage pregnancies with the moral, legal and financial responsibilities logically attached to fathering a child.

We are in the midst of a human tragedy, not only for the individuals directly involved but because our humanness is at risk. It has been our concern with the future, our attention to planning and contemplation of that which is beyond our grasp that contributed most to human progress.

Not only are fewer cultural and intellectual skills being passed to the newest generation, the sense of responsibility people have had toward one another through family association and the community is disappearing. The social costs associated with these and other financially-dictated changes in family life have not been fully assessed.

I see a strong connection between the rising incidences of crime, drug abuse, alcoholism, and violence and the concurrent breakdown of family and community.

In terms of what can be done, we must concentrate on the structural injustice I have identified. The societally-produced value of nature must be collected and distributed in equal shares to each citizen (directly to competents, and in trust for incompetents).

*This would provide considerable additional family income to help parents devote more time to the nurturing of family and participation in community, while eliminating the advantages long enjoyed by the privileged who have - by their control over nature - stolen the heart and soul of citizenship from most people.*