

Curing World Poverty

SIR,

Having read Mary Rawson's review (L&L, No.1170/1), I entertain serious doubts as to how carefully she read the book.

Apparently the effort of checking basic facts overwhelmed her - e.g., the correct title of the work is *Curing World Poverty: The New Role of Property*. The editor, the Rev. John Miller, is a Holy Cross Father ("C.S.C."), not a Jesuit, and is clearly identified as such on the cover. While these and other mistakes may seem trivial, such sloppiness highlights the fact that much of what Ms. Rawson said about the contents of *Curing World Poverty* was also in error.

In her superficial and misleading analysis of the binary economics of Louis Kelso, Ms. Rawson makes no mention of the central article on binary economics by Prof. Robert Ashford. She then devotes about a fourth of her review to other books. Based on her review, a reader, whether "economically literate" or not, would have no idea if *Curing World Poverty* was worthwhile.

One of the major flaws in Ms. Rawson's analysis, which also demonstrates her lack of understanding of the institution of property, is her ambiguous use of the word "access." In *Curing World Poverty*, the term is used to describe how property and ownership are acquired. Ms. Rawson, however, seems to confuse "access" with the actual use of productive assets - and separates "use of productive assets" from the property rights in productive assets. (These rights include "use" and are traditionally referred to as "ownership.") For example, in her critique of an article by Norman Kurland, Ms. Rawson makes "access" and "ownership" mutually exclusive, rather than interrelated, concepts:

"Curiously, Kurland attributes the productivity to 'ownership', not to access. But it should be remembered that the Homestead Acts gave access to land, and on condition the land be used. Only after a period did users get 'ownership'."

Ms. Rawson repeatedly confuses the right to property and the rights of property. This distinction is critical to understanding *Curing World Poverty*. Unlike Ms. Rawson, Henry George, the 19th

century American social reformer, understood property and based his social and economic insights on this understanding. Much of what he wrote about the concentration of ownership of productive assets is consistent with the analysis in *Curing World Poverty*. Ms. Rawson, on the other hand, clearly does not understand property, access or ownership. This is reflected in her analysis, to the detriment of anyone who actually attempts to gain an understanding of *Curing World Poverty*.

Based soundly on universal principles of economic justice, *Curing World Poverty* offers a practical program for addressing the root causes of poverty by removing structural barriers to widespread ownership of productive assets. It aims at a systematic - though not immediate - elimination of widespread poverty. In the interim, as noted in the article "Charity or Justice: Where is the Hope of the Poor?" charity and other expedients will still be needed to address the immediate subsistence needs of groups and individuals who lack a sufficient ownership stake to generate a living income.

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Associate Editor,
Curing World Poverty,
Center for Economic and Social Justice,
Washington, D.C.

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