Agrarian Justice

Thomas Paine

Introduction by Julian Pratt

Commentary by Thomas Spence

International Declaration on
Individual and Common Rights to Earth

Earthsharing Devon

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EXPLANATION OF TERMS used in this document

Land is used in its everyday and geographical sense to mean the solid surface of the Earth. Land does not include buildings or agricultural improvements that are made by people, even when these are physically inseparable from the land.

Property is used to refer to anything to which people may lay claim. Thomas Paine makes the useful distinction between **natural property** (including land and the rest of the natural world) and **artificial property** (artefacts that are made or produced by people). **Common property** strictly refers to property held by a defined group of commoners. However Thomas Paine and his contemporaries referred more loosely to land as the common property of the whole of (hu)mankind.

Rent is used to describe regular payments for the use of land, while **rental** is used to describe payments for the use of artefacts including buildings. The **Market Rent** [of land] is the 'estimated amount for which [the land] should lease (let) on the date of valuation between a willing lessor and a willing lessee on appropriate lease terms in an arms-length transaction after proper marketing wherein the parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently and without compulsion' (RICS 2009: 42). It therefore applies to all land, whether it is owner-occupied or leased.

Thomas Paine and Adam Smith use the term **ground-rent** when referring to the market rent of land, to emphasise that this does not include any rental payment for the use of buildings or other improvements that are attached to the land. Adam Smith also uses the term **ordinary rent of land**, which I take to mean the market rent of agricultural land that has not been improved.

Land Value Tax is a tax levied on some proportion of the market rent of land.

Universal (Basic) Income (Citizen's Income) is an unconditional income that is paid to everybody and is unrelated to poverty, income, wealth, past history of work, present work, availability for work, family unit, marital status, gender or ethnicity. The amount paid may, or may not, be related to age. There is no means test.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Paine's *Agrarian Justice* was first published in Paris in 1797, and is re-published here in full (Page 19).

This introduction begins with a brief summary of Thomas Paine's proposal and then sets out the reasons why his ideas are so relevant today. Orthodox economists and a wide spread of politicians are increasingly finding common ground in the two policies set out in *Agrarian Justice*:

- Land Value Taxation
- Universal (Basic) Income (Citizen's Income).

The introduction continues by describing how the belief that the land is the natural source of revenue to provide for the common good has, over the last two centuries, been replaced by the policy of raising taxes on a wide range of things other than land. And it concludes with a brief account of the writing and publication of *Agrarian Justice*.

The bulk of this publication consists of *Agrarian Justice* itself (Page 19).

This is followed by a critique of *Agrarian Justice* that was published also in 1797 by Thomas Spence (Page 47), who had made a similar, but more radical, proposal more than 20 years earlier.

It concludes with a twentieth century restatement by the International Union for Land Value Taxation (Page 55) of the principle that the earth is the common property of all people. The International Union holds that those who own land have the duty to pay the community the '*annual value attaching to the land alone apart from any improvements thereon created by labour*', in the form of a Land Value Tax.

The essence of Thomas Paine's proposal

Tom Paine's essential claim is that the natural world is and remains the common property of all:

> *Property is of two kinds. First, natural property, or that which is of the Creator's making, as Earth, Air, and Water. Secondly, artificial or acquired property, or that which is of man's making or producing. Of this there can be no equality …. The equality of natural property is the subject treated of in this work. Every person born into the world is born the rightful proprietor of a certain species of property, or the value thereof.* (Page 23 and Thomas Paine 1797b: 6)

He advocated distributing its ground-rent:

> *And as it is impossible to separate the improvement made by cultivation, from the earth itself, upon which that improvement is made, the idea of landed property arose from that inseparable connection; but it is nevertheless true, that it is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property. Every proprietor therefore of cultivated land, owes to the community a ground-rent; for I know no better term to express the idea by, for the land which he holds: and it is from this ground-rent that the fund proposed in this plan is to issue* (Page 28 and Thomas Paine 1797b: 12).

Paine proposed that this fund, consisting of revenue from ground-rents, was to be paid out to every person – in part as a lump sum on reaching the age of twenty-one and in part as an annual pension to each person over the age of fifty and to people with disabilities:

> *To create a National Fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of* Fifteen Pounds sterling*, as a compensation in part for the loss of his or her natural inheritance by the introduction of the system of landed property.*
>
> *AND ALSO,*

> *The sum of* Ten Pounds per annum, *during life, to every person now living of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age.* (Page 31 and Thomas Paine 1797b: 15)

The source of the fund, the ground-rents of the whole country, remains the ideal. But as Paine describes how to put this into effect in England and France, he compromises the ideal in several ways. He suggests that the ground-rents should be collected not periodically, as would be expected for a ground-rent, but at the time of death as a tax on inheritance; and that a proportion of the price of all property, not just land, be collected. These departures from the simple justice of his underlying principle that land is the common property of humankind were strongly criticised even at the time by Thomas Spence (Page 47), but the underlying principles remain as clearly relevant to us today as they were in 1797:

- **There is no justification for outright private ownership of the earth in perpetuity (though improvements made by people can be justly owned).**
- **Owners of land should compensate everybody else by paying a ground-rent for their land into a fund.**
- **This fund should be used for the benefit of all, equally.**

The relevance of *Agrarian Justice* today

Agrarian Justice is deeply relevant to twenty-first century readers for the principles that he drew on and the capacity of his ideas to tackle contemporary economic problems. His passion and rhetoric continue to inspire us today.

Principles

Thomas Paine believed that land is common property, that every proprietor owes to the community a ground-rent and that these ground-rents should be distributed to everybody as a right.

Land is common property

He asserts that every individual is born with a legitimate claim on the natural world – that the Earth (unlike the things that we make) is the common property of all. But he did not advocate taking land into common ownership like earlier English revolutionaries, particularly Gerard Winstanley and the Diggers.

Taxing the value of land

Thomas Paine did not challenge landowning itself, but insisted that proprietors of land owe to the community a ground-rent. Although he referred to *proprietors of cultivated land*, as was natural when most economic activity was agricultural, he came close to advocating the collection of the market rent of all land, which orthodox economists call a Land Value Tax.

He made it clear that this payment should be a condition of owning land. Re-connecting the right to hold land with the duty to compensate those who are excluded from it makes land less desirable to hold, and so makes it more available to others. Indeed it turns land from an asset held in perpetuity (ownership) into a secure tenancy or use-right (stewardship) (Julian Pratt 2011:4). The implications for access to land for housing, cultivation and work are profound.

Benefits that are universal

Thomas Paine advocated a benefit system that is generous in spirit. He was always positive about the capacity of individuals to constitute a supportive society, but he distrusted the ability of government to make this happen. In *Agrarian Justice* he recognised the need for society to support the old and to compensate young people who are denied, by the system of ownership, their claim to a share of the natural world. Although he did not propose paying an income to adults of working age, apart from those with disabilities, this was not a Beveridge-style benefit system where payments are

paid on condition that the recipient does not work. He proposed that the revenue from the ground-rents paid by landowners should be distributed unconditionally (though according to age and extended to people with disabilities) – something close to a Universal Income. His approach does not necessarily depend on the state for administration of the fund.

Contemporary economic challenges and their solutions

The plans put forward by Thomas Spence and Thomas Paine manage to avoid the design flaws in the tax and benefit systems that all orthodox economies contain. These include the inefficiency and intrusiveness of conditional benefits, the inadequacy of work as a means of distributing the product of a complex and automated economy, the challenges of taxation in a globalised economy, the over-investment in and under-use of land, and macroeconomic instability (Julian Pratt 2011: 95).

Inefficiency and intrusiveness of conditional benefits

Orthodox economists, and the press, think of orthodox benefit systems as a burden on taxpayers and the economy. It is no surprise, therefore, that benefits are generally mean and their administration intrusive due to means-testing. As out-of-work benefits are conditional on being out of work, and are lost when people move into work, they directly discourage people from taking on work that is low-paid, part-time or voluntary.

Thomas Paine recognised that everybody has a right to their share of the ground-rents. Receiving a universal benefit does not directly discourage participation in work. And the universality means that such benefits can be administered without intrusion such as means-testing.

Work as the means of distribution

Work itself is no longer a satisfactory way to distribute the product of an economy as complex and mechanised as ours. It is only necessary to see the implications of, for example:

- **Low wages** that routinely need to be topped up by Tax

Credits.

