A Word with You

Essays by Robert Clancy, 1960 - 1994

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Expressions of a Hopeful Philosophy

Introduction by George L. Collins

SINCE THE APPEARANCE of Henry George's seminal work *Progress and Poverty* in 1879, countless individuals of every rank and station have been influenced, enlightened and motivated by the stirring call to liberty and the practical prescription for attainment of a just society contained within its pages. Some of those who have credited George with awakening or informing their thought on social issues have been eminent personalities – Tolstoy, Einstein, Shaw, and Churchill come to mind. Many, many others, no less profoundly actuated to promote the greatest good, have labored unsung.

Robert Clancy occupies a unique position. The world at large may have known little of him, but virtually everyone in the latter half of the 20th Century who studied or examined the Georgist philosophy came within the orbit of his far reaching contributions to the understanding of George's economic reform. His encyclopedic knowledge of its precepts and analysis, its annals and its personalities made him a treasured repository from which generations of students and scholars could draw.

"A Word With You" was the title of a Monthly column in the *Henry George News*, house organ of the Henry George School of Social Science in New York. Bob was director of the school from 1946 to 1969. Later essays appeared in *The Georgist Journal*, organ of the Henry George Institute which he founded in 1971 and *Land & Liberty*, published in London.

Bob's involvement with the school began as a student of its founder, Oscar Geiger, from 1932, the year it was founded, until 1934. Bob soon began working for the school and was largely responsible for development of its library, a major factor in the attainment of its Absolute Charter, granted in 1937 by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York.

His tenure at the school was interrupted by service in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1945. He was awarded a Bronze Star for service in the European Theatre. After his discharge from the Army, Bob returned to

the school as Office Manager, became Assistant Director then Director in 1946.

Oscar Geiger's papers came into Bob's hands and in 1952 he published *A Seed Was Sown – The Life, Philosophy and Writings of Oscar Geiger.* Until he left the school in 1969 he used that book as the text for a popular course titled *A Philosophy of Life.*

The decades of the 1950s and 60s could be viewed as the "glory days" of the Henry George School. Tens of thousands of students attended classes in New York and at as many as fifteen branches throughout the country. Correspondence courses were conducted in five languages. An active Speakers Bureau operated in most cities. High school students attended summer courses in New York and high school teachers earned "In Service Credit" at the school. The school organized annual conferences which served not just the school but the entire movement of organizations and individuals promoting every level of Single Tax reform.

For over two decades Bob developed and enhanced these programs at the Henry George School. Academics and laymen, educators and novices looked to New York, looked to Bob Clancy for information, inspiration and guidance, and he had it to give. Those of us who had the good fortune to come under his direct tutelage found it so very easy to learn from his patient and understanding dedication.

He may also be credited with having given a start to land value tax research within the Georgist movement. During the Sabbatical which became his effective departure from the school, he completed the Committee On Land Taxation (COLT) Manual. It was a compilation of practical methodologies that had been employed or proposed to capture some or all of the land rent.

There are many Georgists who will still remember the after class gatherings that Bob would have in his penthouse office at 50 E. 69th St. The occasions were social and the conversations, going late into the evening after classes had ended at 9:30, would be on anything and everything — economics of course, the latest scientific development, fads and foibles, the movies — talk of the kind that any interesting group of seven or eight denizens of Gotham would engage in. As in any exchange among Georgists there would be nuanced differences even in areas in which there was undoubted agreement. Without any assertion whatsoever — Bob was always

retiring in his manner — his deliberate and measured rumination could bring the issue to a cogent conclusion or lead you to new lines of thought that would go well beyond that discussion.

Clancy's even-tempered disposition was not easily ruffled. But every Georgist has experienced the frustration of parrying words with especially strident opponents who would heap ridicule on the reform, branding it as "Simplistic" or some other deprecation — rather than following the argument where logic and common sense would lead. In such moments, Bob's response would be a simple one: he would quietly conclude, "All I can do is explain it to you, I cannot give you the capacity to understand it."

Bob always had a bottle of wine for these occasions and he was as careful and considerate in presenting his views as he was with the droplets of wine with which he would even the quantity in the glasses. At the end of such an evening, one or two of us would continue our talks with Bob in the walk down Lexington Ave. to Grand Central Station. If the conversation demanded it, a cup of coffee and slice of pie at the Automat could precede getting our separate trains.

Bob was a man of many parts, all of which invited approbation. He had an interest in music, art and literature beyond that of the casual observer. Here, too, his knowledge was prodigious. In fact, I cannot recall a subject in which he did not have some credible knowledge to impart. He played the keyboard. He wrote reviews of concerts, operas and art exhibits he attended and distributed them to friends based on their interests. He introduced me to the music of Richard Wagner. Bob could be found dancing the Irish Jig at St. Patrick Day parties at the school and directing and acting in his Penthouse Players dramatic readings of works like Shakespeare's *Coriolanus.*

Bob had studied art and he painted a set of murals depicting the history of civilization. On the cover of this book is a projection of the earth that he designed and two of his illustrations from *A Seed Was Sown.* One illustration represents Geiger's concept of a "unitary universe". The other depiction is of the highest objective an individual can pursue — a "worthy goal", one that is consistent with the laws of nature.

