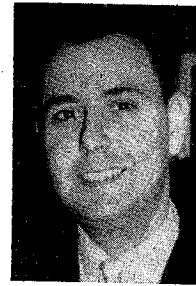


A Motto for Georgists

by ROBERT V. ANDELSON

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WE Georgists need to be challenged to an enthusiasm based not upon grandiose expectations but simply upon unflinching commitment to that which is right and true and just. Our ranks include no place for summer soldiers or for sunshine patriots, and the sooner this is clearly understood the better for all concerned. For the fact is that the millenium which Henry George foresaw may not be just around the corner, and it may not be given to us but to some other generation to witness that culmination of which he so eloquently wrote — “the City of God on earth, with its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl; the reign of the Prince of Peace.”

I remember when I first read *Progress and Poverty*. All that had puzzled me about the relationship between the individual and society, economic freedom and security, God and Mammon, Caesar and Christ, suddenly fell into place. Take for the community that value which is the creation of the community, and leave to private individuals the values which they, as private individuals, create. This, I thought, was the golden key to the enigma of how to build a better world. I still think it is the key. But when it came to the matter of turning the key in the lock, I found that I was in for a rude awakening.

Fired with a consuming sense of mission, I figuratively rolled up my sleeves, girded myself with the breastplate of Truth, and sallied forth to enlist in that mighty army which would vanquish the forces of land monopoly,

and in so doing, cut the ground from under the looming threats of communism and socialism. Well, to begin with, I had a hard time *finding* the army. In fact, I didn't meet another Georgist until fully five years after I had first read *Progress and Poverty*. And when I finally found the army it didn't impress me as being exactly mighty.

A score of neat but somewhat less than prosperous looking folk, drinking weak Hawaiian punch from paper cups in a drab and barren hall, my fellow crusaders seemed for the most part considerably past the age for military service. But, undaunted, I placed myself at their disposal, inquiring what grand exploit was to be my first assignment. Their reply was to put me to work stuffing envelopes! I was disconcerted only momentarily.

Drawing on my deepest reserves of optimism, I said to myself: “The pen is mightier than the sword. No doubt they're sending out some stirring manifesto which will galvanize a worldwide march toward social justice. Eagerly I perused the deathless document. This was my final disillusionment. The manifesto turned out to be a call for volunteers to help redecorate the local headquarters office!

Where were the mass rallies demanding the return of man's God-given heritage, the earth? Where were the starry-eyed legions, exultantly waving green banners to the swelling chorus of “The Land Song”? I looked around the shabby room at the nondescript countenances of those to whom the revelation had been given, and saw

no reflection of the Grail within their eyes. Were these indeed the flame-crowned heroes who had been elected to slay the dragon of privilege and liberate mankind? I gazed down on the insipid liquid in the paper cup someone had pressed into my hand. My head swam with vertigo. It seemed as if the holy city were dissolving in Hawaiian punch. "Let this cup pass from me," I murmured.

You see, my friends, I knew little then about the nature of real vision or of genuine dedication. In the months and years that lay ahead, I was to learn that real vision walks arm in arm with patience. I was to learn that genuine dedication bends to the task at hand, however humble, inspired, to be sure, by an ultimate goal, but never influenced by the imminence or distance of its culmination.

The history of the Georgist movement has been one more characterized, I fear, by poverty than progress. Gains have been made, unquestionably, but they have been extremely tentative. An "enclave" here, an irrigation district there; a second-class city here, a road district there; a measure of local option on the state level here, a faltering application on some wider level there — of such stuff as these are our victories compounded. And even our rather pathetic relish in these modest triumphs is cankered by the knowledge of reverses. In short, while Georgism may be the wave of the future (and I believe it is), there has been as yet no overwhelming tide in its direction.

Nonetheless, I would not speak to you the words of Talleyrand: "*Pas de zèle.*" What is needed is not less zeal but more zeal. What is needed is a zeal that does not ask to be fed upon success, a zeal that takes its impetus solely from the rightness of its goal. Henry George perceived this well. That is why he wrote:

"Let us not disguise it. Over and over again has the standard of Truth

and Justice been raised in this world. Over and over again has it been trampled down — oftentimes in blood. If they are weak forces that are opposed to Truth, how should Error so long prevail? If Justice has but to raise her head to have Injustice flee before her, how should the wail of the oppressed so long go up?

