

# Land and Freedom

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## Comment and Reflection

**O**F late there has developed within our movement a curious attitude which assumes that only an anti-war, "isolationist" belief is the true Georgeist position. While this viewpoint is not widespread, it should nevertheless be criticized as unauthoritative. We feel that opinions on the present war are at least within the realm of "free doctrine"—that is, Georgeists may disagree on such matters without prejudice to their acceptance of the economic teachings of Henry George. To hold otherwise is to deny the larger philosophy of freedom to which we ought to dedicate ourselves. It therefore seems proper and fitting that we take this occasion to counteract the dogmatizing of current notions which have no basis in "Progress and Poverty."

**H**ENRY GEORGE expounded principles of harmonious human relationships, the violation of which leads to war and other social disorders. It is the Georgeist task to continue the propagation of these principles. As to war, the one truly Georgeist pronouncement on the subject that can be made with justification is that it will vanish, together with other evils, upon the universal adoption of Georgeist ideals. To narrow the "authoritative" Georgeist position to a "stand" on the present conflict, and to exclude all other considerations, is gratuitous at best, and we take exception to the impropriety. On the other hand, this does not mean that we must remain coldly aloof from the world scene. As human beings and citizens we cannot help feeling strongly on burning issues of the day. But as servants in a noble cause, we ought not to regard our fellow workers as outcasts and heretics because they happen to disagree with us. What is to be deplored more than anything else is an intolerance of the other fellow's point of view.

**L**OOKING back over the history of our cause, we find there have been schisms on almost every major issue that has arisen—which is not unnatural when all things are considered. Even Henry George and Father McGlynn could split on political questions. Another cleavage on contemporary events arose over the occasion of the Boer-British conflict at the turn of the century. It is amusing to note (in a symposium held in *The National Single Taxer*, a predecessor of LAND AND FREEDOM) the familiar strains of dissenters. From one: "It seems almost impossible to conceive of a Single Taxer taking the side of the strong as against the weak in the South African struggle, yet there

are some who . . . assume a position positively and emphatically pro-English." And from another: "A Single Taxer, who of necessity believes in equal rights to all, cannot consistently side with the Boers in the present struggle for the perpetuation of their oligarchy."

**W**E respect the views of those in our movement who are unqualifiedly "against war." On the other hand we resent the impertinence that accuses as being "for war" and not "good Georgeists" those who sympathize with the Allied cause. We would remind these folk of Henry George, Jr.'s remark about his father's attitude: "Much as he hated war, George justified it when waged for natural rights—for liberty." We believe that there is enough of liberty now at stake to justify the struggle being waged by the democratic countries. We have never been able to understand that school of perfectionists which contends that since every measure of liberty we have today is imperfect, what we do have is not worth preserving and defending at all. Nor need we be reminded of defects in the economic structure of democratic nations. We ask: How much further would we be ahead, and how much less would we have to struggle against if we supinely allowed the totalitarian nations to triumph? For ourselves we shudder at the thought of a Hitlerian victory. We prefer to heed the spirit of our esteemed Joseph Dana Miller who, during the first World War, gave this counsel:

**"L**ET it be said that the great body of Single Taxers believe in this war—they are loyal at once to country and conviction, which in this instance are identical. The movement may be set back many years if it is suspected that in this tremendous crisis in the world's history Single Taxers saw liberty assailed and made no protest. The Democratic Party in this country paid the penalty of a generation of exclusion from power and the loss of public confidence because of its sympathy with the slave power of the South. The Single Tax movement would meet a similar fate should its members falter now in a time of more imminent peril to the world's liberties in declaring that they are loyal citizens of the world to whom the cry of Serbia, Belgium and France has not gone up in vain. Our preaching of economic liberty would fall upon deaf ears, or would meet the taunt that when all liberty was in danger we had been false to the message we bring, that our worship of her was not even lip service, that where millions of men gave their lives for liberty, we had not even given our voice."