

How I "Saw the Cat"

George Jukes

continues our series of personal journeys relating the different paths by which we arrive at geoism. To "see the cat" is to experience a sort of revelation, in the manner of when a kid sees the hidden cat in those activity book drawings of a tree or bush. After you've seen the cat, the geoist paradigm just seems so obvious.

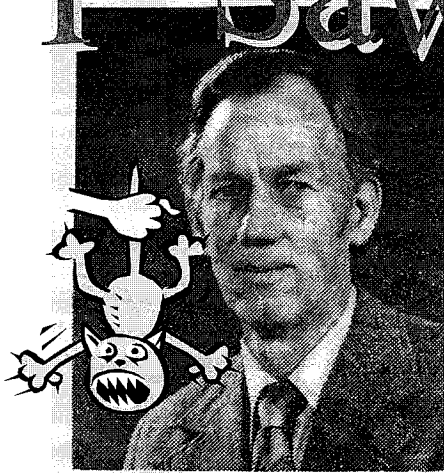
1919 wasn't an easy time to be born, and tougher still if you had 5 siblings. I was brought up in a Georgist household with a father (who seemed to know it from birth) plus an elderly man who was a boarder in our Port Lincoln home. The need for economic justice was the only topic of conversation, so I was imbued with Georgist econom-

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ics by osmosis. With this very early edification, there was not actually any definable moment when I saw the cat.

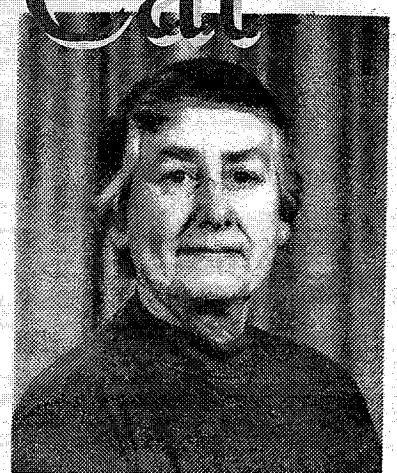
My father always objected to the name "Single Tax" and asserted that George's solution is not really a tax at all, so our household was never obscured by this misleading term.

A little bit of history about the "West Coast" - the western half of South Australia and my birth place. Now if you were to rule a line East-West across Australia between Perth and Sydney, about half way



George JUKES

THE
HENRY GEORGE
LEAGUE
INDEPENDENT
CANDIDATES
FOR THE
SENATE



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across is a small town called Kimba. If there was a spot in *The Guinness Book of Records* noting which place had the greatest percentage of Georgists per head of population, I think that at one moment in history Kimba would have won it hands down.

Early last century a number of early farmer settlers were driving their stock overland to the West Coast and they were joined by a young Irishman - an immigrant who was humping his bluey across Australia. And so, in those days walking and driving their stock, Sam Lindsay introduced them to Henry George. The ranks are growing thin now, but after nearly 100 years there are still a few stalwarts keeping the faith.

I was bashing the ears of my unwilling school friends from about the age of 12 and, though I have never doubted the truth of Henry George's teachings of the natural order, I have learned to refine some of the arguments and even add a couple of extensions to suit changing times. However, there's been no doubting the accuracy of George's logic or the beauty of expression.

At 19, as a tailor, I moved to Adelaide and soon began visiting the Georgist office, especially because Mr. Craigie was the secretary there. When he got in parliament, his son Tom ran the office, and I remember Tom discussing *Progress and Poverty* with one of these smart alects who thought it was clever to prove George was wrong. Suddenly Tom said, "Just a minute, Alan" and

pulled *Progress and Poverty* from the shelf and located the exact sentence. He put the punctuation in the correct place and altered the meaning completely. I was most impressed.

Mr. Craigie eventually lost his seat in parliament because the Labor and Liberal parties exchanged preferences, so the Labor party actually put in the Liberal party member. A similar anti-geoist conspiracy occurred a decade or so ago when the Democrat leader, Janine Haynes, narrowly lost a South Australian election.