A Word With You will provide you the reader with a glimpse of Bob Clancy's penetrating thought on contemporary affairs and examples of the relevance of Georgist economic analysis to a wide range of public issues.

The broad sweep of his scholarship is here to be seen. In "Midgard the Serpent," myth is brought to service as metaphor for the evil that has grafted itself to the earth; inextricable unless its true nature is recognized and its vulnerability is identified. Then there is "Government as Panacea" where the long roster of failed remedies are not discarded as useless or unimportant but qualified as ineffectual in the absence of a sovereign remedy. On and on you'll find in the well honed craft of this master essayist, from "Quesnay's Predecessor" to "Human Rights and the Georgist Philosophy," some of the best 20th Century expressions of Henry George's hopeful philosophy.

April, 2003

Midgard the Serpent

IN NORSE MYTHOLOGY there is a story about Thor, the Hercules of the North, and his visit to the land of the giants. They invite him to show off his strength, and one of the tasks set before him is to lift a cat off the ground. Thor strives with might and main, and finally succeeds in lifting one paw a little. He is of course humiliated, but the giants explain that the cat was an illusion — it was really Midgard the serpent who is wrapped around the entire earth.

I think of this story when I hear it said that our economy is doing wonderfully well today, except — except for some little problem — like inflation. One little cat to lift off the ground!

An era of great optimism and well-being preceded World War I. Progress was the key-note, yet life was pleasant. The standard of living was rising, education was more universal — even "music is getting sweeter," said one observer. Alack! The gay waltz collided with the cannons of war.

Everything had been going fine, except — except for what seemed to be little problems which progress would surely mop up in time — like the backward masses of Russia, a handful of anarchists in Sarajevo, a few disagreements among the Colonial powers.

Another halcyon era was the period before the Great Depression. Again, everything was going great. I remember being in school when the Locarno Pact was signed. "Just think," said our teacher, "that means no more wars." With world peace and domestic prosperity, what more could one ask? What indeed, except to clear up bothersome little details, like the habit of Florida land booms to bust, the high cost of living, the indecisive results of the Versailles Treaty.

As we move into each new recovery, we hear a lot of talk about the exuberant state of the nation. Everything's wonderful — except.

They are deceptively simple, those little problems. All you have to do with slums, for instance, is tear them down and build new houses. But the price of land is such that the rent on the new houses is too high. Very well, let's have a little help from the government. The cat turns into Midgard!

To settle wage disputes, you simply offer a wage at which labor will agree to produce. But if you touch wages, you also raise questions about

dividends, productive capacity, plant and equipment, prices, taxes... Midgard!

Single Taxers have had as a motto, "Do you see the cat?" — referring to the outline of a cat concealed in a drawing of a tree. But like Midgard, there is much more than a cat to contend with. The Single Tax is far from getting put into practice after the cat is seen. There are deep implications and obstacles to surmount. There are ingrained habits of thought and action, personal ambitions, profound indifference and blocks to rational behavior.

The results of over a century of mighty efforts, campaigning, politicking, and spreading the word have disappointed most Georgists.

It is tempting to succumb to the conclusion that nothing has been achieved. But it is not as bad as that. Many other movements have disappeared — e.g., the Populists and the Progressives, and the Georgist movement is still around. Some fifty years ago there were the Jefferson School of Social Science (communistic) and the Rand School of Social Science (socialistic) that have fallen by the wayside — but the Henry George School of Social Science is still around. The Single Tax communities of Fairhope and Arden have had their troubles but they endure, whereas dozens of experimental communities have disappeared. There have been setbacks in Land Value Taxation but there have also been advances. The net result may not seem very much by world standards, but it may be likened to the cat's paw being lifted by an inch. Remarkable, all things considered.

There is much, much further to go, and it may very well be a long range Job to get general assent to our principles. But we cannot give up.

Editor's note: This is a combination of two articles on the same theme, one from the Henry George News *of January, 1960, and the other Bob's last "Comment" from the* Georgist Journal *of Autumn, 1994.*

Bad Guys and Good Guys

ONE OF THE EXPLANATIONS for the troubles of the world is the "bad man" theory. It is really more a feeling than a theory, but it is very pervasive and influential.

The brunt of it is that bad people are stirring up all the trouble, and once we get rid of these undesirables all will be well. This ranges all the

way from our folklore — western movies are a good example — to our foreign policy. Up to now we have always managed to find the right bad man or men responsible for our woes.

When, on Election Day, enough people pull a lever with a certain Presidential nominee's name attached, he thereby becomes the man to take the blame for all the troubles going on, and as these usually grow, he becomes before long the most hated man alive. A nice compensation comes when his term expires, for then he is acclaimed as a great man.

All President Johnson had to do was to announce that he would not run for another term, and overnight he was converted from a bad man to a good man without anyone batting an eyelash. However, some accumulated blame will await our next President.

