

RESOURCE RENT By SHIRLEY-ANNE HARDY (Perthshire, Scotland)

Upon reading in the Spring GJ the contribution from Mark Sullivan - with which I was wholly in accord - it finally crystallized in my mind what has been the real error (as error I believe it has been) of focusing our efforts upon the term "land value taxation."

That is: not so much its effect on others as its effect upon ourselves! The term "land value taxation" is incapable of expressing the concepts of liberty and justice, and the effect of it is to screw us into the fiscal position before we even open our mouths!

This has surely been a great stumbling-block to us, for I share Henry George's conviction (expressed in The Condition of Labour) that the ethical side of this reform is more important than the fiscal, and that to carry it will require indeed "nothing less than the religious conscience" - which latter term may perhaps be interpreted as the level of consciousness where concepts such as liberty and justice and (most especially today) concern for the Earth-our-Mother are at work in us. In short, "land value taxation" fails to present our reform in its truly radical light.

In attempting to express the fiscal aspects of the reform at this deeper level, a new term has come to my notice: Resource Rent. It seems particularly fitted to the awakening environmental conscience - which undoubtedly represents the most radical thinking today, for it carries with it the built-in reminder that "the land really does not belong to us, it is we who belong to the land." (So the student in the Spring GJ summed up his gratitude to Henry George's teaching.)

The term is used by Michael Horsman of Templeraíney House, Arklow, Co. Wicklow, Ireland. He is in process of producing a paper whose full title is "Raising Revenue Without Taxation: the Natural Resource Rent", and it seems to me something of a breakthrough in expressing the market and fiscal concepts of this reform in terms of the environment. "Natural Resource" perhaps appears to exclude too decisively - as a friend has pointed out - the values bestowed by improvements, although "land rent", "ground rent", "land value taxation" etc., scarcely suggest these either; in which case the simple term Resource Rent may be better, which could infer the value from humanly-created resources as well as natural ones. I certainly look forward to the publication of Michael's paper based on this concept.