LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONFUSION

Perhaps you will be inundated with letters refuting the claim of Syd Gilchrist (Progress, February) that rent, when collected as public revenue, is a tax.

Such a claim astonishes, and yes, dumbfounds me. Syd surely knows that ground rent is there whether it is collected or not; and to say that when it is collected it then becomes a tax seems to be not only a profound misuse of language but also absurd, and not only so but also ultimately and inherently counterproductive.

Syd refers to what he calls the 'pretence' that the collection of 'site revenue' is not a tax; and by 'site revenue' he means rent. For my part, I am not prepared to say that the words 'rent' and 'tax' are synonymous, and this for the simple reason that they are not; and I will not pretend that they are. They are not in any way related.

We don't make fast progress; but to confuse terms in this manner is surely one of the things that we must by all means abjure. Expediency (even if it were expedient) is no excuse for deliberate confusion. One of the great strengths of our philosophy is that we first strictly define our terms; and confusion of terms, as we all know or should know, is probably the most prolific source of the economic confusion and fallacy that bedevils our world.

If rent is tax then all who have freehold title to land are actually taxing themselves, since they have and retain the economic rent of the land, which Syd Gilchrist insists is tax. Surely this is confusion worse confounded.

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