

The Georgist Journal

Number 48

Summer 1985

GEORGISM'S ETHICAL FOUNDATION

Guest Editorial

Many social and political movements emerge for a brief time, usually in relation to some specific historical contingency, and then disappear from the scene. By contrast, the Henry George movement has shown a capacity to endure and persist over the decades. This is because the Georgist movement deals with general principles and fundamental issues, with causes rather than effects.

It is also because disorders in our society, especially in the economic sphere (unemployment; absurd and pernicious taxation; unequal access to land; enforced poverty) still persist, despite all the palliatives and half-baked nostrums being ventilated or tried. Moreover, it is not difficult to see that these disorders arise from neglect of, or defiance of, those principles advocated by the Henry George movement.

The Georgist movement, for example, has always advocated overhaul of our revenue system. Indeed, this is central to its message. Could the present taxation system be really much more cumbersome, crazy and complex than it is?

The Georgist movement has always warned that adequate housing will become increasingly harder for ordinary citizens until the price of land is steadily lowered. Tinkering with interest rates and payments, making special grants, etc., have not reversed the steady tendency for home ownership to become more difficult.

The Georgist movement has always pointed out the limitations of overseas aid and stressed the need for structural reforms (land tenure reform; lowering of trade barriers, etc.). More and more people, especially the aid groups themselves, are increasingly acknowledging this.

The Georgist movement has always stressed that increasing productivity in itself will not lead to greater prosperity. This is becoming increasingly evident as the years pass.

The Georgist movement has always emphasized the inadequacies of Keynesianism, especially when it was academically popular. Now that widespread stagflation has discredited Keynes, the Georgist approach warrants wider attention. Likewise, as disillusionment with Milton Friedman's ideas increases, Georgist principles merit deeper consideration...

Moreover, inasmuch as the Georgist approach explicitly involves an ethical emphasis, it is far more relevant than those which bypass or ignore ethical principles.

- Editorial in Progress (Melbourne, Australia)