

A Word With You

If there be in this universe superior intelligences . . . who sometimes examine the speck we tenant, . . . the manner in which, in such a country as this, population is distributed, must greatly puzzle them.

—Henry George, *Social Problems*

GMORK AND MBADU levelled their flying saucer ten thousand miles above New York City and equilibrated with the earth's axis so as to keep the city under them for study.

Mbadu wrapped his tentacles around the Xscope, took a look, and commented, "One of the more advanced centers of barbarian culture. Not bad."

Then, as he peered, he added, "Gmork, this is odd. The settlement does not follow any of the known patterns."

Gmork flipped through the files: "Not even C48Qb?"

"Almost, but not quite. There is a dense center, but large buildings stand close to small ones, and there are spots with no buildings at all. The settlement spreads for miles. The empty spots increase, but there are clusters of houses huddled here and there. Then vast empty stretches."

Gmork stroked his scales. "Perhaps they are independent settlements?"

"N-no. There is a network of communication and transportation. Why do they huddle so close together when there is so much room? Perhaps to protect themselves from bands of marauders? Let us ask the computer!"

Gmork put the question to the computer, which hummed and answered, "Inapplicable."

"Are the areas in between contaminated?"

"Possible-improbable, second degree," said the computer.

"Not good enough." Mbadu turned his eye-stalk back to the Xscope. "I wonder if there is a taboo on the unoccupied areas, as we have observed with more primitive cultures?"

The computer clicked: "Possible-probable, third degree."

"Much better," said Mbadu. "But I should think this culture would have outgrown taboos?"

Gmork consulted the Encyclopedia Galactica. "Taboos," he reported, "may linger on into fourth level barbarian cultures, especially in economic matters."

"That's it, of course! These denizens buy and sell land!" Mbadu exclaimed.

The computer clucked approvingly.

"Like the inhabitants of Sirius Six, I'll wager," Gmork added. "Remember? They went through the phase of carving up and selling their planet as private property, always reaching for a higher price."

"And they came close to exterminating themselves over it, before they stumbled onto the principle of planetary parity and were admitted to the Galactic Federation," Mbadu added.

"I wonder," mused Gmork, "if these earthlings will learn in time?"

"Hmmmmmm," said the computer.

—Robert Clancy

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The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N.Y., supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives value to land, therefore the income from land values (rent of land) belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

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