

Time to Save the World

2010: the world was at the crossroad. The political classes were alerted. They failed to define a secure future for all nations. I now predict two outcomes.

(1) A world war was *necessary* to end the Depression of the 1930s. Similar conditions exist today: they will trigger the third world war.

(2) Civilisation built on the European model has run its full course. Current policies will drive that civilisation into terminal decline.

These outcomes are not inevitable. But *negotiating* change to the evil dynamic that causes wars and ends civilisations has failed. It is time to take control of the agenda.

A New Year Mission Statement by Fred Harrison¹

Evil is as... From the outset, the civilisation that originated in Europe half a millennium ago was never sustainable. In essence, the privatisation of resource rents spawned a social virus with the power to wreck both human society *and* those eco-systems on which we depend. In my estimation, our civilisation – now a global reality - cannot survive for more than a few decades.

Some of us have tried to change the world, to prevent the current crises. We did not fail because the world is still afflicted by a pernicious financial process that maldistributes people's incomes. We failed because we did not develop a strategy which – in principle – *might* have worked. If we now apply the lessons of that lifetime experience, however, it will not have been wasted effort. We *can* change the world. To do so, however, we need to understand the nature of the evil that obstructs reform.

Change will not happen if we continue to talk in terms of taxing people. The language of taxation reinforces the psychology of those property rights that are the basis of *all* the crippling stresses that afflict humanity, and the planet.

¹ Fred Harrison's latest book is *The Predator Culture* (2010), London: Shephard-Walwyn.

Implicitly, because we accepted the language of history's victors, we accepted the legitimacy of privatised rent. That made us complicit in the manipulation which locks people into the Predator Culture.

We need to clean up our language, if we are to clean up our own minds. That is the first step towards helping others to understand the convoluted nature of the "public's" finances. Otherwise, it will not be possible to unravel the consequences which flow from the privatisation of earth's resource rents, and the privatisation of the value which people create through their joint efforts in their communities. If we are to re-socialise rents, and re-privatise people's wages and profits, we need to go back to the beginning and start again. Is that possible?

Dreaming in the Doldrums

For 80 years, the rent reform flag has been flown by a global Georgist movement. That movement has been like a rudderless sailing boat trapped in the doldrums: becalmed, at the mercy of nature, the sailors without control over their destiny.

- Dreaming is what Georgist activism has been all about. Dreaming that, by acting ethically and applying reason, and by explaining the principles of economic justice, people will listen, learn, and act in their best interests.
- The reality is cruel: dreaming *cannot, and will not*, result in a change in the way governments fund public services. As of today, January 1, 2011, Georgism remains locked in dreamtime.

Humanity survived the atrocities of the 20th century because nature enabled us to overcome the genocidal behaviour of predatory states. The fecundity of our species provided a biological safety-net. But biology will not save our civilisation from the emerging cataclysms. The prognosis is one of total collapse; the human species being decimated by the onset of multiple catastrophes as the pathological trends converge and collide over the next two decades (that is why the CIA calls them "mega-trends").

Success is as Success does...

To understand the world as it is, we need to appreciate that the emerging cataclysms are *not* indicators of *failure*. The European paradigm is *not* malfunctioning. The destruction that stems from disrespect for other people's rights to land, the disrespect which leads to territorial wars and the extinction of other species...these are *indicators of success*. The success of the Predator Culture at work...

There is logic to the rent-privatising process. That cruel intelligence steamrollers everything before it. So powerful is the private appropriation of rent as a *social process*, so insatiable is its appetite, that the world is now at the mercy of a relentless determination to extend control over the life-forces of the whole planet.

Yes, the temptation to privatise the economic surplus has been with humans ever since our innate genius led to the discovery of how to produce an economic surplus. *The story of the rise and fall of civilisations is the story of rent*. Our modern civilisation was foredoomed when our forefathers accepted the switch of rent from its social functions to serving private interests.

