

The pioneers of the New African Age

Kenya The Kenya government is pursuing major reforms to comprehensively address the complex land question in the country. The Ministry of Lands has published a new Draft National Land Policy to “establish an appropriate land taxation system to mobilise revenue and discourage land speculation”. Land scarcity is an enduring issue in Kenya—as all over East Africa. Clashes on the Kenyan side of Mount Elgon in 2007 left over 150 dead and displaced more than 60,000, according to Reuters.

The Ministry’s analysis concludes that “the land based revenue sector is not performing as it should” and that “it is imperative that reform measures are put in place in the interest of equity, discouraging land speculation, enhancing revenue collection, and making serviced land more accessible”.

The Ministry’s policy response includes “in urban areas the Unimproved Site Value and Improvement Value Taxation”; for unplanned settlements “a special revenue collection system such as House Tax or Area Tax... designed to tap into the emerging commercial property markets in the slums and also facilitate improvement efforts”; and a “Development and Capital Gains Tax... applied in order to capture for society some of the value created through public infrastructure improvement”.

According to government sources, Kenya Minister for Lands, Mr. James Orengo recently told the East African Legislative Assembly that the Draft National Land Policy would soon be discussed by the Kenyan cabinet before being debated in Parliament.

In a further move, Kenyan members of the Assembly have called for harmonisation of land laws across member states—Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda as well as Kenya—a region of 1.8 million square



kilometres with a population of 100 million. us President Obama’s father was a Luo from Nyang’oma Kogelo in Kenya’s Nyanza Province. The President keeps an interest in Kenyan affairs.

For more information about the policy and to download a copy go to www.ARDHL.GO.KE

Ethiopia The Ethiopian authorities are in discussions with UK-based reformers about their land and tax policies. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has a personal insight and understanding of his country’s land-based problems that place him at the forefront of what some are foreseeing as the new African age.

Zimbabwe The Zimbabwe government’s controversial land reform programme now lies in tatters after a Southern African Development Community tribunal ruling. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act 17 nationalised the country’s land in 2005, and remaining white farmers were served with eviction notices. The SADC case was brought by a group of evictees. The ruling reads: “We... hold that in implementing (Constitutional) Amendment 17, the respondent [Zimbabwe government] has discriminated against the applicants [farmers]

on the basis of race and thereby violated its obligation under Article 6 (2) of the [SADC] Treaty”. Morgan Tsvangirai’s MDC’s progressive land and tax reform policy [L&L 1222] awaits a tipping point in Zimbabwe’s fortunes.

Republic of South Africa Discussions are far advanced within the government on a proposal to introduce a land tax, the Land Affairs Minister Lulama Xingwana has told a Parliamentary Committee, according to a report in *BusinessDay*. Such a tax would assist the government’s bid to fast-track its land reform programme, the minister said.

Meanwhile, in the voluntary sector, a “historic legal challenge” is being mounted to South Africa’s Income and Property Rates Acts. The initiative is being led by the South African Constitutional Property Rights Foundation, a Cape Town-based public benefit organisation. The Foundation’s mission is “to make land affordable for everyone by challenging those South African tax laws which contradict the Constitution”. Foundation director Peter Meakin told L&L “we will be arguing that equity means affordability for everyone, however poor. That is, by law, unused land should have no entry cost”. Go to www.SACPRIIF.ORG

HGF report

AGM This year’s AGM of the Henry George Foundation, held at 11 Mandeville Place, London, in September, was a happy and positive affair, helped by the abundance of good news that could be reported from the past year. More new members and supporters were recruited than for many years past and a corresponding increase in donations gave a significantly enhanced revenue. Members appreciated the successful development of the new educational courses held throughout the year. The retirement of Jose Mernane and Julia Bastian from the Council of Management—two long-standing stalwarts—was regretted with sincere appreciation for their contributions over many years. Three new

members—Michael Learoyd, Peter Bowman and Renate Schmidt—were elected to the Council. **Friday Library Group** The autumn programme of Friday afternoon meetings of the Library Group continues to attract established and new supporters to hear talks from speakers from both within and outside the Foundation. The Group has been encouraged by the continuing stream of people drawn to visit following contact through the HGF website. **Principles of Political Economy** The spring course programme is now under way. Encouraged by the success of the autumn course (The Condition of Labour), a new ten week course on the ‘Principles of Political Economy’ started on 9th January (see *diary* and HGF website). Enrollment continues enthusiastically.

