

## Courageous thinking, in response to George Monbiot

Published: January 14, 2026, 8:54 am

---

[George Monbiot's Guardian article](#) this morning asks what is the next big idea. He concludes it could be land value taxation and a citizen's income.

I have no doubt land value taxation has to be part of a proper tax system. I also have a paper coming very shortly, with Howard Reed, on a citizen's income. But whilst I think they are important I am not sure either is the next 'big idea'. They're important, but not enough to change everything.

Curiously George hints at what is needed, saying:

*These ideas require courage: the courage to confront the government, the opposition, the plutocrats, the media, the suspicions of a wary electorate. But without proposals on this scale, progressive politics is dead. They strike that precious spark, so seldom kindled in this age of triangulation and timidity — the spark of hope.*

Here he and I agree. [In my book The Courageous State](#) I argued (chapter 13, when introducing the third part of the book on solutions to the problems we face):

*Based on the arguments in the first two parts of this book I hope it is now clear that the Courageous State has three goals.*

*First, it wants to run its own economy in accordance with its democratic mandate to achieve a balanced outcome that is sustainable and that permits as many of its resident population to achieve as much of their potential as possible.*

*Second, the Courageous State wants to cooperate internationally so that other states can achieve the same goal for themselves.*

*Third, it wants to provide as much freedom as it can to its population to explore their potential while imposing only those constraints necessary to ensure that a balanced society results. The result should be personal courageous states where individual risk-taking — not just economic, but across the whole spectrum of life — is possible.*

*It is important to note that these goals are fundamentally different to the those of the feral, neoliberal state we now have. That state that sings to the neoliberal tune and runs its economy to primarily meet the needs of the financial /speculative economy that exists largely outside the real economy in which real people live, work and exchange. Internationally, the neoliberal state succumbs to the demands of international finance represented in popular myth as 'the bond markets'.*

*It is also important to say that the Courageous State is also different from the post-war consensus. In a nutshell that consensus offered a bargain with the people of the developed world, offering better material living standards for all now, and for their children thereafter. In the process it ignored the constraints of the planet. Oil found it out and led to its downfall.*

*In contrast to the post-war consensus, the feral neoliberal economy offered a different bargain with the people of the world: it offered (relatively) stable consumer prices, an illusion of wealth through asset inflation and cheap, readily available credit so that people could have whatever they wanted as soon as advertising succeeded in persuading them of their desire for it. The mountain of debt this created as an elite accumulated unsustainable wealth has found this model out and has led to its downfall.*

*The Courageous State offers a different bargain with the people of the world. It offers those people the chance to fulfil their potential, both economic and otherwise, in a world that offers them and their children sustainable hope for their future. No-one has done that before, but the Courageous State is a not a twist on what we've had: it is about creating politics fit for the 21st century.*

*In saying that I know, of course, that the degree to which any state can be courageous depends to some degree upon the eventual extent of international cooperation there is on these goals; there is no point pretending otherwise. But for all those who say that is unlikely to happen, it is wise to recall that for many years neoliberals thought they had no hope of overturning the post-war Keynesian consensus that delivered the greatest period of sustainable increased prosperity the world has ever seen. However, they did just that. Circumstances gave them the opportunity and they took it. The current world economic crisis provides the opportunity to create the Courageous State. To put it another way: without courage, the Courageous State will not happen, but the time for it to be created is now.*

*It's vain to suggest you have the big idea, and I definitely don't. But I offer some big ones in that book. And for good reasons: the world needs them.*