

OPEN FORUM 4

Postbag

Sir, Michael Hudson and Richard Noyes, in "Sidetracked! Counting the cost of the Two-Rate Tax" (Spring 1997), indicate that the effort to get two-rate cities is trivial and inconsequential and that the movement should abandon this effort to concentrate on the "big picture". They say: "Only an overall philosophy will enable people to make sense of the chaos in the economy. Once people gain this broader sense of proportion, their fiscal perspective will follow."

The idea that because we seek two-rate cities we are somehow undermining other efforts to convince the public of the rectitude of George's theory is nonsense.

One of the strengths of our movement is that everyone has his own idea about how to reach the goal we all cherish: for governments to eliminate taxes on labour and to collect the economic rent of the land. This is a strength because we do not know which path is going to be the one that will lead us to our goal. If we did, we could concentrate all of our efforts on the "right" path and

abandon all of the work on the "wrong" paths. The authors say that theirs is the "right" path, that getting two-rate cities is the "wrong" path and that all of the resources now directed to two-rate should be re-directed to the "right" way. More nonsense.

There is no bar to the authors pursuing the "right" solution. Since they tell us it is the "right" way to go, undoubtedly, they will convince our national leaders to follow their lead. When that happens, but not before, all of us two-raters will abandon our efforts and fall in line behind the leaders. The progress that Dick Noyes has made toward our goal in the New Hampshire Legislature, where he sits, is a sterling example of the results that can be achieved when following the "right" path.

We do need "real world victories". We do need more two-rate cities. We need more cities that tax land only. It's obvious, even to us, that it is only a first step, but, if we do not have first steps, modest as they may be, we will become totally a debating society. We will have

no examples of the practical application of our ideas. Is that what we want, nothing practical, just more and more studies and more and more debates? I don't think so.

The article does prove one thing to me. Georgists have little or no tolerance for the ideas and efforts of other Georgists. Georgists like to blame their lack of success not on the paucity of their own efforts, but, on the wrong efforts of other Georgists. If those other Georgists would just get out of the way then the leaders would lead us to Nirvana. Can't we ever get over this syndrome and concentrate our efforts on moving toward our goal? What a waste of energy and treasure to spend the time writing such nonsense and taking the very scarce space in *Land and Liberty* to publish it.

Let us all work, in whatever way we think right, to reach our goal. Let us stop, once and for all, criticizing each other and concentrate on the real problems.

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HENRY GEORGE

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all classes. Booms and slumps continue to follow in succession. City centres decay, while pressures grow for encroachments on the countryside.

Henry George's latter-day followers still believe that the economic doctrines which he proposed more than a century ago provide at least part of the answer to such modern problems. Now that the various other solutions which were being eagerly proposed so recently have all disappointed their erstwhile supporters, is it worth examining Henry George's arguments carefully and critically in a modern context, to see how they might help?

Governments are facing impossible demands for increases in spending on education, health, transport and poverty alleviation. Present systems of taxation cannot cope. Henry George pointed to a source of government revenue which is simple to collect, is fair, and does not press down upon employment or production. It is time for a re-appraisal.