After Mr. Craigie left parliament, he worked full time for the Henry George League and often travelled to country towns to speak at meetings when local councils were planning to change from Site Value to Capital Value rating. He was usually successful. We had a photo of the 3 Craigie boys and on the back Mr. Craigie had written "Three reasons why I am a Single Taxer". Of course, Henry George wrote near

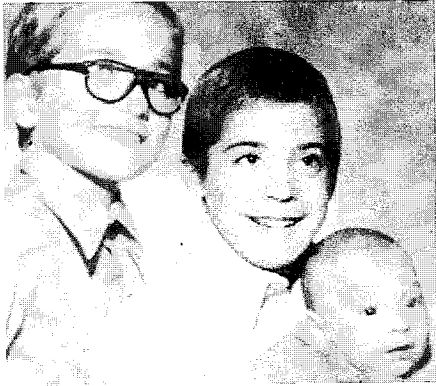
we are the custodians of a great idea whose time will surely come, though when, no one knows

the end of *Progress and Poverty* that it would be better to leave your children nothing in a just world than to leave a fortune in an unjust world.

We closed the tailor business during the war. My service was not an illustrious one, working for an air-

field construction squadron in Darwin and Borneo.

The first time I ever addressed an audience was when I had an invitation from Betsy Harris, secretary of the Henry George League of Kimba. My wife Jean, Ron Burford, my business partner (another confirmed Georgist) and I all drove



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to Kimba 170 miles North of Point Lincoln. When I addressed the Kimba Henry George League, I guess it was the nearest I'll ever get to being in Heaven among so many people who spoke the same language!

Back in Point Lincoln after the war, Betsy Harris asked me to stand for the senate, sponsored by the Kimba Henry George League. I had to wait until after I retired to devote the time necessary so, when I did retire in 1977, I prepared for the senate election the following December. To get a column of your own in the election paper we needed to be a party, so my wife Jean ran as well. You won't be surprised that we weren't elected!

Soon after we sold up, gave our cars to our two daughters who had just graduated from university, and took off to Britain. We immersed ourselves in the Georgist movement there and made many lifelong friends ("Cheerio" to you, Jose, Barbara and Shirley-Anne!). We then travelled extensively in Europe

and the U.S.A. before returning to South Australia, but where would we settle? Then we discovered that John Hall, Lou Ellis and David Brookes had revived the H.G. League in Adelaide, so that clinched it – Adelaide would definitely be our home!

This was 1979, the centenary of the publication of *Progress and Poverty*, so we soon flew off to San Francisco for the International Georgist Union conference to mark this occasion, attended by hundreds. A launching of Robert Andelson's book *Critics of Henry George* took place – a real highlight [Ed: *Hear! Hear! This book is a triumph!*].

More travels abroad followed, always taking in Georgist colleagues. After 5 years retirement I returned to work, working as a costume-maker for the State Theatre from the age of 63 to 81 (4 years ago). At about the time I returned to work I petitioned my large double garage, added carpet, and made it into our Adelaide meeting room.

Betsy Harris is still going strong and, if in one of those rare moments I feel despondent about lack of progress in the cause, I look back at a letter that Betsy showed me from Mr. Douglas Herps who, discussing this despair, said "But we must continue to keep the faith, remembering that we are the custodians of a great idea whose time will surely come, though when, no one knows."

Age is our great problem and losing our youngest, talented member

to the perplexing question why more people don't embrace Georgism, Julia's reply was "They just don't see the magic"

Tony O'Brien in 2002 was a great blow as well as a burden on John Hall (who took on the Treasurer's and Secretary's jobs and does them so well). That my wife Jean is an enthusiast is of inestimable value, but to find young talent that have the time to spare is the problem.

What have I got out of knowing about the "Land Question" according to George? - moments of despondency, but only moments! I have come to know so many great people in England, America & Australia who have become good friends through our movement. One vivid memory is discussing with Julia Bastian the perplexing question why more people don't embrace Georgism. Julia's reply was "They just don't see the magic" – and magic it is!

Imagine Robinson Crusoe takes a day off from catching fish by hand and makes a crude fishing rod with which he can multiply his catch. He now has property, capital wealth - who has he robbed?

If he takes a day off from hunting for food and builds a hut so that he no longer needs to sleep under the stars - again he has property - but who has he robbed?

However, if he claims ownership of the island itself, and demands rent for a site where they wish to build a hut, or rent for going hunting in his forest, from Man Friday and other people who arrive from shipwrecks he is stealing what Mother Nature has created.

I don't believe all ownership of property is theft but I do believe the claim to own natural resources (land, the spectrum, landing slots) is theft: and that is the moral justification for land value taxation.

Dave Wetzel