

# the Henry George News

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## The Flame Grows Brighter

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**Y**OU will understand what I mean when I say that my association with the Henry George School has become a very personal thing. It seems to me that I may be able, in some small way, to contribute through it to the betterment of mankind.

I'll try to present my views on important aspects of "the problem," with a few comments on how I think our school may help in seeking answers. We live in a nation where individual altruism is as strong a force as it has ever been anywhere, at any time. Our standard of living is high and, because of travel, television, and other improved methods of communication, we are very much aware of how poor some of the rest of the world is. I refuse to call this awareness a national guilt complex.

This would imply that for the rest of the world to improve, we would have to sacrifice. I believe most of us would be willing to sacrifice in order to speed up orderly development throughout the world, but no amount of sacrifice can do this as long as most of the land is owned or controlled by one per cent of the people.

How well off are we?

If we compress the world's population into an imaginary town of 1000 people, only 60 would be Americans—but these 60 would receive one-half the income and own more than half of the

wealth. Our lowest income group would live better than the average of the other 940. The Americans would have an average of 70 years to live and enjoy their wealth, while the rest would die before an average age of 40.

There are people who say land value taxation is not a panacea, and most of us don't believe in panaceas. But these critics often have their own panacea. They may want to abolish the income tax or they may shout loudly for worldwide socialism. I'm not going to defend the income tax, but I would like to know what was going to fill the vacuum before voting to abolish it completely.

As for socialism, the only places where I think it can function with any hope of looking successful are in dictatorship areas or in nations which are going concerns and thus already have wealth to distribute. But the dictatorships have already found that they must add incentive, and the wealthier nations with socialistic tendencies are already aiming at distributing more wealth than they produce. Certainly in our country urban renewal is an excellent example of socialization which is a complete flop.

Now if socialism will probably fail in these older countries, how can it possibly work in an undeveloped emerging African nation which has no wealth to

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distribute and which will have an awfully hard time developing incentive in an uneducated and often primitive population? Mind you, I don't say that land value taxation is the "panacea" for these nations, but without it I doubt if they will have a chance of success.

Many of us in the last two generations are veering strongly away from religion. Many religious leaders find it easier to preach a moral philosophy of humanism than the former philosophy of individual goodness. But if religion is no longer going to emphasize the role of the individual, then someone else must!

It was Henry George's clear logic leading up to the Law of Human Progress, Association in Equality, which made me feel that an attitude of individualism need not be selfish and unclean, but could be constructive, logical and effective. The Law of Human Progress implies strongly that the best way to improve our condition is not lazily to abandon individual efforts in favor of letting Uncle do it, but rather to strive to show that by creating economic equality of opportunity, all men will have a chance to help themselves.

One way of furthering this kind of education has been the branch system which we have in the Northern California Extension. Because we have 5 branches, we have 5 boards of 6-12 members each, who meet every month in an organized but informal manner

to find ways to make the classes better. One person each year, a volunteer not a professional, heads up each branch and has the satisfaction of knowing that its success has in great part been due to his time, effort and leadership. Out of this may emerge more valuable extension board members.

Publicity formerly issued from the extension office in San Francisco has been more effective when released through a branch in the Bay Area. The value of such news was brought home to me a few weeks ago when Frank Haylock, our public relations chairman, sent a notice to our Marin County paper about my election as president of the extension. During the next week a dozen friends and colleagues who had never heard of the school, asked me about it. Their initial impression was favorable if only because a friend was connected with it.

I should like to pay my personal tribute to the thousands of men and women in the past who have strode down the path toward a sound economy, widening it for those of us who follow. The flame George lit has been growing brighter over the years but never has the atmosphere been so ready for total illumination. There is dissatisfaction with income taxes, sales and excise taxes, tariffs, and the present property tax. We have something to contribute that may seem old to us but is a new and stimulating idea to the many citizens who are just now beginning to question the *status quo*.