- **Loss of jobs** to low-wage countries as the result of globalisation.
- **Part-time working** and zero-hours contracts that provide inadequate and unpredictable levels of income.
- **Internships** that are unpaid (and which also ensure that only the wealthy can meet the entry requirements for well-paid jobs).
- **Work outside the money economy** that is undervalued because it is unpaid (for example study and training, voluntary work of all sorts, artistic and creative work and above all family and friends contributing to child rearing and caring for the sick and disabled).
- **Mechanisation** and automation that reduces the need for many existing occupations.

The pursuit of full employment drives government to subsidise and support all manner of socially and environmentally destructive activities – one of the UK's top four export industries is the arms trade, for example.

If we were to share the ground-rent of the whole country, as a right, the income each person received would ensure that they felt financially secure. We would no longer fear the introduction of mechanisation or foreign competition. Our choice of work (paid or unpaid) would reflect the contribution we want to make to society. Judging by the activities that people choose to do voluntarily, whether formally or informally within networks of family and friends, this contribution would be of far greater value to society than most traditional employment.

Inefficiency and injustice of orthodox taxation

Orthodox systems of taxation are deeply damaging to society and to the economy itself, for example:

- The **deadweight loss (excess burden) of taxation** (the economic activity that is not carried out because taxation increases its cost or reduces its rewards). The New Zealand Treasury quotes estimates from 14% - 50% and uses a default assumption of 20% for this deadweight loss. The UK Treasury does not make an independent estimate of the deadweight loss of existing taxation, but it effectively assumes that it is 30%. With a UK tax bill of about £665 billion (IFS 20216:4) this amounts very approximately to a loss in economic activity of £200 billion per year, or £3,000 for each man, woman and child.
- The **complexities of supply chains** and transnational corporations make it difficult to decide in which jurisdiction a tax should be levied, and difficult to collect.
- The extent of **tax evasion** and the ease of tax avoidance that orthodox taxes invite by their very design.
- The **number of taxes that are regressive** (fall disproportionately on the poor) and so increase inequality (e.g. Council Tax, National Insurance Contributions and Value Added Tax).

Taxes on land are recognised by orthodox economists to create no deadweight burden, so their introduction as a replacement for existing taxes would stimulate the economy. Land cannot be hidden from the taxman, or moved to another jurisdiction, so avoidance and evasion are virtually impossible as long as no exemptions are allowed for particular uses or categories of user. Poor people own very little land and taxes on land are generally progressive – they fall predominantly on the wealthy.

Land use

Land has become a financial asset to be held in perpetuity rather than a secure tenancy or use-right that is conditional on

paying a ground-rent to the community. This has caused two sorts of problem, over-investment in land and its under-use:

Over-investment in land. The land used for housing, agriculture, industry and commerce is an attractive investment, particularly as collateral for bank loans. This makes land unavailable to most people, increases levels of indebtedness and reduces investment in productive enterprise.

Under-use of land. Without the need to pay a ground-rent, an owner of land has no economic imperative to make good use of it. Indeed in times of rising land prices it can make complete economic sense to hold land even if it is left idle – the increase in market value of the land is likely to be greater than the interest paid on the loan taken out to buy it.

A tax on the ownership of land makes it less attractive as an investment, making more land available for those who want to use it rather than invest in it and diverting investment to productive activity.

A tax on the ownership of land provides an incentive to put that land to the best use permitted by the planning system. It would encourage owners to make use of derelict and under-used land, or to sell it to somebody who will.

It would put pressure on businesses that currently pay less than the market rent for their land (for example because they have paid off their mortgage) to compete on equal terms with innovative start-ups that have to pay rent or mortgage interest.

If we were to apply the principles of *Agrarian Justice* today the impact on agriculture, to take just one example, would be to enable more people to live and work on the land in a more sustainable way, leading to an agrarian renaissance.

Macroeconomics

The over-investment in land that is caused by the failure to collect ground-rents occurs in cycles. When land prices are rising, investors will offer higher and higher prices. The desire

of households to 'get on the housing ladder' becomes an imperative. There is a powerful element of speculation – the purchase of an asset in the expectation that its price will increase. At some point the price of land reaches a level where significant numbers of owners can no longer afford to pay their mortgage interest – perhaps because of a business downturn, interest rate rises or job losses. Land can no longer generate the anticipated return, investors lose confidence and land prices fall. This is a major cause of bank failures and the boom and bust cycles that bedevil market economies.

A tax equal to the market rent of land would prevent any cyclical changes in land values and so remove those elements of macroeconomic instability that arise from the land market.

Land as the natural source of revenue

The philosophical debate about land has largely focused on whether it should be held as private or common property. The reality of land ownership has been determined not by philosophical discourse but by 'facts on the ground', often violent. The duties of landowners to society have been gradually eroded – initially feudal duties were replaced by taxes on land, which have in turn been largely replaced by taxes on production and consumption. Thomas Paine's belief that the owner of land '*owes to the community a ground-rent*' continues to inspire radical approaches to social justice and economic efficiency.

Common property

There has been debate for at least two millennia about whether land should be held as private property or common property. Judaic law made clear that the land is the property of God; people may have a time-limited claim on it, but it was to be returned to its original owner at the Jubilee.

Plato, the Stoics, the Church Fathers, John Wycliffe, the Anabaptists, Francisco Suarez and Gerard Winstanley are amongst those who have advanced the view that land is

common property.

Private property

Advocates of private property include Aristotle, Alexander of Hales, St Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf and John Locke.

John Locke's general argument in support of representative democracy required him to oppose the Divine Right of Kings and to develop a justification for private property rights that was independent of the monarch. His inspiration was the American homesteading model, which rewarded the labour expended by the first occupant. He proposed that property rights to land were acquired by the labour expended to '*inclose it from the common*' by tilling, planting, improving and cultivating (John Locke 1690: 250). In spite of his now manifestly unwarranted assertion that '*there was still enough, and as good left; and more than the yet unprovided could use*' (John Locke 1690: 251), it is labour and first occupancy that emerge today when you scratch the surface of most people's beliefs about the justification for land ownership.

Taxes on land

Since the beginning of settled agriculture revenue to support communities, the state, the church and the powerful has been raised from the produce of the land.

Physiocrats

The first thinkers to give serious theoretical consideration to the workings of the whole economy were the Physiocrats in 18th century France. Their most prominent member, François Quesnay, held that the wealth of a nation derived from the net product of agricultural work on the land – the output minus the inputs, that is to say the ground-rent (François Quesnay 1758/1894). He advocated good husbandry, a tax on landowners equal to the ground-rent (l'impôt unique) and the removal of all other taxes (François Quesnay 1760/1846).

Anne-Robert-Jaques Turgot diverged somewhat from this view, believing in the need to foster trade and industry as well as agriculture. But he, too, advocated the removal of taxes such as excise duties and payroll taxes that fell most heavily on the poor while raising taxes on the value of land – particularly previously exempt land belonging to the aristocracy and clergy (Anne-Robert Jaques Turgot 1766/1783: Section 99).

Classical economics

Adam Smith, generally regarded as the founder of the classical school of economics, would have dedicated his *Wealth of Nations* to François Quesnay if Quesnay had still been alive when it was published in 1776. He consulted extensively with Anne-Robert-Jaques Turgot (Mason Gaffney 2012/2013: 159). The classical school of economics analysed economic activity in terms of three factors of production – land, labour and capital. In the *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith advocated taxing all three factors as a matter of fairness; but he was clear that on pragmatic grounds a tax on ground-rents is the most efficient form of tax:

> *Both ground-rents and the ordinary rent of land are a species of revenue which the owner, in many cases, enjoys without any care or attention of his own. Though a part of this revenue should be taken from him in order to defray the expenses of the state, no discouragement will thereby be given to any form of industry. The annual produce of the land and labour of the society, the real wealth and revenue of the great body of the people, might be the same after such a tax as before. Ground-rents, and the ordinary rent of land, are therefore, perhaps, the species of revenue which can best bear to have a peculiar tax imposed upon them* (Adam Smith 1776 Volume III Chapter V: 239).

The classical economists followed the Natural Law tradition and saw ground-rents, and so landowners, as the natural source of revenue for the public good. This approach was developed by the agrarian radicals Thomas Spence and

Thomas Paine and reached its popular and political zenith in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th century with the Single Tax movement of Henry George (Henry George 1879).

The reality of land ownership

Notwithstanding these philosophical debates property rights in England were established by force and military conquest, as they have been throughout history and across the globe. The history of the United Kingdom can be told as a struggle for land rights (Steve Wyler 2007 : 4; www.threeacresandacow.co.uk/about/) .

In early Saxon times the land was owned not by the king or large landowners but by free peasant proprietors (ceorls). Even before the Norman Conquest this system began to be replaced by a Teutonic feudal system in which the king created lords (thegns) who received rent (in the form of produce) from their land. Extensive common lands remained, however, to provide sustenance for everybody.

