

Footnote: A Share In The Land

We each arrive on this planet with nothing. We each take none of it with us when we leave. Yet there is a glaring disparity in how its habitable land is divided among us. No excursion in moral reasoning can justify this. The poor and dispossessed should therefore be given back their rightful shares. [PDF]

The History

Before 1700 A.D. there were well over 1½ km² of habitable land for every family on the Earth. Even as late as 1800 A.D. there was still about 1 km² of habitable land per family. Today, with over 6 billion people on earth [circa 1998], there remains only about 15·2 hectares of habitable land per family. This planet still has more than enough land for everybody to be able to turn their labour into their needs of life. So it could never have been for lack of planetary resources that disparity of wealth and well-being has been an ever-present feature of history.

The Potential

Ecologists calculate that the planet's biosphere is capable of supporting 6 times the present population. Each human being is equipped with a 120-150 watt body, a 200-billion neurone brain and 8 productive hours a day in which to use them. So provided he is allowed to apply his labour to an adequate portion of the planet's resources, every human being is capable of producing his needs of life. In favourable circumstances, the amount he can produce is much more than the immediate consumable needs of himself and his dependants.

The Reality

The table below shows the amount of habitable land covered by the United Kingdom, and available on the planet as a whole. It then shows how much this works out as per head of population for each. Land, as an economic resource, is relevant only to working economic units. The basic economic unit is the generic family. A generic family is made up of 2 grandparents, 2 parents and 3 children.

	United Kingdom	The World
Habitable Land	241,590 km ²	130,693,000 km ²
Population ‡	58,970,119	~6,000,000,000
Land per person	4,097 m ²	21,782 m ²
Land per family	28,678 m ²	152,475 m ²

‡ United Kingdom population estimate at July 1998.

As inhabitants of the planet, my family's share of its land surface should therefore be just over 15 hectares. A hectare is 10,000 m². 100 hectares = 1 km². In fairness, this should be our unconditional inheritance by right of birth. In other words, our birthrights. Even as inhabitants of this grossly overcrowded United Kingdom of Great Britain, our combined share of its land surface still should be almost 3 hectares.

In contrast, the table below shows how much land is actually owned by 3 different inhabitants of the United Kingdom: the Queen, [the farmer](#) I know, and me. It also shows how many times (in my case, what fraction of) their fair share each has of the land in the United Kingdom, and of the habitable land surface of this planet.

	Area Owned	Share of U.K.	Share of Earth
The Queen	† 28,000 hectares	9,764 times	1,836 times
The Farmer	158 hectares	55 times	10½ times
Me	.0676 hectares	1/42 nd of	1/234 th of

† Combined area of [Balmoral](#) and [Sandringham](#) estates only.

The Queen has 414,201 times as much land as I have. And as her subjects generally fare, I have rather more than the average. The [farmer](#) (with his family of 6) has over 55 times his fair share of the UK land surface. He has 2,337 times as much land as I have. My family of 5, who has more than the average, 'owns' less than 400m² (0.04 hectares), which is about 2% of our fair share. The United Kingdom is a land of gross disparity.

More Than Sufficient Means

Sustained by energy from the sun, the ecosystem of Planet Earth provides mankind constantly and continuously with far more than sufficient means to enable every single member of the human race to generate for himself the needs for an abundant and fulfilled life.

The ebbs and flows of nature are well understood. Ancient history has shown that feast and famine can be managed. There is no economic or moral excuse for poverty and deprivation. Modern booms and recessions - and the unemployment they spawn - are man-made. And deliberately so.

No Excuse For Poverty

Use of Planet Earth's resources and what they produce have been commandeered by a minority which like a coven of self-appointed demigods have ensconced themselves between mankind and his birthright. If it were not for the avarice of that faceless few, the present disgraceful state-of-the-world would not exist.

It is not beyond the wit of man to understand what he must do to live at peace with his neighbour. A fair society of peers could be formulated quite easily. If they would only cease from dissipating the greater part of human effort in endless acts of gainless competition and conflict, a good living could be had by all, paving the way to higher things.

[Parent Document](#) | ©Dec 1994 Robert John Morton

© This content is free and may be reproduced unmodified in its entirety, including all headers and footers, or as "fair usage" quotations that are attributed as follows: " - [article name] by Robert John Morton <http://robmorton.20m.com/>