Who – or what – Commands? *Negotiating* change to the rules is impossible. We cannot offer any inducement to the *social process* that was so attractive, as to enable it to permit change. Why? Because our agenda – restructure government revenue – is a declaration of war. The Predator Culture is acutely sensitive to that intent, which is – correctly – perceived as a threat to its existence.

When we explain to “policy-makers” the wisdom of land value taxation, we are proposing that the Predator Culture should commit suicide. That invitation is understood, and artfully declined. The evil web woven by rent privatisation is like the internet: there is no one Command & Control Centre. So even if it wanted to do so, the system cannot (i) voluntarily destroy itself, or (ii) be destroyed by under-resourced individuals like Georgists. In short, we set ourselves an impossible mission.

Mission Impossible? Where did we go wrong? We accepted the European model’s doctrine at its face value: grounded in reason, decisions made on the basis of evidence produced by science; aspiring to democracy and the champion of human rights. *This is a false self-representation which served the rent appropriators very well.*

Our acceptance of this ideology in good faith (through *socialisation*) meant that we could not facilitate change. We approached our mission as misinformed individuals, allowing decent instincts to mislead us into thinking that reason will prevail. It won’t. But: is ours *really* a mission impossible?

The Collective Consciousness We cannot *negotiate* change through cold reason and warm hearts. So what is left? We have to kill the Predator Culture.

Violence is not acceptable. How, then, do we *forcibly expunge* a process that monopolises the weapons of mass destruction? The most lethal of those weapons is *not* the fire-power of the military. Maturing its tools over the course of five centuries, the Predator Culture devised techniques to control our minds, mould our language and shape social institutions to serve its primary purpose. The mechanism: capture our collective consciousness, so that we would be co-opted into accepting our lot.

This explains why educated, moral people cannot comprehend the need to restructure the tax regime. Those people were turned into instruments for perpetuating a system that offends their *intentions*. Social scientists, politicians, lawyers, *even reformers in civil organisations that campaign for change*, are locked into perverse ways of thinking and behaving, to preserve the Predator Culture.

The barriers to fiscal reform are not of the legal or political kinds. Nor are they financial or practical. They are *psychological*. Psychology is the only way to account for the impregnability of the barriers which deny people the capacity to appreciate the wisdom of the Georgist philosophy. To survive among decent human beings, *the rent-seeking process had to capture the collective consciousness of the host population*. This was the deed of ultimate evil. The Predators *had to control the mind-set of their*

victims. This was the cost-effective way to continue with the process of appropriating the community's economic surplus.

That project, to control the collective consciousness of Europe's populations, was superbly successful. And so, it became possible to seed the rest of the world with the virus of rent privatisation...

Avoiding the Mental Dragnet By quirks of fate, some people escaped the mental dragnet that regulates society. That had a twofold outcome.

- As we worked our way through *Progress and Poverty*, we became detached from others. Our comprehension meant that we could never enjoy the comfort of the crowd. We were alienated individuals.
- The legacy: an onerous responsibility. We knew that something had to be done, that no-one else was going to do it, so – if we *were* moral beings – we had to act.

We cannot walk away from the crisis that threatens our civilisation. But since Mission Impossible cannot be accomplished with Hollywood's techniques of virtual reality, we need new tools.

Aversion Therapy How do we destroy the pathological streak in our communities? *We must bombard the cancer cells in the body politic with antidotes that are powerful enough to rehabilitate our collective consciousness.*

Bombard with what? Evidence of the virtues of land value taxation? That has not worked. Two months ago, for a workshop in Dublin, I reviewed the conditions under which land taxation was introduced in modern times. Apart from Denmark, every case was induced by conditions of duress. Appeals to justice? Pointless. What's left?

Shock therapy.

Collectively, the populations which fell under the spell of the Predator Culture are traumatised. Think of the deer rooted to the highway, staring at the headlights of a 10-tonne truck, waiting to be mowed down. That's us: lambs to the slaughter.

That mind-set has to be disturbed. How? ***A shock of overwhelming impact needs to be administered.*** To recover its humanity, the whole population needs to shake itself out of subservience to the monster in our midst.

