

DEMOCRACY, EARTH RIGHTS, AND THE NEXT ECONOMY,

by Alanna Hartzok

Review by Dr. Heather Remoff, Eagles Mere, PA

As the title of Alanna Hartzok's speech at the prestigious Schumacher Lectures indicates, she is not afraid of big topics even in "small-is-beautiful" environments. Six hundred people attended her presentation. The speech and the resulting pamphlet live up to the promise in the title and serve an important role in linking Georgist thought to our natural allies in the environmental and sustainable economies movements.

Hartzok gets off to a running start and quickly targets the inequitable distribution of land as being at the heart of the concerns that unite those in her audience. She nicely ties her remarks to the positions of Amory Lovins and John Todd, the two other speakers on the program, both of whom are leaders in the natural capital and appropriate technology movements.

Even Georgists who are familiar with the history of humankind's alienation from their basic rights in land will be fascinated by Hartzok's survey of the enclosures. Reading the pamphlet, this reviewer was always aware of its origins as passionately spoken word. This is no dry recitation of historical fact, but is, instead, a heartfelt cry against injustice. Part of the fun of reading the piece is experiencing the imagined audience reaction and interest.

Hartzok carefully builds her case, relating her arguments to early Christian teachings and giving equal time to those that support her position and to those that, in apparent service to the interests of the landlord, distort notions of justice in regard to land. Her speech is peppered with entertaining quotes. One of my favorites is the statement by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "Before the Europeans came to Africa, we had the land and they had the Bible. We bowed our heads to pray, and when we opened our eyes, we had the Bible and they had the land."

Tracing the history of justice and human rights in our own country, Hartzok identifies "the property-in-land problem" as "the crack in the Liberty Bell" and quotes our own Richard Noyes as seeing the current land tenure system as, "the one great imperfection, the snag on which freedom catches." This is powerful stuff, but Hartzok is not content to merely identify the problems, she also offers solutions.

As she moves toward her conclusion, she describes "five ways by which the earth can be claimed for the benefit of the people as a whole, detailing ways and means for securing common rights to water, oil and mineral royalties, and the rent of surface land." Hartzok is not content to merely bullet her five instruments for change. She offers concrete examples of specific (cont'd on pg. 6)

actions that have successfully challenged the misguided assumptions that stand in the way of our rights to the earth.

One of the real strengths of this lecture is its belief in the possibility of a better future. Hartzok not only describes her vision for the "Next Economy", she also inspires her audience to an activism that could bring it to pass. I heartily recommend "Democracy, Earth Rights, and the Next Economy". Both its many strengths and its only flaw lie in its origins as a speech. Although the pamphlet contains references, I was occasionally frustrated by the lack of an appropriate footnote for a particularly intriguing piece of information. (Hartzok tells me that Schumacher resists including endnotes with printed copies of their lectures. The complete and unabridged footnotes will be found on www.Earthrights.net.)

That reservation aside, I plan to purchase a number of copies to share with environmentalist friends who have not yet seen the Georgist light. Copies are \$5.00 apiece and can be ordered from the E. F. Schumacher Society at 140 Jug End Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230. Further information is available at www.smallisbeautiful.org or at (413) 528-1737.

[Hartzok is the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Representative for the International Union for Land Value Taxation and also is the director of the Earth Rights Institute. Hartzok's published presentation is printed in a nicely bound 42 page booklet. Sharing the podium with Hartzok at the Schumacher Lectures were University of Vermont Professor John Todd, who is an internationally recognized biologist and author, and Amory Lovins, a co-founder in 1982 of the Rocky Mountain Institute and the co-author of "Natural Capitalism Creating the Next Industrial Revolution."]

[Dr. Heather Remoff is a member of the Board of Directors of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. She also serves on the boards of HGFA, CSE, and the Henry George School of Social Science. She and her husband Gene both read and were impressed by Alanna Hartzok's speech, though they were unable to be present at the Twenty-First Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures held at Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, on October 27, 2001.
