

AN ACTIVE supporter of Henry George's philosophy has been elected to California's State Assembly in Sacramento.

William Filante, a 50-year-old doctor, polled 52% of the votes to represent Marin and parts of southern Sonoma Counties.

And addressing the conference celebrating the centenary of *Progress & Poverty*, in San Francisco, where George wrote and published the first edition, he bluntly declared:

"Politics is the only game in town, and it is high time you knew it. It's not dirty, it's the game. Why is a doctor up there? Because I care about people, and I am an environmentalist."

If Henry George were alive today, he said, he would make Howard Jarvis — one of the promoters of Proposition 13, which set severe limits on the rate of increase in property taxes — look like a big spender.

American politics, he said, were in a "stand-off" situation. "The present conservative trend will not bring about less government and less federal spending, because it is a stand-off between the liberals who want to spend less on defence and the conservatives who want to spend less on welfare — and there is excess spent on both of these..."

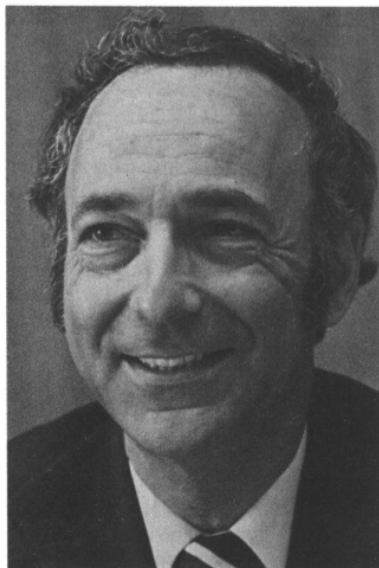
Mr. Filante urged delegates to get involved in issue-oriented organisations which dealt with taxation. "If you stay out of the arena and say 'This is the wonderful world of utopia', the utopian world will pass you by. If you don't do it this time, it will not be done."

Mr. Filante talked about his support for Proposition 13. "I was opposed by most of the Georgists. I had my particular reasons based on my paramount idea that there was too much government and inflation caused by the government. I supported Proposition 13 after I found out that it was the only ballot issue available, and I received assurance from legal counsel that it would not destroy local government."

But he predicted that there would be a reaction against Proposition 13 in about five years, as tax rates paid by new and existing householders grew wide apart as a result of the changes in the State's property tax laws.

"As a duly elected public representative with a responsibility for my district, and elected to mould the policy of the entire State, I had better come up with a good solution."

The art of politics and **'BENEFIT DISTRICT FINANCE'**



● William Filante

One of the results of Proposition 13 was that people were now asking him to legislate for "benefit district financing," which meant that people paid the costs of the services they received. And this presented the supporters of Henry George with an opportunity.

Mr. Filante explained in an interview: "Where public projects create increased land values, these have to be returned to the community. But let the businessman or corporation keep what they earn."

"Benefit district financing" rather than "land value taxation" was Mr. Filante's phrase in his election campaign. For, he said, to campaign on a ticket using just Henry George's name as a slogan would be to lose.

"By name I am attacked here as a Georgist in the Press, and I have had to overcome that to get elected. If it was only on the basis of being a Georgist or not a Georgist, I would lose. The name 'Georgist' is a liability.

"I never deny the fact that I am a Georgist; of course I am. But I use the fact that I am a fiscal conserva-

tive, a Republican and am closer to the philosophy of Milton Friedman and *Fortune* magazine than anybody else.

"It's the principles that count, and if you use Henry George's principles you can win. These principles are that things should be done without cost to the taxpayer, there should be no subsidies, and that people who benefit should pay."

During the election, he explained, people were interested in the logic of the proposal that the government should tax the land values created when it built roads, schools and sewers, rather than taxing the income which people earned.

Currently, Mr. Filante is vice-chairman of some influential committees, including the Resources, Land Use and Conservation Committee and the Revenue and Taxation Committee.

From this position he sought to promote what he called "the only game in town" — politics and the market place.

An example of an issue in need of close scrutiny was the ceiling placed on the rents charged for the use of air waves. "All it needs is for the people to influence five legislators in a committee, and the matter would be on the floor of the State legislature... and it would be the free marketplace dictating the air-wave rents which should be paid to the community. There are some radio stations which are not paying any air rent. The big corporations would pay trillions for the right to monopolise those air waves."

As one of the State's influential politicians, he was determined to steer public policies in terms of free market economics. For example, there would be fewer subsidies paid out in California in future. And improvements, he said, should be financed out of the increased value of land.

But he warned against restricting one's role to attacking land speculators.

"I have nothing against land speculators. I deal with them to get transit projects going — they are business people who care about the interests of the rest of us at least some of the time. They say 'Let's get the public projects done and I'll pay a share.' They recognise that they will benefit, and are willing to pay. We need to have more people understand that. So be involved in specific issues rather than in demagoguery — deriding a group such as the land speculators. They are only speculators because of the laws that we pass or don't pass."