William the Conqueror claimed ultimate ownership of all land, bringing with him the Norman system of feudalism. He allocated tenancies to his followers in return for fulfilling feudal duties, principally to provide an army and uphold local peace and justice. The right to own land (held from the king and not as an absolute right) was always balanced by these duties and responsibilities.

After the Conquest, Saxon landholding was wiped out and the Saxons were incorporated into the Norman feudal system, sometimes retaining some rights to hold land but usually as serfs. Some land remained available for people to cultivate crops in open fields and beyond these extensive common land remained that provided grazing, gathering and fuel.

Almost as soon as this system was formalised, the king and nobles began to enclose the common land. The balance of power shifted from the king to the nobles with Magna Carta (1215), and free men also won a victory with the Charter of the

Forest (Carta de Foresta, 1217) which reinstated their rights to pasturage, foraging and firewood in the forest. This was, however, soon followed by the Commons Act (1236) which allowed the lord of the manor to enclose common land.

The balance of power shifted again after the Black Death in 1348 as labour shortages increased the bargaining power of the serfs. Men were willing to pay rent (socage) to work land in their own right. The feudal lords could see enough advantage to release them from their feudal ties and duties. The balance of rights and duties of feudal land ownership was eroded.

Landowners responded by turning arable land to pasture, and enclosure of the common lands intensified over the next 500 years. Between 1604 and 1912 a total of 20% of the land of England, 6.8 million acres, was enclosed by means of over 5,000 Enclosure Bills (Parliament website).

William Pitt the Younger introduced the Income Tax in 1799 as a temporary measure to fund the Napoleonic War, and it was re-introduced on a permanent basis by Sir Robert Peel in 1842. Income Tax has since been joined by a whole raft of direct and indirect taxes – by almost anything other than a tax on land. The dominance of landowners in both the House of Commons and the Lords and the dependence of the right to vote in the 19th century on a property qualification no doubt played their part in this shift of taxation from land to income and other taxes.

Land and ground-rents outside economic orthodoxy

During the 19th century the ideas of the classical economists including Adam Smith and Thomas Paine were subjected to sustained opposition. Karl Marx attacked the 'trinity formula' of land, labour and capital, treating land as a form of capital (Karl Marx 1844/2000: 85). Even more significantly from the late 19th century the Neo-Classical school of economics, centred on the University of Chicago, successfully wrote land out of orthodox

economic theory (Mason Gaffney 1994/2006: 29).

This turn in orthodox economics has provided all the justification that politicians have needed over the last hundred years to levy taxes on – and so to discourage – the things that they should be encouraging in the economy. Taxes discourage earnings (Income Tax), employment (National Insurance Contributions), adding value (VAT), profitable business (Corporation Tax) and the development of commercial land (the buildings component of National Non-Domestic (Business) Rates). At the same time taxes have been removed from land even though they would provide a source of revenue that would discourage only the possession, not the use, of land. Without any obligations on the owner and without significant taxation, land has become an asset to be traded not a use-right to be treasured.

It is difficult for us to recognise just how unusual the two hundred years since Thomas Paine was writing have been, in our failure to recognise the land as the natural source of revenue for promoting the common good.

Thomas Spence's response to Agrarian Justice

Thomas Spence published *Property in Land Every One's Right* (Thomas Spence 1776) in 1776 and republished it many times as part of his other works, including the *End of Oppression* (Thomas Spence 1795). He shared with Thomas Paine the principle that the land is the common property of mankind and that landowners should pay rent to the community. He had been committed to Clerkenwell Prison for publishing and selling the second part of Paine's *Rights of Man*, so he was familiar with Thomas Paine's writings. But he was disappointed that *Agrarian Justice* was in many ways not as radical as his own plan, which advocated (Thomas Spence 1797) that:

- the property rights to all land in a parish should be transferred to the commoners of that parish; while Paine advocated (in theory) nothing more than a tax on

a proportion of the ground-rent and (in practice) an inheritance tax of just 10%.

- far more revenue should be collected – the full value of the annual rent of the land.
- a proportion of this revenue be remitted by each parish to the national exchequer to replace existing excise duties and taxes; forseeing the macroeconomic benefits to be expected from de-taxing work, enterprise and sales.
- public expenditure at parish level, funded from this revenue, be determined and overseen at parish level.
- the residue of the parish income be divided equally among all parishioners, whatever their age, to provide an annual income; thereby supporting children and people of working age, not just young adults and older people as Paine proposed.
- unnecessary expenditure at parish level would be minimised by people's desire to maximise their income; while investment in local public goods that would genuinely provide local benefits would raise the local level of rents, and therefore the income of the parish.

At the time when *Agrarian Justice* appeared in London, Thomas Spence was about to publish his *Rights of Infants*. He hurriedly added an introduction, and an appendix providing a critique of *Agrarian Justice*, and this appendix is reprinted here after the text of *Agrarian Justice* (Page 47).

Henry George

Neither Thomas Spence nor Thomas Paine managed to inspire a popular movement for land reform or the collection of ground-rents for the common good. That role fell to Henry George, whose ideas appear to have developed independently from the tradition of Spence and Paine. His *Progress and Poverty* (Henry George 1879), and his further writings and campaigning, were highly important influences on popular

and political thought; but the displacement of classical economics by neo-classical economics at the end of the 19th century (Mason Gaffney 1994/2006: 29) ensured that Henry George's ideas did not take hold in orthodox academic economics.

The International Union – rights to land

The International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade (The IU) was established in 1926 to promote Henry George's proposal to levy a tax on the market rent of land, that is to say on its ground-rent, and to use the revenue to replace existing taxes as a Single Tax (Henry George 1879 Book VIII Chapter II: 385). In 1949 the IU reclaimed the language of human rights, so natural to Thomas Paine, and issued *An International Declaration on Individual and Common Rights to Earth* (Page 55) which continues to provide a rallying call for those who advocate these reforms.

Beyond the boundaries of orthodox economics, insights and solutions are to be found that would be familiar to anybody who has read *Agrarian Justice* – particularly relating to the role of land in the economy. The principles underlying Thomas Paine's proposal live on in two proposals that are familiar in heterodox economics – Land Value Tax and Universal (Basic) Income (Citizen's Income). There is growing support for both of these, even amongst orthodox economists, and a growing public appreciation of their desirability. The barriers to taking them forward are political rather than economic, and this means that they need the support of a significant part of the electorate. The time is ripe for another Tom Paine to inspire us; meanwhile we can savour his original challenge.

Writing and publishing *Agrarian Justice*

Thomas Paine wrote *Agrarian Justice* during the winter of 1795 to 1796, following his release from a Luxembourg prison and while he was a guest of the USA's ambassador to France, and future president, James Monroe.

Agrarian Justice was first published in French 'chez la citoyenne Ragouleau' (Moncure Conway 1892) under the title *Thomas Payne à la législature et au directoire, ou, la Justice Agraire opposée à la Loi Agraire, et aux priviléges agraire* (Thomas Paine 1797a), though he was clear that his plan was 'not adapted for any particular country alone'. This edition, which does not include the preface, included a note explaining that Thomas Paine had not supervised the translation due to his sudden departure from Paris.

The original English version was published in the same year, again in Paris, by William Adlard (Thomas Paine 1797b), and this is the version reproduced here.

It was republished many times in London in the same year. All the London editions have been censored, presumably by the publishers themselves as publishers of Paine's *Age of Reason* had been jailed for sedition. The omissions from the London editions include parts of the Preface attacking Bishop Watson's belief that God made rich and poor; the address *To the Legislature and the Executive Directory of the French Republic*; and a call for revolution to bring his plan into effect. The London editions show variations in paragraph layout and punctuation, and the version by Thomas Williams (Thomas Paine 1797c), available in the British Library, is generally closer to the original than the others.

AGRARIAN JUSTICE,

OPPOSED TO AGRARIAN LAW,

AND TO AGRARIAN MONOPOLY

BEING

A Plan for meliorating the Condition of Man,

BY

Creating in every Nation a NATIONAL FUND, to pay to every Person, when arrived at the age of *Twenty-one Years*, the Sum of *Fifteen Pounds* Sterling, to enable *him* or *her* to begin the World;

AND ALSO

Ten Pounds Sterling per Annum during Life to every Person now living of the Age of *Fifty Years*, and to all others when they shall arrive at that Age, to enable them to live in Old Age without Wretchedness, and go decently out of the World.

BY THOMAS PAINE,

AUTHOR OF COMMON SENSE, RIGHTS OF MAN,

AGE OF REASON, &C. &C.