Authors 2008 Around 70 came to the HGF-sponsored party in December to celebrate the work in 2008 of authors John Stewart, Brian Hodgkinson and Geoffrey Lee, and publisher Anthony Werner of Shephard-Walwyn. **UK Coalition** The Foundation is a founding partner in the new UK initiative the Coalition for Economic Justice (see *news in brief*...). HGF Executive Chairman David Triggs said: “We are pleased to join with other groups advocating the collection of the unimproved value of land for public revenue as a replacement for taxes that inhibit production. It’s the way to solve the current crisis.” Through the office of Vince Cable MP a seminar has been arranged in the House of Commons on 24th March. HGF members are urged to bring the event to their MP’s attention.

CAP reform

Paul Flynn MP writes: a Scottish dairy farmer has caused a political uproar after it was revealed that he is to receive £1 million a year in farm subsidies: nine times more than the subsidy entitlement for the milk his cows produce.

William Hamilton (and Sons) of Meldrum Farm, Blairdrummond, Stirling, is the first Scottish farm to receive a single year payment of more than a million pounds (£1.47 million). The new single farm payment scheme pays farmers on the amount of land they own. Producing crops is irrelevant. They can stay in bed all day and still get the handouts. Even better they can sell their farm subsidy entitlements to investors—who may never have set foot on a farm.

At a recent public auction of farm subsidy entitlements in Scotland an investor paid £562.82 for a subsidy entitlement that is worth £306 a year indefinitely.

Under EU regulations, only someone classified as a farmer can buy the right to receive subsidies, but to be classified officially as a farmer, people need only hold a lease on a minimum of 1.7 acres for ten months of the year, and never need to visit it. Scottish landowners are now leasing out vast tracts of rocky highland for as little as £5 an acre a year, so that investors can claim to be farmers. For each acre you lease, you can buy annual subsidies averaging £100 an acre, but which can rise to over £1,000 an acre.

Still 40% of the EU budget is spent on wasteful single payments. At a time when tottering industry is in dire need of a helping hand, this is a chronic misuse of money.

Dip into Paul Flynn MP’s lively daily blog on www.PAULFLYNNMP.CO.UK

Meet the Social Liberalists

A new political party with a double difference has been launched in the UK. The Social Liberalist Party’s first difference is that most of its members, including its front bench team, are still teenagers. The second difference is that the party’s policy platform is built on “switching taxation away from earned income onto unearned wealth”. The party’s manifesto announces it as a ‘liberal’ party and sets out detailed national land tax calculations.

The party already has 13 branches across the country and hopes to count its members in the thousands by the end of the year.

Party leader Anton Howes (17) told L&L why they supported land value taxation: “It’s just a great idea, especially for first-time buyers and those unable to get onto the housing market”.

Renegade Economist

The Renegade Economist is a channel, see *Scotland*, a weekly 30 minute episode. ‘Geist’ interpretation: Karl Fitzgerald (K2) and co-hosts delve into the shine the spotlight on motivations and policy with experts such as Bill Harrison, Alanna Harrison hitting Michael Hudson.

K2 told L&L: “Look at my interview with Fred Foldvary through geo-anarchism and libertarianism and Austrians.”

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Ecuador and rights



The Blue-footed Booby native to Ecuador and the Pacific’s southern island

The people of Ecuador have a new constitution that recognises legally entities of nature, or ecosystem rights. Community Environment Fund. The Fund says the status of ecosystems from property under the law rights-bearing entities.

The move is considered an expansion of the field of Commentators are diving it goodbye to the common or a barrier to the common the forces of privatisation fruits of nature? Go to