When previous civilisations collapsed, populations had to endure Dark Ages before they were able to shake themselves into a state of recovery. *We can short-circuit this process*, vaulting over the coming collapse and the Dark Age, traversing our way to a new path of cultural renewal. How? People need to grasp, and then confront, the evil of rent privatisation. But how do we encourage them to do this, in sufficient numbers, so that – in a democratic way – they can choose to effect change?

- People need to be offered new perspectives on the history that fashioned the property rights in land which they now tenaciously defend: a historical process which has brought humanity to the precipice.

Psychologists call this strategy aversion therapy.

The Gauntlet Someone, somewhere has to make a start. I cannot presume to criticise others, without offering the alternative.

- Rewriting history to deepen understanding of the full consequences of the land grabs of old is a mammoth task. And trustworthy guides are needed, to nurture people through experiences of profound anguish.

I intend to prosecute this process. I need compatriots. That is the gauntlet I am throwing down for the global Georgist movement. This is the strategy:

First, rewrite history. An awesome task, but unavoidable. Without an alternative world-view, there can be no new social paradigm.

Second, by-pass the gatekeepers of our minds. Develop the means of mass communication: professionalize our use of the internet, and of the use of film.

Third, fine-tune the instruments of shock therapy. Develop narratives that can be turned into the screen scripts that enable people *en masse* to achieve two things:

- Understand *why* our social universe is running out of control.
- Explain *why* our leaders do not know what they are doing.

We can offer the alternative leadership. A leadership grounded in reason and the principles of justice, but applied in ways that awaken people's need to take democratic action to save our social universe.

Subversion of the System Our proposal – to fund public services out of the nation's rents – is subversive. The guardians of the Predator Culture understand the nature of that threat. The ramifications of our tax shift proposals are uncompromisingly total. No part of society would be left untouched. The synergy of fiscal liberation would empower people to transform themselves, their communities and their societies at large. That is why tax reform faced total opposition. And that is why we have to by-pass the agents of the Predator Culture, to empower people so that, in overwhelming numbers, they can take control of their destinies.

We owe it to ourselves to get involved in ways that are meaningful. For four generations, we have been complicit in the games that suited the Predator Culture.

- We accepted the language of *taxation*. Consequently, we talked in terms of tax rates that were necessarily less than 100% of the stream of rental income.

- We accepted a gradualist strategy. But time is always on the side of the Predators.

The therapeutic adjustment to reality must begin with Georgist activists. If *we* can't make the mental leap, we can't expect others to do so. I am taking my first step in a book on the environmental crisis, which will be published this spring.

**A Race
Against Events**

I am willing to put a date on the point at which our civilisation will tip into *irreversible* decline. To ensure that I am acting responsibly I must reflect further before “going public” with the date. Meanwhile, there is an enormous amount of work to execute, and resources to accumulate, if we hope to avoid that event.

I can be more specific on what I fear will be the outbreak of the first global war. 2011 is to the current depression what 1931 was to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Fascism was rising throughout Europe, but the politicians failed to convince their peoples that they had a coherent plan for the recovery of the continent. Two years later, Hitler was invited to take control in Germany. The conditions prevailing then apply today. There was a systemic imperative for an all-out war – the cathartic relief for a continent that could not apply orderly means to bring the economy under control.

Nonetheless, I remain optimistic, despite my diagnosis. There are two reasons. First, we have the remedy: financial reform really is the “silver bullet”. And, secondly, on a worldwide basis, we have talented people working unremittingly for a better future.

We owe it to ourselves – and to previous generations of activists, who devoted their lives selflessly to improve the lot of humankind – to adjust our strategies. For by their sacrifices we have accumulated the evidence to show that the time-honoured approaches *could not work, because they did not work*.

We cannot guarantee success. But we *must* deliver approaches which, *in principle*, at least, *might* work.

I am developing strategies and I have scoped out a programme of work that fills my remaining years. I will seek the collaboration of whoever wishes to support that work. Our objective is nothing less than the saving of our civilisation.

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