PARIS, Printed by ADLARD, Rue Menilmontant, No . 113, and sold by DESENNE, Palais Égalite, No 2.

PREFACE

The following little piece was written in the winter of 1795 and 96, and as I had not determined whether to publish it during the present war, or to wait till the commencement of a peace, it has lain by me, without alteration or addition, from the time it was written.

What has determined me to publish it now is a sermon preached by *Watson*, *Bishop of Landaff*. Some of my Readers will recollect, that this bishop wrote a book entitled *An Apology for the Bible*, in answer to my second part of the *Age of Reason*. I procured a copy of his book, and he may depend upon hearing from me on that subject.

At the end of the bishop's book is a list of the works he has written, among which is the sermon alluded to. It is entitled,

"THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD in having made both RICH and POOR; with an Appendix, containing Reflections on the present State of England and France."

The abominable falsehood contained in the title of this sermon, determined me to publish my *Agrarian Justice*. It is a falshood to say God made Rich and Poor. He made only *Male* and *Female*, and he gave them the Earth for their Inheritance. We have heard of the blasphemous doctrine of the *Divine Right of Kings*, or of *Kings by Divine Right*; and we have lived to see it exploded. But we never before heard of *Riches by Divine Right*, nor of *Poverty by Divine Right*. The bishop has the merit of being the first sycophant who propagated this false and detestable absurdity.

Instead of preaching canting and lying sermons to encourage one part of mankind in insolence, and seduce the other into slavery, as the generality of priests in all countries, and of all professions do, *particularly those who belong to what are called established churches*, it would be better that they employed their time to render the general condition of man

less miserable than it is. Practical religion consists in doing good; and the only way of serving God, is that of endeavouring to make his creation happy. All preaching that has not this for its object is nonsense and hypocrisy.

THOMAS PAINE

TO THE

LEGISLATURE AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORY

OF THE

FRENCH REPUBLIC

The plan contained in the present work is not intended for any particular country. The principle upon which it is based is general. But as the study of the *Rights of Man* is but new in this world, and stands in need of protection against the craft of priests and the insolence of long established oppression, it is with propriety that I put this work under the safe-guard of your just considerations.

When we recollect the long and dreary night which France and all Europe have suffered under governments and priests, it is not a matter of wonder, thought it is of regret, that the first dawning of light should bewilder, whilst it operated to undeceive. The eye long accustomed to darkness, remains, for a time, confounded by light. It is practice that teaches the eye to see, and the case is similar in passing from any long continued state to a contrary state.

As we do not get rid of all our errors at once, so neither do we acquire every just idea of rights at once. France has the glory of adding to the word LIBERTY that of EQUALITY. It is a word containing a *whole principle* (and not a thing of degrees) upon every thing to which it applies; but it has often been misinterpreted, often misapplied, and often violated.

Liberty and property are words that express every thing we possess that is not of an intellectual quality. Property is of two kinds. First, natural property, or that which is of the Creator's making, as Earth, Air, and Water. Secondly, artificial or acquired property, or that which is of man's making or producing. Of this there can be no equality, because, in order to participate equally, it is first necessary that every man produces it equally, which is never the case; and if it were

every man keeping his own, would be the same as participation. The equality of natural property is the subject treated of in this work. Every person born into the world is born the rightful proprietor of a certain species of property, or the value thereof.

The right of voting in the choice of persons to whom the formation of laws, for the government of the whole society, is to be entrusted, connects itself with the word *Liberty*, that is, the equality of personal rights. But did it connect itself with property, which it does not, the right of voting would be equal as in the other case; because, as before said, every person born into the world, is born the rightful proprietor of a certain species of property.

I have always considered the present constitution of the French republic to be the best *organized* of any system that ever was produced; neither do I see how a better *Organizatio*n can be devised. But my ancient colleagues will, I trust, pardon me when I say there is an error in the principle. Equality of the right of suffrage is not maintained. The equal right of voting is not preserved. The right is made to depend upon what it ought not to depend. It is made to depend upon a certain quantity of a certain kind of tax, called direct contribution. The sacredness of the right is dishonoured, and the enthusiasm it is capable of producing is diminished, by thus putting it in equi-poise against a trifle. It does not admit of any equi-poise; and nothing is worthy being its basis but itself. It is not of a nature to flourish when engrafted on an exotic.

Two abortive conspirations have taken place since the establishment of the constitution. That of Babeuf; and that of some persons, scarcely known, calling themselves by the contemptible name of royalists. The conspiration of Babeuf took ground upon this defect in the principle of the constitution. It worked upon the discontents which that defect had produced; and instead of seeking to remedy it by fair

constitutional means, or to devise any thing for the good of society, it sought to throw every thing into confusion, and to erect itself into a secret self-created Directory (the very reverse of election and representation) and was mad enough to expect that society, which has a thousand domestic cares to attend to, should commit itself blindly to the management of this self-created thing.

The conspiration of the royalists (a wild attempt of a few to do every thing with nothing to do it with) followed, within a few months, that of Babeuf. It calculated upon discontents (no matter how produced) and sought to make tools and instruments of the same class of people as the other had done. But its leaders acted as if they imagined society ought to have no other care than that of providing for voluptuous courtiers, place-men, and pensioners, under the contemptible name of royalty. This little work will teach them better. It will shew them there is an object for society to attend to of a very different kind – *That of providing for itself*.

We all know, or ought to know, that all the time a revolution is acting, is not the moment to expect the advantages that are to follow from it. But let Babeuf and his comrades of the conspiracy look at the condition of France since the establishment of this constitution, and compare it with what it was during the dismal revolutionary government of terror, and the difference, in so short a time, is astonishing. It is all the difference between abundance and famine; and it has every prospect of growing prosperity in view.

As to the defect in the principle of the consititution, I cannot permit myself to doubt but it will be remedied in a constitutional way. It is necessary to do it; for whist it remains it affords hope for conspiracy to feed on; and it is besides, a matter of regret, that a constitution, so wisely organized, should have any such defect in its principle. The defect is also open to a species that will hereafter appear, which is, that there will be intriguing candidates, who will look out for persons to

whom it is not convenient to pay the direct contribution, and furnish them with money to pay it with, to ensure their votes. Let us keep close to the sacred principle of equality in the right of voting. It is the best of possible securities.

Salut et fraternité.

Your ancient colleague

THOMAS PAINE.

AGRARIAN JUSTICE,

OPPOSED TO AGRARIAN LAW, AND TO AGRARIAN MONOPOLY,

BEING

A plan for meliorating the Condition of Man, &c.

To preserve the benefits of, what is called civilized life, and to remedy at the same time, the evils it has produced, ought to be considered as one of the first objects of reformed legislation.

Whether that state that is proudly, perhaps erroneously, called civilization, has most promoted, or most injured, the general happiness of man, is a question that may be strongly contested. –On one side, the spectator is dazzled by splendid appearances; on the other he is shocked by extremes of wretchedness; both of which he has erected. The most affluent and the most miserable of the human race are to be found in the countries that are called civilized.

To understand what the state of society ought to be, it is necessary to have some idea of the natural and primitive state of man; such as it is at this day among the Indians of North America. There is not in that state any of those spectacles of human misery which poverty and want present to our eyes in all the towns and streets in Europe. Poverty, therefore, is a thing created by that which is called civilized life. It exists not in the natural state. On the other hand, the natural state is without those advantages which flow from Agriculture, Arts, Science and Manufactures. The life of an Indian is a continual holiday compared with the poor of Europe; and on the other hand, it appears to be abject when compared to the rich. Civilization, therefore, or that which is so called, has operated two ways to make one part of society more affluent, and the other part more wretched, than would have been the lot of either in a natural state.

It is always possible to go from the natural to the civilized state, but it is never possible to go from the civilized to the

natural state. The reason is, that man in a natural state, subsisting by hunting, requires ten times the quantity of land to range over to procure himself sustenance than would support him in a civilized state where the earth is cultivated. When therefore a country becomes populous by the additional aids of cultivation, arts, and science, there is a necessity of preserving things in that state; because without it, there cannot be sustenance for more, perhaps, than a tenth part of its inhabitants. The thing therefore now to be done, is, to remedy the evils, and preserve the benefits, that have arisen to society by passing from the natural to that which is called the civilized state.

Taking then the matter up on this ground, the first principle of civilization ought to have been, and ought still to be, that the condition of every person born into the world after a state of civilization commences, ought not to be worse than if he had been born before that period. But the fact is, that the condition of millions, in every country in Europe, is far worse than if they had been born before civilization began, or had been born among the Indians of North America of the present day. I will shew how this fact has happened.

