

INTRODUCTION

Roland Vaubel leads off this issue with an article examining the various rationales offered for redistributive policies. His analysis concludes in favour of helping the poor rather than a general levelling of income differences.

Dmitrii Trubnikov and **Ekaterina Trubnikova** use public choice theory to critically review the principle of ‘universal service’ in telecommunications.

The rapid growth of electronic currency in Africa is examined by **Malavika Nair** and **Rahimat Emozozo**, who locate this development in the older tradition of privately issued inside money.

The British politician William Huskisson is sadly best remembered nowadays for being the first victim of a fatal railway accident. But, as **Christopher Rowe** argues, Huskisson deserves renewed recognition as a powerful and influential advocate of free trade in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

In recent years many countries have legislated to restrict the use of free plastic bags by supermarkets. **Richard Kish** looks at the economic arguments.

Attitudes towards capitalism differ across the planet, but **Pál Czeglédi** and **Carlos Newland** demonstrate the existence of clusters of nations which seem to have similar ideological positions. They link this to indicators of economic freedom.

In a lively Discussion section, **Tim Congdon** takes issue with Sir Charles Bean’s analysis of ultra-low interest rates in the Wincott Memorial Lecture 2017, **J. R. Sargent** offers his view of the UK’s ‘Productivity Puzzle’, while **Keith Hartley** and **Paul Robinson** continue the debate about defence spending.

This issue’s Review Article by **Nicos Zafiris** reflects on the continuing crisis of Greece’s economy.

J. R. Shackleton
Editor