

**Bridging Left and Right** By DAVID SIMMONS (Phoenix, Arizona)

At the Conference in San Diego there was an interesting session with the above title in which several speakers endeavored to prove that Henry George was a liberal or a conservative. The classifications used were Left-wing Liberal Democrat and Right-wing Conservative Republican. Liberal used to be a respectable term, but nowadays it seems that many so-called liberals want to conserve a socialistic bureaucracy that has proven itself incapable of dealing with the problems facing the nation. A conservative used to be some one who wanted to conserve things as they are, but many conservatives these days have ideas that are now considered radical, such as drastically reducing the role of government and giving individuals more freedom. Henry George was without doubt one of America's great radicals, and one of his radical ideas was free trade. Thus it is hard to imagine him at this moment as a Democrat passing legislation to restrict trade with our friends at the expense of the American public.

It is true that Henry George accepted socialist support in his campaign for Mayor of New York, but afterwards they split because George, who believed in Adam Smith's free market, could never agree with Karl Marx that state ownership was the way to achieve economic justice. The Democratic Party continues to be the American equivalent of a Socialist Labor Party, and its economic thinking is just as confused and muddled as was Marx's. What they do have in common with Georgists is a desire to right injustices and a concern for improving the lot of the common man. Unfortunately, most of their policies have just the opposite effect. Their Marxist roots also tend to make them naive about the intentions of communist governments and unaware of the dangers facing the United States and its non-communist friends from such governments.

The Republicans who are generally more aware of these dangers, and whose economic policies for the most part are more sensible, unfortunately have a blind spot concerning the disastrous consequences of land speculation. This is too bad since land value taxation is really the only way to correct the major defect of so-called capitalism (which I prefer to call free enterprise) and turn it into a truly just and effective system. It seems to me that our natural allies should be the Libertarians, but most of them have the same inability to see the importance of the land question.

Since I would prefer more freedom over more government interference in my life, I personally vote Republican as being the lesser of two evils. The fact that other Georgists vote Democratic doesn't make them any less loyal supporters of the philosophy of Henry George. If some day there is ever a political party that supports land value taxation and free trade, I'm sure that all Georgists will unite and support it no matter what it is called. In the meantime, the bridge that already exists between left and right within the Georgist movement is our common effort to make Henry George's ideas more widely known to people of all political persuasions.