It is a position not to be controverted, that the earth, in its natural uncultivated state was, and ever would have continued to be, THE COMMON PROPERTY OF THE HUMAN RACE. In that state every man would have been born to property. He would have been a joint life proprietor with the rest in the property of the soil and in all its natural productions, vegetable and animal.

But the earth in its natural state, as before said, is capable of supporting but a small number of inhabitants compared with what it is capable of doing in a cultivated state. And as it is impossible to separate the improvement made by cultivation, from the earth itself, upon which that improvement is made, the idea of landed property arose from

that inseparable connection; but it is nevertheless true, that it is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property. Every proprietor therefore of cultivated land, owes to the community a *ground-rent*; for I know no better term to express the idea by, for the land which he holds: and it is from this ground-rent that the fund proposed in this plan is to issue.

It is deducible as well from the nature of the thing, as from all the histories transmitted to us, that the idea of landed property commenced with cultivation, and that there was no such thing as landed property before that time. It could not exist in the first state of man, that of hunters, It did not exist in the second state, that of shepherds. Neither Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Job, so far as the history of the Bible may be credited in probable things, were owners of land. Their property consisted, and is always enumerated in flocks and herds, and they travelled with them from place to place. The frequent contentions at that time about the use of a well in the dry country of Arabia, where those people lived, shew also there was no landed property. It was not admitted that land could be located as property.

There could be no such thing as landed property originally. Man did not make the earth, and though he had a natural right to *occupy* it, he had no right to *locate* as *his* property in perpetuity any part of it: neither did the Creator of the earth open a land-office from whence the first title-deeds should issue. From whence then arose the idea of landed property? I answer as before, that when cultivation began, the idea of landed property began with it, from the impossibility of separating the improvement made by cultivation from the earth itself upon which that improvement was made. The value of the improvement so far exceeded the value of the natural earth, at that time, as to absorb it; till, in the end, the common right of all became confounded into the cultivated right of the individual. But they are nevertheless distinct

species of rights, and will continue to be so as long as the earth endures.

It is only by tracing things to their origin, that we can gain rightful ideas of them, and it is by gaining such ideas that we discover the boundary that divides right from wrong, and which teaches every man to know his own. I have entitled this tract *Agrarian Justice*, to distinguish it from *Agrarian Law*. Nothing could be more unjust than Agrarian Law in a country improved by cultivation; for though every man, as an inhabitant of the earth, is a joint proprietor of it in its natural state, it does not follow that he is a joint proprietor of cultivated earth. The additional value made by cultivation, after the system was admitted, became the property of those who did it, or who inherited it from them, or who purchased it. It had originally an owner. Whilst, therefore, I advocate the right, and interest myself in the hard case of all those who have been thrown out of their natural inheritance by the introduction of the system of landed property, I equally defend the right of the possessor to the part which is his.

Cultivation is, at least, one of the greatest natural improvements ever made by human invention. It has given to created earth a ten-fold value. But the landed monopoly that began with it has produced the greatest evil. It has dispossessed more than half the inhabitants of every nation of their natural inheritance, without providing for them, as ought to have been done, as an indemnification for that loss, and has thereby created a species of poverty and wretchedness that did not exist before.

In advocating the case of the persons thus dispossessed, it is a right and not a charity that I am pleading for. But it is that kind of right which, being neglected at first, could not be brought forward afterwards, till heaven had opened the way by a revolution in the system of government. Let us then do

honour to revolutions by justice, and give currency to their principles by blessings.

Having thus, in a few words, opened the merits of the case, I proceed to the plan I have to propose, which is,

To create a National Fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of Fifteen Pounds sterling, *as a compensation in part for the loss of his or her natural inheritance by the introduction of the system of landed property.*

AND ALSO,

The sum of Ten Pounds per annum, *during life, to every person now living of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age.*

MEANS BY WHICH THE FUND IS TO BE CREATED

I have already established the principle, namely, that the earth, in its natural uncultivated state was, and ever would have continued to be, the COMMON PROPERTY OF THE HUMAN RACE - that in that state every person would have been born to property – and that the system of landed property, by its inseparable connection with cultivation, and with what is called civilized life, has absorbed the property of all those whom it dispossessed without providing, as ought to have been done, an indemnification for that loss.

The fault, however, is not in the present possessors. No complaint is intended, or ought to be alledged against them, unless they adopt the crime by opposing justice. The fault is in the system, and it has stolen imperceptibly upon the world, aided afterwards by the Agrarian Law of the sword. But the fault can be made to reform itself by successive generations, without diminishing or deranging the property of any of the present possessors, and yet the operation of the fund can commence, and be in full activity the first year of its establishment, or soon after, as I shall shew.

It is proposed that the payments, as already stated, be made to every person, rich or poor. It is best to make it so, to prevent invidious distinctions. It is also right it should be so, because it is in lieu of the natural inheritance which as a right belongs to every man over and above the property he may have created or inherited from those who did. Such persons as do not chuse to receive it, can throw it into the common fund.

Taking it then for granted, that no person ought to be in a worse condition when born under what is called a state of civilization, than he would have been, had he been born in a state of nature, and that civilization ought to have made, and ought still to make, provision for that purpose, it can only be done by subtracting from property a portion equal in value to the natural inheritance it has absorbed.

Various methods may be proposed for this purpose, but that which appears to be the best, not only because it will operate without deranging any present possessors, or without interfering with the collection of taxes, or emprunts [loans] necessary for the purpose of government and the revolution, but because it will be the least troublesome and the most effectual, and also because the subtraction will be made at a time that best admits it, which, is at the moment that property is passing by the death of one person to the possession of another. In this case, the bequeather gives nothing; the receiver pays nothing. The only matter to him is, that the monopoly of natural inheritance, to which there never was a right, begins to cease in his person. A generous man would not wish it to continue, and a just man will rejoice to see it abolished.

My state of health prevents my making sufficient inquiries with respect to the doctrine of probabilities, whereon to found calculations with such degrees of certainty as they are capable of. What, therefore, I offer on this head is more the result of

observation and reflection, than of received information; but I believe it will be found to agree sufficiently enough with fact.

In the first place, taking twenty-one years as the epoch of maturity, all the property of a nation, real and personal, is always in the possession of persons above that age. It is then necessary to know as a datum of calculation the average of years which persons above that age will live. I take this average to be about thirty years, for though many persons will live forty, fifty, or sixty years after the age of twenty-one years, others will die much sooner and some in every year of that time.

Taking then thirty years as the average of time, it will give, without any material variation, one way or other, the average of time in which the whole property or capital of a nation, or a sum equal thereto, will have passed through one entire revolution in descent, that is, will have gone by deaths to new possessors; for though, in many instances, some parts of this capital will remain forty, fifty, or sixty, years in the possession of one person, other parts will have revolved two or three times before that thirty years expire, which will bring it to that average; for were one half the capital of a nation to revolve twice in thirty years, it would produce the same fund as if the whole revolved once.

Taking then thirty years as the average of time in which the whole capital of a nation, or a sum equal thereto, will revolve once, the thirtieth part thereof will be the sum that will revolve every year, that is, will go by deaths to new possessors; and this last sum being thus known, and the ratio per cent to be subtracted from it being determined, will give the annual amount or income of the proposed fund, to be applied as already mentioned.

In looking over the discourse of the English minister, Pitt, in his opening of what is called in England the budget (the scheme of finance for the year 1796) I find an estimate of the national capital of that country. As this estimate of a national

capital is prepared ready to my hand, I take it as a datum to act upon. When a calculation is made upon the known capital of any nation, combined with its population, it will serve as a scale for any other nation, in proportion as its capital and population be more or less. I am the more disposed to take this estimate of Mr. Pitt for the purpose of shewing to that malignant minister, upon his own calculation, how much better money may be employed, than in wasting it, as he has done, on the wild project of setting up Bourbon kings. What in the name of heaven are Bourbon kings to the people of England? It is better that the people have bread.

Mr Pitt states the national capital of England, real and personal, to be one thousand three hundred millions sterling, which is about one-fourth part of the national capital of France, including Belgia. The event of the last harvest in each country proves that the soil of France is more productive than that of England, and that it can better support twenty-four or twenty-five millions of inhabitants than that of England can seven, or seven and a half.

The 30th part of this capital of £.1,300,000,000 is £43,333,333, which is the part that will revolve every year by deaths in that country to new possessors; and the sum that will annually revolve in France in the proportion of four to one, will be about one hundred and seventy-three millions sterling. From this sum of £.43,333,333 annually revolving, is to be subtracted the value of the natural inheritance absorbed in it, which perhaps, in fair justice cannot be taken at less, and ought not to be taken at more, than a tenth part.