"But for those who see Truth and would follow her; for those who recognize Justice and would stand for her, success is not the only thing. Success? Why, Falsehood has often that to give, and Injustice often has that to give. Must not Truth and Justice have something to give that is their own by proper right — theirs in essence, and not by accident?

"That they have, and that here and now, everyone who has felt their exultation knows."

In place of the pusillanimous advice of Talleyrand, I commend to your adoption the motto, "I will persevere," under which William of Orange led his countrymen to independence. And I ask that you consider deeply the profound epigram with which he elucidated what it meant to him: "We need not hope in order to act; nor need we succeed in order to persevere."

Truly has it been said that there is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time is come. But also truly was it said that "of that day and of that hour knoweth no man." So we bend to the task before us, doing what we can.

In an old Hindu story, Ami says to his son, "Bring me a fruit off that tree, and break it open. What is there?"

The son replies, "Some small seeds." "Break one, and then what do you see?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"My child," replies the wise man, "where you see nothing, there dwells a mighty tree."

A vision without a task is but a dream. A task without a vision is but drudgery. A vision and a task is the

hope of the world. May we never disdain the meanness of the task because of the greatness of the vision. May we never lose sight of the greatness of the vision because of the meanness of the task.

Building patiently upon the sacri-

ficial labors of countless unsung saints who saw Truth and followed her, who recognized Justice and stood for her, may we hallow, each of us, their sturdy efforts by inscribing indelibly upon our hearts and souls the solemn promise: "I will persevere."

Typical Comments from Students

MRS. MINA OLSON of Chicago was proud of her students and collected a few of their class talks for us to share.

Faith Hoffman said she learned some startling new ideas on the cause of poverty, enjoyed the method of studying the lessons, joined in some exhilarating discussions, and hopes that because of this she can do something constructive about "our ancient, out-of-date social system."

Andy Rausch said for him the most important point in *Progress and Poverty* was the part that rent plays, and how, going back into history, it has been the major cause of poverty and the ruination of empires. "In order to have equal distribution of wealth," he wrote, "we must make it worth while for capital to invest and for labor to be fully paid for what it produces. This may not eliminate poverty entirely, but it could bring it down to a bare minimum."

Gloria Handzlik said she was grateful for the opportunity to take this course as it had made her aware of some of the biggest causes of economic problems, such as unfair taxation and land speculation. The first kills incentive and reduces purchasing power — the second, land speculation, is the parent of inflation, and throws the economy out of balance. "Wouldn't it be nice," she asks, "if some of our so-called men of influence could believe that we should leave this world in a condition somewhat better than we found it in?"

H. Handzlik seemed surprised by the simplicity of this idea and said man

has always wound up in the same dark alley of taxation. Since Henry George's views seemed the soundest and fairest, three questions came to mind: 1) Why is the land value taxation so difficult for our political statesmen to absorb and put to effect? 2) Is this idea, after it's put into effect, as good as it sounds? 3) What seems to be the big obstacle standing in the way of putting this totally to work?

Many interesting talks were also given at the commencement in New York last term. Here is a sampling from one which happened to reach HGN. It was by Essie Harris in Francis Nicosia's class.

"In every age and civilization there has been the haves and have-nots. There has always been plenty, and yet for some there is so little. These situations are found throughout the world. We know that aid in the form of food and clothes is being sent to the so-called poverty areas abroad as well as to our large cities.

"Henry George, who was one of America's great economists, referred to this as a social evil, and in order to get rid of it he said the causes would have to be eliminated. He denied that the evil resulted from insufficient capital or low production or too many people. But he did claim it was caused by unjust and unequal distribution of wealth.

"Some things he said would help eliminate poverty were association in equality and chances to increase knowledge and skill through education. Unless we have cooperation there cannot be a healthy and flourishing society."