

To Reform Society, Focus Our Movement

by Jeff Smith

Hand me a magic wand. Here's how I'd transform our movement to rescue civilization:

First change would be to abolish our oath of allegiance, you know, the one all directors, officers, and staff must take which goes: "No demographic change over the past 100 years, no insight from the science of social change, no practical lesson demonstrated by successful movements shall inform either my funding or strategy. Amen."

All teasing aside, dollar per follower, Georgism may be the richest movement in history. Yet such largesse need not militate against us. Simply direct it to these Twelve Steps to Advance the G-Movement:

1. Improve our diction. In place of "Georgism," which sounds cultish, say geonomics. And drop "land tax." It validates taxes in general, painting us into the corner of having to invalidate all taxes but the one which we happen to subjectively favor, like that puerile joke from junior high school: "everybody's butt smells but your own." In place of land tax (never say "tax" without immediately saying "abolition"), say land dues or deed fee.

2. Focus our message not on the taking — more onerous — but on the sharing — more inspiring and the essence of our share-Earth philosophy. Say Citizens' Dividend, Earth Share, Rent Rebate, Natural Heritage Share, etc. Hold a contest to choose our favorite neologism. All these phrases denote spending, which logically presupposes collecting public revenue via fees, licenses, royalties, or if you must, a tax. These phrases also broach the issues of trimming waste and democratizing funding decisions, making us more than Johnny-one-notes.

3. Focus our political activity on amending the US Constitution (as did incometaxers, feminists, et al), insisting that all levels of government get the rent before anything else. While hoisting high this amendment standard, spin off the growing momentum into shorter term campaigns such as Housing Vouchers and GeoBonds.

Note that the Citizens Dividend, Housing Vouchers, and GeoBonds all emphasize not the taking, as taxes do, but the sharing, the reward for the hard work of reform.

4. Focus our education on people who've not yet bought into a competing ideology — the young in and out of schools — especially those types of youths whose profiles match activists — people who'll make a difference.

5. Focus research on what consultants could sell, governments and business would buy, and the media should re-print.

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6. Collapse our many periodicals into one, with cartoons, of broad appeal.

7. Utilize the latest communication media, including phone surveys.

8. Market our message via everything from T-shirts to tours, from books to board games, at all events from fairs to conferences.

9. Raise awareness and funds and enroll new members via direct mail.

10. Reinvest, so our portfolios support not our opponents but our own cause.

11. Expand beyond siccing phds on problems. You pay copy shops and the post office; don't starve your grassroots. Fund people who are not soloists but who grow groups, the backbone of any movement.

12. Ally with like-minded groups — such as "greens," libertarians, Perotists, et al — to cosponsor position papers, conferences, petition drives, etc.

Hopefully, these steps are already being debated in board rooms and implemented in staff meetings. Once in place, these steps will do for our movement what g-ism itself would do for the world — save it.

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Single taxers hitherto have not taken kindly to organization. The very nature of the movement, calling in its practical application for local or state action, and depending for its political success on situations that arise from time to time without warning, seems to militate against any but the very loosest kind of co-ordination.

— Joseph Dana Miller, in the *Single Tax Year Book* (1917)