It will always happen, that of the property thus revolving by deaths every year, part will descend in a direct line to sons and daughters, and the other part collaterally, and the proportion will be found to be about three to one; that is, about 30 millions of the above sum will descend to direct heirs,

and the remaining sum of £.13,333,333 to more distant relations, and part to strangers.

Considering then that man is always related to society, that relationship will become comparatively greater in proportion as the next of kin is more distant. It is therefore consistent with civilization to say that where there are no direct heirs, society shall be heir to a part over and above the tenth part *due* to society. If this additional part be from five to ten or twelve per cent. in proportion as the next of kin be nearer or more remote, so as to average with the escheats [land reverting to the state when the owner dies without legal heir] that may fall, which ought always to go to society and not to the government, an addition of ten per cent. more, the produce from the annual sum of £.43,333,333 will be,

From	30,000,000	- at ten per cent	3,000,000
From	13,333,333	at 10 per cent. with the addition of ten per cent. more	2,666,666
	£.43,333,333	……	£.5,666,666

Having thus arrived at the annual amount of the proposed fund, I come, in the next place, to speak of the population proportioned to this fund, and to compare it with the uses to which the fund is to be applied.

The population (I mean that of England) does not exceed seven millions and a half, and the number of persons above the age of fifty will in that case be about four hundred thousand. There would not however be more than that number that would accept the proposed ten pounds sterling per annum, though they would be entitled to it. I have no idea it would be accepted by many persons who had a yearly income of two or three hundred pounds sterling. But as we often see instances of rich people falling into sudden poverty,

even at the age of sixty, they would always have the right of drawing all the arrears due to them. –Four millions, therefore, of the above annual sum of £.5,666,666 will be required for four hundred thousand aged persons, at ten pounds sterling each.

I come now to speak of the persons annually arriving at twenty-one years of age. If all the persons who died were above the age of twenty-one years, the number of persons annually arriving at that age, must be equal to the annual number of deaths to keep the population stationary. But the greater part die under the age of twenty-one, and therefore the number of persons annually arriving at twenty-one, will be less than half the number of deaths. The whole number of deaths upon a population of seven millions and a half, will be around 220,000 annually. The number arriving at 21 years of age will be about 100,000. The whole number of these will not receive the proposed fifteen pounds, for the reasons already mentioned, though, as in the former case, they would be entitled to it. Admitting then that a tenth part declined receiving it, the amount would stand thus:

Fund annually …….	……...	£.5,666,666
To 400,000 aged persons at £.10 each ……...	£.4,000,000)	
To .. 90,000 persons of 21 years, £.15 ster. each	1,350,000)	5,350,000
	remains	£.316,666

There are in every country a number of blind and lame persons totally incapable of earning a livelihood. But as it will always happen that the greater number of blind persons will

be among those who are above the age of fifty years, they will be provided for in that class. The remaining sum of £.316,666 will provide for the lame and blind under that age, at the same rate of £.10 annually for each person.

Having now gone though all the necessary calculations, and stated the particulars of the plan, I will conclude with some observations.

It is not a charity but a right – not bounty but justice, that I am pleading for. The present state of what is called civilization is as odious as it is unjust. It is the reverse of what it ought to be, and a revolution in it is necessary. The contrast of affluence and wretchedness continually meeting and offending the eye, is like dead and living bodies chained together. Though I care as little about riches as any man, I am a friend to riches because they are capable of good. I care not how affluent some may be, provided that none be miserable in consequence of it. But it is impossible to enjoy affluence with the felicity it is capable of being enjoyed, whilst so much misery is mingled in the scene. The sight of the misery, and the unpleasant sensations it suggests, which though they may be suffocated cannot be extinguished, are a greater drawback upon the felicity of affluence than the proposed 10 per cent. upon property is worth. He that would not give the one to get rid of the other, has no charity, even for himself.

There are in every country some magnificent charities established by individuals. It is however but little that any individual can do when the whole extent of the misery to be relieved be considered. He may satisfy his conscience, but not his heart. He may give all that he has, and that all will relieve but little. It is only by organising civilization upon such principles as to act like a system of pullies, that the whole weight of misery can be removed.

The plan here proposed will reach the whole. It will immediately relieve and take out of view three classes of wretchedness. The blind, the lame, and the aged poor; and it

will furnish the rising generation with means to prevent their becoming poor; and it will do this, without deranging or interfering with any national measures. To shew that this will be the case, it is sufficient to observe, that the operation and effect of the plan will, in all cases, be the same, as if every individual were *voluntarily* to make his will, and dispose of his property, in the manner here proposed.

But it is justice and not charity, that is the principle of the plan. In all great cases it is necessary to have a principle more universally active than charity; and with respect to justice, it ought not to be left to the choice of detached individuals, whether they will do justice or not. Considering then the plan on the ground of justice, it ought to be the act of the whole, growing spontaneously out of the principles of the revolution, and the reputation of it to be national and not individual.

A plan upon this principle would benefit the revolution by the energy that springs from the consciousness of justice. It would multiply also the national resources; for property, like vegetation, encreases by off-sets. When a young couple begins the world, the difference is exceedingly great whether they begin with nothing or with fifteen pounds a-piece. With this aid they could buy a cow, and implements to cultivate a few acres of land; and instead of becoming burthens upon society, which is always the case, where children are produced faster than they can be fed, would be put in the way of becoming useful and profitable citizens. The national domains also would sell the better, if pecuniary aids were provided to cultivate them in small lots.

It is the practice of what has unjustly obtained the name of civilization (and the practice merits not to be called either charity or policy) to make some provision for persons becoming poor and wretched, only at the time they become so. –Would it not, even as a matter of œconomy, be far better, to divise means to prevent their becoming poor. This can best be

done by making every person, when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, an inheritor of something to begin with. The rugged face of society, chequered with the extremes of affluence and of want, proves that some extraordinary violence has been committed upon it, and calls on justice for redress. The great mass of the poor, in all countries, are become an hereditary race, and it is next to impossible for them to get out of that state of themselves. It ought also to be observed, that this mass increases in all the countries that are called civilized. More persons fall annually into it, than can get out of it.

Though in a plan, in which justice and humanity are foundation-principles, interest ought not to be admitted into the calculation, yet it is always of advantage to the establishment of any plan, to shew that it is beneficial as a matter of interest. The success of any proposed plan, submitted to public consideration, must finally depend on the numbers interested in supporting it, united with the justice of its principles.

The plan here proposed will benefit all, without injuring any. It will consolidate the interest of the republic with that of the individual. To the numerous class dispossessed of their natural inheritance by the system of landed property, it will be an act of national justice. To persons dying possessed of moderate fortunes, it will operate as a tontine [annuity] to their children, more beneficial than the sum of money paid into the fund: and it will give to the accumulation of riches a degree of security that none of the old governments of Europe, now tottering on their foundations, can give.

I do not suppose that more than one family in ten, in any of the countries of Europe, has, when the head of the family dies, a clear property left of five hundred pounds sterling. To all such the plan is advantageous. That property would pay fifty pounds into the fund, and if there were only two children under age, they would receive fifteen pounds each (thirty

pounds) on coming of age, and be entitled to ten pounds a year after fifty. It is from the overgrown acquisition of property that the fund will support itself; and I know that the possessors of such property in England, though they would eventually be benefited by the protection of nine tenths of it, will exclaim against the plan. But, without entering into any enquiry how they came by that property, let them recollect, that they have been the advocates of this war, and that Mr. Pitt has already laid on more new taxes to be raised annually upon the people of England, and that for supporting the despotism of Austria and the Bourbons, against the liberties of France, than would annually pay all the sums proposed in this plan.

I have made the calculations, stated in this plan, upon what is called personal, as well as upon landed property. The reason for making it upon land is already explained; and the reason for taking personal property into the calculation, is equally well founded, though on a different principle. Land, as before said, is the free gift of the Creator in common to the human race. Personal property is the *effect of society*; and it is as impossible for an individual to acquire personal property without the aid of society, as it is for him to make land originally. Separate an individual from society, and give him an island or a continent to possess, and he cannot acquire personal property. He cannot be rich. So inseparably are the means connected with the end, in all cases, that where the former do not exist, the latter cannot be obtained. All accumulation therefore of personal property, beyond a man's own hands produce, is derived to him by living in society; and he owes, on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilization, a part of that accumulation back again to society from whence the whole came. This is putting the matter on a general principle, and perhaps it is best to do so; for if we examine the case minutely, it will be found, that the accumulation of personal property is, in many instances, the

effect of paying too little for the labour that produced it; the consequence of which is, that the working hand perishes in old age, and the employer abounds in affluence. It is perhaps impossible to proportion exactly the price of labour to the profits it produces; and it will also be said, as an apology for injustice, that were a workman to receive an increase in wages daily, he would not save it against old age nor be much better for it in the interim. Make then Society the treasurer to guard it for him in a common fund, for it is no reason that because he might not make a good use of it for himself that another shall take it.

