

TWO FACES OF AN IMAGE

I am again indebted to Harry Pollard for reprinting and circularizing George Hardy's Henry George Commemoration Address in Melbourne, Australia last September.

This speech is about the clearest statement of the problem facing Georgists that I have seen. Mr. Hardy begins with practical questions: "Georgist ideas," he says, "have been held by many politicians privately--but when these politicians reached the corridors of power, they have found it almost impossible to convince their colleagues to put Georgist ideals into practice." And he adds that such land taxation as remains in Australia is "a mockery of the original Georgist ideas and has been used as just one more measure to increase general revenue."

He says it is evident that both capitalism and socialism oppress and exploit the individual while Georgism provides a clear cut solution to ethical, social and economic conflicts. "Why is it," he asks, "that we have such small impact?"

He offers as one answer the ease by which extremes are much more apparent than in-between phenomena. But the essence of Georgism, he says, is that it is NOT an extremist philosophy; it stands against exclusive power, exclusive rights and privileges, and it offers social justice based on rational and ethical considerations that are exactly the opposite of the more popular emotional power considerations.

Stressing his opinion of Georgism as "primarily a philosophical and ethical concept, which holds that the individual is entitled to live his life in any way he chooses--as long as he does not infringe upon the equal rights of others to do the same," he calls it "the philosophy of anti-monopolism."

"I believe," he says, "that by stressing these political, and philosophical views

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of Georgism, we shall be more successful in pointing out the practical benefits which flow from the crusade against monopolies."

Mr. Hardy strengthens his argument by pointing out that identifying Georgism with a "single tax" is more of a hindrance than a help. It takes lengthy explanation, he says, to convince the uninitiated that taxing the unimproved land value is a vastly superior economic measure compared with other forms of taxation. And after we've succeeded, we face another objection: the problem of the responsibility of the state to provide the multiple services we now take for granted. "Instead of having won a point--we become involved in a new argument."

One solution, Mr. Hardy says, may be to put a new and different emphasis on the public image of Georgism. Instead of trying to get acceptance of tax reform, we should present Georgism as providing a clear cut answer to basic social conflict--the distribution of incomes among individuals and between individuals and the community.

George's anti-monopolism, he says, is the only social system that provides a non-political definition of the amounts of just taxation. Georgism provides an alternative to socially minded humanists who recognize the need to limit the responsibility of the community toward the limitless "needs" of pressure groups but do not know where to draw the line without dictatorial decrees.

"I believe that the key to making people realize the validity of the Georgist anti-monopolistic ethic ... is in the continued up-dating and explanation of how our philosophy, our social and economic proposals ensure that the individual can live his life according to his own aims--without being exploited and without being dictatorially forced to do only what is approved by the whims or if you please, the 'plans' of Big Brother."

We should strive to convince people that Georgism is the only social order that can insure individual freedom without exploitation and equality without oppression.

C. A. Weisskopf