The state of civilization that has prevailed throughout Europe is as unjust in its principle as it is horrid in its effects; and it is the consciousness of this, and the apprehension that such a state cannot continue when once investigation begins in any country, that makes the possessors of property dread every idea of a revolution. It is the *hazard* and not the principles of a revolution that retards their progress. This being the case, it is necessary, as well for the protection of property as for the sake of justice and humanity, to form a system, that whilst it preserves one part of society from wretchedness, shall secure the other from depredation.

The superstitious awe, the enslaving reverence, that formerly surrounded affluence, is passing away in all countries and leaving the possessor of property to the convulsion of accidents. When wealth and splendour instead of fascinating the multitude excite emotions of disgust; when instead of drawing forth admiration, it is beheld as an insult upon wretchedness; when the ostentatious appearance it makes serves to call the right of it in question, the case of property becomes critical, and it is only in a system of justice that the possessor can contemplate security.

To remove the danger it is necessary to remove the antipathies, and this can only be done by making property productive of a national blessing extending to every

individual. When the riches of one man above another shall increase the national fund in the same proportion; when it shall be seen that the prosperity of that fund depends on the prosperity of individuals; when the more riches a man acquires the better it shall be for the general mass, it is then that antipathies will cease and property be placed on the permanent basis of national interest and protection.

I have no property in France to become subject to the plan I propose. What I have, which is not much, is in the United States of America. But I will pay one hundred pounds sterling toward this fund in France, the instant it shall be established; and I will pay the same sum in England, whenever a similar establishment shall take place in that country.

A revolution in the state of civilization is the necessary companion of revolutions in the system of government. If a revolution in any country be from bad to good, or from good to bad, the state of what is called civilization in that country must be made conformable thereto, to give that revolution effect. Despotic government supports itself by abject civilization, in which debasement of the human mind, and wretchedness in the mass of the people, are the chief criterians. Such governments consider man merely as an animal; that the exercise of intellectual faculty is not his privilege; *that he has nothing to do with the laws, but to obey them;* [*] and they politically depend more upon breaking the spirit of the people by poverty, than they fear enraging it by desperation.

It is a revolution in the state of civilization that will give perfection to the revolution of France. Already, the conviction that government, by representation, is the true system of government, is spreading itself fast in the world. The reasonableness of it can be seen by all. The justness of it makes itself felt even by its opposers. But when a system of

[*] Expression of Horsley, an English bishop in the English Parliament

civilization, growing out of that system of government, shall be so organised, that not a man or woman born in the republic, but shall inherit some means of beginning the world, and see before them the certainty of escaping the miseries, that under other governments accompany old age, the revolution of France will have an advocate and an ally in the heart of all nations.

An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot: – It will succeed where diplomatic management would fail – It is neither the Rhine, the Channel, nor the Ocean, that can arrest its progress – It will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer.

THOMAS PAINE

Means for carrying the proposed Plan into execution, and to render it at the same time conducive to the public interest

I.

Each canton shall elect in its primary assemblies three persons, as commissioners for that canton, who shall take cognizance, and keep a register, of all matters happening in that canton, conformably to the charter that shall be established by law, for carrying this plan into execution.

II.

The law shall fix the manner in which the property of deceased persons shall be ascertained.

III.

When the amount of the property of any deceased person shall be ascertained, the principal heir to that property, or the eldest of the coheirs, if of lawful age, or if under age, the person authorised by the will of the deceased to represent him, or them, shall give bond to the commissioners of the canton, to pay the said tenth part thereof, within the space of one year, in four equal quarterly payments, or sooner, at the choice of the payers. One half of the whole property shall remain as security until the bond be paid off.

IV.

The bonds shall be registered in the office of the commissioners of the canton, and the original bonds shall be deposited in the national bank at Paris. The bank shall publish every quarter of a year the amount of the bonds in its possession, and also the bonds that shall have been paid off, or what parts thereof, since the last quarterly publication.

V.

The national bank shall issue bank notes upon the security of the bonds in its possession. The notes so issued shall be applied to pay the pensions of aged persons, and the compensations to persons arriving at twenty-one years of age. – It is both reasonable and generous to suppose, that persons not under immediate necessity will suspend their right of drawing on the fund, until it acquire, as it will do, a greater degree of ability. In this case, it is proposed that an honorary register be kept in each canton of the names of the persons thus suspending that right, at least during the present war.

VI.

As the inheritors of property must always take up their bonds in four quarterly payments, or sooner if they chuse, there will always be numeraire [cash / coinage] arriving at the bank after the expiration of the first quarter, to exchange for the bank notes that shall be brought in.

VII.

The bank notes being thus got into circulation upon the best of all possible security, that of actual property to more than four times the amount of the bonds upon which the notes are issued, and with numeraire continually arriving at the bank to exchange or pay them off whenever they shall be presented for that purpose, they will acquire a permanent value in all parts of the republic. They can therefore be received in payment of taxes or emprunts, equal to numeraire, because the government can always receive numeraire for them at the bank.

VIII.

It will be necessary that the payments of the ten per cent be made in numeraire for the first year, from the establishment of the plan. But after the expiration of the first year, the inheritors of property may pay the ten per cent. either in bank notes issued upon the fund, or in numeraire. If the payments be in numeraire, it will lie as a deposit at the bank, to be exchanged for a quantity of notes equal to that amount; and if in notes issued upon the fund, it will cancel a demand upon the fund equal thereto; and thus the operation of the plan will create means to carry itself into execution.

THOMAS SPENCE'S CRITIQUE OF *AGRARIAN JUSTICE*

A CONTRAST
Between *PAINE'S* AGRARIAN JUSTICE, and
SPENCE'S END OF OPPRESSION

Both being built upon the same indisputable Principle, viz.
That the Land is the common Property of Mankind.

Under the system of Agrarian Justice,	*Under the system of* The End of Oppression,
The people will, as it were, sell their birth-right for a mess of porridge, by accepting of a paltry consideration in lieu of their rights	The people will receive, without deduction, the whole produce of their common inheritance.
Under the first	*Under the second*
The people will become supine and careless in respect of public affairs, knowing the utmost they can receive of the public money.	The people will be vigilant and watchful over the public expenditure, knowing that the more there is saved their dividends will be the larger.
Under the first	*Under the second*
The people will be more like pensioned emigrants and French priests than interested natives.	The people will be all intent upon the improvement of their respective parishes, for the sake of the increased shares of the revenues, which on that account they will receive.

Under the first	*Under the second*
The people cannot derive right of suffrage in national affairs, from their compromisory stipends.	Universal suffrage will be inseparably attached to the people both in parochial and national affairs, because the revenues, both parochial and national, will be derived immediately from their common landed property.
Under the first	*Under the second*
The government may be either absolute monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, or mixed.	The government must of necessity be democratic.
Under the first	*Under the second*
All the complexity of the present public establishments, which support such hosts of placemen, will not only still continue, but also the evils of them will be greatly enhanced by the very system of Agrarian Justice.	There can be but two descriptions of public officers, parochial and national, and these but few in number, and on moderate salaries.
Under the first	*Under the second*
There will exist two spirits, incompatible in a free state, the insolent and overbearing spirit of aristocracy, and the sneaking unmanly spirit of conscious dependence.	There will exist only the robust spirit of independence, mellowed and tempered by the presence and checks of equally independent fellow-citizens.

Under the first	*Under the second*
The destructive profligacy of the great, and the wretched degeneracy of the poor, will still continue, and will increase, to the pitiable unhappiness of both parties.	All the virtues being the natural offspring of a general and happy mediocrity, will at once step forth into life, and progressively increase their blessed influence among men.
Under the first	*Under the second*
Taxes, both directly and indirectly, will not only be demanded, but will be increased to the utmost the people can possibly bear, let trade and seasons be ever so prosperous.	There can be no taxes, nor expenses of collecting them, because the government would be supported by a poundage from the rents which each parish would send quarterly to the national treasury, free of all expense; this leaving the price of all commodities unencumbered with any addition but the price of labour.
Under the first	*Under the second*
The poor would still continue, through despair, unambitious to arrive out of their hopeless state of abject wretchedness and vulgarity.	The lowest and most profligate having such frequent opportunities, by the aid of their quarterly dividends, of starting into industrious and decent modes of life, could not always resist the influence of the general virtue every where displayed, without some time or other following the example.

Under the first	*Under the second*
Children will still be considered as grievous burdens in poor families.	As both young and old share equally alike in the parish revenues, children and aged relations living in a family will, especially in rich parishes, where the dividends are large, through high rents or the productions of mines, etc. be accounted as blessings.
Under the first	*Under the second*
If the aristocratic assistance afforded by charity schools, in the education of poor children, be withdrawn, the labouring classes must inevitably degenerate into barbarous ignorance.	If the people are not generally learned it must be their own fault, as their inexhaustible means of comfortable subsistence must furnish also the means of education.
Under the first	*Under the second*
The poor must still look up for aristocratic benefactions of rotten potatoes and spoiled rice, and other substitutes for bread in the times of scarcity, to preserve their wretched existence.	What with the annihilation of taxes and the dividends of the parochial rents, together with the honest guardianship of their popular government, we may reasonably suppose that the people will rarely be driven to the dire necessity of using a substitute for bread.

Under the first	*Under the second*
After admitting that the earth belongs to the people, the people must nevertheless compromise the matter with their conquerors and oppressors, and still suffer them to remain as a distinct and separate body amongst them, in full possession of their country.	After insisting that the land is public property, the people's oppressors must either submit to become indistinguishable in the general mass of citizens or fly the country.
Under the first	*Under the second*
If foreign or domestic trade increase, the productions of the land will increase in price, of which the landed interest will reap the advantage, by raising the rents in due proportion until the whole benefit thereof centres in them.	If foreign or domestic trade increase, the price of commodities will in proportion also increase, and the rents of course will rise, but this increase will revert back to the body of the people, by increasing their quarterly dividends.
Under the first	*Under the second*
All the aristocratic monopolies in trade, in privileges, and government, will continue.	There can be no monopolies; but a fair, salutary, and democratic competition will pervade every thing.
Under the first	*Under the second*
A timid and acquiescing spirit must be promoted amongst the people as now, lest they should discover the dissimularity between their natural rights and enjoyments.	The justness and consistency of affairs will invite, nay, challenge, the most rigorous and logical enquiries, and will draw forth, uncramped, the utmost powers of the mind.

Under the first	*Under the second*
Domestic trade will be far from its natural height, because multitudes of the people will be poor and beggarly, and unable to purchase numberless articles of use and luxury that their wants and inclinations would prompt them to wish for.	Domestic trade would be at an amazing pitch, because there would be no poor; none but would be well cloathed, lodged, and fed: and the whole mass of rents, except a trifle to the government, being circulated at home, in every parish, every quarter, would cause such universal prosperity as would enable every body to purchase not only the necessities of life, but many elegancies and luxuries.
Under the first	*Under the second*
The fund proposed by Paine will require a great number of placemen of various descriptions to manage it, and who being chosen, as they must be, by the ministry and their friends, will very much increase the already enormous influence of governments.	The government can have very little influence by places, because the parish officers will be chosen by the parishioners; and all the complex machinery of financiering and stock-jobbing; all the privileged trading companies and corporate towns, which are the nests of influence and corruption, would be abolished.

Under the first

The rich would abolish all hospitals, charitable funds, and parochial provision for the poor, telling them, that they now have all that their great advocate, Paine, demands, as their rights, and what he exultingly deems as amply sufficient to ameliorate their condition and render them happy, by which the latter end of our reformation will be worse than the beginning.

Under the second

The quarterly dividends, together with the abolishment of all taxes, would destroy the necessity of public charities; but if any should be thought necessary, whether to promote learning, or for any other purpose, the parochial and national funds would be found at all times more than sufficient.

AN INTERNATIONAL DECLARATION ON INDIVIDUAL AND COMMON RIGHTS TO EARTH

We hereby declare that the earth is the common heritage of all and that all people have natural and equal rights to the land of the planet. By the term "land" is meant all natural resources. Subject always to these natural and equal rights in land and to this common ownership, individuals can and should enjoy certain subsidiary rights in land. These rights properly enjoyed by individuals are:

1. The right to secure exclusive occupation of land.
2. The right to exclusive use of land occupied.
3. The right to the free transfer of land according to the laws of the country.
4. The right to transmit land by inheritance.

These individual rights do not include:

1. The right to use land in a manner contrary to the common good of all, e.g., in such a manner as to destroy or impair the common heritage.
2. The right to appropriate what economists call the Economic Rent of land.

The Economic Rent is the annual value attaching to the land alone apart from any improvements thereon created by labor. This value is created by the existence of and the functioning of the whole community wherein the individual lives and is in justice the property of the community. To allow this value to be appropriated by individuals enables land to be used not only for the production of wealth but as an instrument of oppression of human by human leading to severe social consequences which are everywhere evident.

All humans have natural and equal rights in land. Those rights may be exercised in two ways:

1. By holding land as individuals and/or

2. Sharing in the common use of the Economic Rent of land.

The Economic Rent of land can be collected for the use of the community by methods similar to those by which real estate taxes are now collected. That is what is meant by the policy of Land Value Taxation. Were this community created land value collected, the many taxes which impede the production of wealth and limit purchasing power could be abolished.

The exercise of both common and individual rights in land is essential to a society based on justice. But the rights of individuals in natural resources are limited by the just rights of the community. Denying the existence of common rights in land creates a condition of society wherein the exercise of individual rights becomes impossible for the great mass of the people.

WE THEREFORE DECLARE THAT THE EARTH IS THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL PEOPLE.

Originally composed and declared at a meeting of the International Union for Land Value Taxation held in 1949 (www.theiu/international-declaration).

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Proposal that Louisiana be purchased

Thomas Paine

In 1802 Louisiana was administered by the French. Napoleon had denied access by the USA to New Orleans and there was a real risk that the two countries would go to war. On Christmas Day Tom Paine wrote a short letter to the president, Thomas Jefferson, suggesting that the USA should purchase Louisiana from the French. Within a year the deal had been done.

When it comes to disputes about territory and natural resources, are we missing a trick? Could we make more use of financial solutions to settle disputes?

Proposal that Louisiana be purchased was not Tom Paine's only suggestion about fair ways to handle territorial claims. In *Agrarian Justice* he asserted the principle that a landowner '*owes to the community a ground-rent*' (Land Value Tax) that should be distributed to all. If this distribution were to take place across national boundaries this would dramatically reduce the incentive for one state to grab the territory of another.

When conflict threatens, buying or renting territory could form the basis for peaceful resolution.

Available from: www.stewardship.ac/orders.htm

Husbandry:
an ancient art for the modern world

Jonty Williams

Ever thought of being a husband or wife to a piece of the earth?

Each and every human being alive today belongs to a world which is alive. The resources of land, sea and air we find ourselves in are composed of alive ecological communities – both urban and rural. We humans find ourselves placed at the top of the food chains of these pieces of earth. That gives us a special, self-interested need to look after them.

This book tells a story of husbandry – a proper, time honoured way in which humanity may participate as members and marriage partners with these "earth communities".

This book also shows how we might link together and apply the power of our economic systems to this task so that earth communities and humanity's marriage to them may both flourish.

Husbanding even a small piece of the earth is both a breath-taking ambition and one which recognises the equal dignity and regard that both human and soil need to have for each other.

Husbandry requires an exclusive relationship of a person with the land. Dignified secure tenure requires the payment of dues to compensate those who are excluded from that land.

Available from: www.stewardship.ac/orders.htm

Stewardship Economy:
private property without private ownership

Julian Pratt

This book takes a radical approach to the problems of market economies. It doesn't question the role of market mechanisms themselves, or the role of government in regulating the economy and providing public goods. It does however question one of the foundations on which market-based economies are based: the system of property rights. It suggests that the form of private property that works well for the things we make is entirely inappropriate when applied to the natural world. It proposes an alternative – stewardship.

The underlying principle of stewardship is that everyone is entitled to an equal share of the wealth of the natural world.

The steward of any part of the natural world has the exclusive right to use it, the responsibility to care for it and the duty to compensate others for excluding them from it.

In practical terms this means that stewards of land pay dues (fees) that are equal to its market rent. This is used to provide revenue for the government in place of conventional taxes and to provide a Universal Income that is distributed to everybody. Stewards of the environment pay a charge equal to the resource rent, and this revenue is distributed to everybody as an Environmental Dividend.

Once you see the world from the perspective of stewardship, none of the familiar challenges look the same. You will have a new way of thinking about what to do about poverty, the environment, globalisation, the tax-benefit system, house prices, negative equity, recessions, sovereign debt …

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