Despite these simple rules, there is a great deal of confusion straining the bad man theory these days. How do you classify de Gaulle? Franco is getting mellow in his old age. We can't even decide about Ho Chih Minh. As for Vietcong and South Vietnamese, they are indistinguishable one from the other. Furthermore, the bad people think they're good, and what's more, they think the good people are bad. And worst of all, no sooner do we get rid of all the bad people when new ones seem to arise.

As this theory groans under insupportable burdens, we may have to look for another theory about our troubles.

A useful clue may be found in the field theory of physics. We learn that the particles of physics are all pretty much alike, but behave very differently according to conditions in the field wherein they are operating. Electrons lazily ambling along will, depending on how you energize the field, act like destructive lunatics, or like a disciplined army, or like creative architects.

And so, in this world's wide fallow, we might do better searching out good conditions than searching out bad people. Do we not indeed find that where people are oppressed, exploited, despised, they are at their worst? And where they have the greatest freedom, the most of economic opportunities, and are accorded a human dignity, they are at their best?

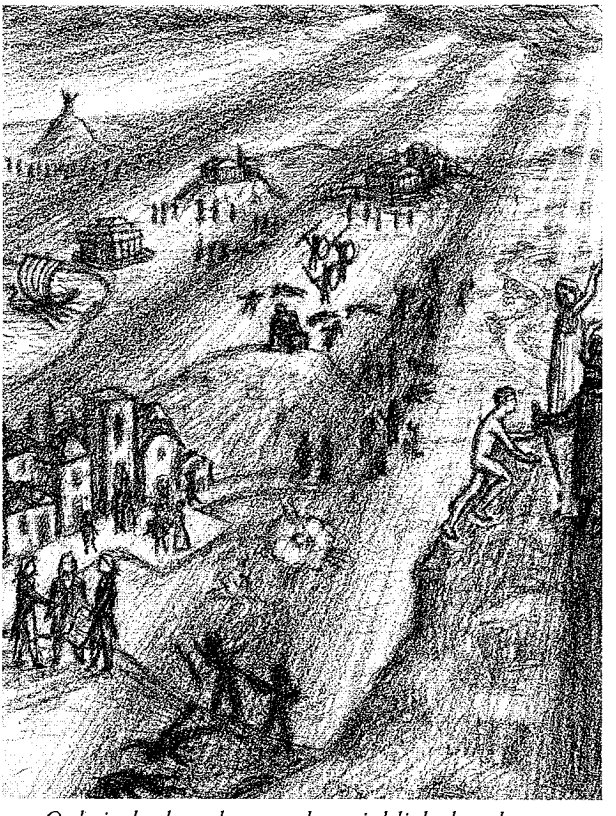
The most effective way of getting rid of bad people is to convert them into good people by changing the field in which they operate.

Henry George News, *May, 1968*

How Long?

HOW LONG before the Georgist philosophy becomes generally recognized and accepted? This is a question on the minds of those who have been introduced to it. Some may feel it has no chance at all, but most feel it should by this time be closer to acceptance than it is, and want to know how long it will take. How have other philosophies fared, comparatively?

The classical case is Christianity, which took 300 years to become accepted. In the Middle Ages it took even longer — 500 years — for arabic numerals to be adopted by Europeans. But the modern world does at least move faster.



Only in broken gleam and partial light has the sun of Liberty yet beamed among men, but all progress hath she called forth.

Marx and Engels issued their *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, and 70 years later the Bolsheviks took over in Russia. Another 30 years, and one-third of the world was Communist-dominated.

The woman suffrage movement started in the U.S. in 1869 and within half a century they had obtained their goal. Freud came out with his strange theories in the 1890's and by the 1920's people all over the world were dropping like flies onto psychoanalytic couches.

Perhaps the most speedy success was that of Lord Keynes. His *General Theory* appeared in 1936, and a decade later governments were guided

by it and college economics was permeated with it.

It is now close to 90 years since *Progress and Poverty* was given to the world — and what's holding up the parade? Sometimes it seems to be around the corner — as in 1964, when some were impressed by Johnson's war on poverty, or by Goldwater's speeches on freedom, and if either took one more step, he'd be a single taxer. But that one step turns out to be across a Grand Canyon.

And there's the rub. The Georgist philosophy, simple as it appears to be, is so fundamental and far-reaching that accepting it means letting go of a universe of fallacies and malpractices that are easier to continue. To take one instance: the notion that money is wealth lies behind our entire practice of foreign aid, urban renewal, gold panic, union demands, international trade and much more. The theories that enable us to tinker with the system without basic changes are readily adopted. Keynesianism certainly does this. Even Communism turns out to be a ruling clique on top and the rest on bottom — it can even be the same clique as before. Georgism wants more than tinkering or cliques — it wants fundamental justice for all men. So our job is much greater.

But as George knew — and as most of us feel — these ideas must eventually be recognized. Even now there is a perceptible advance in our direction on many levels — in education, journalism, in city planning, and internationally. Let's wait till 1979 to see what happens.

Henry George News, *April, 1968*

Government as Panacea

EVERY AGE has its own panacea, I suppose — its remedy which everyone believes will solve all problems.

In the eighteenth century, the indispensable cure-all was Reason. There was no folly so great but that it could be Reason'd out of man... or so it was thought.

But, regrettably, an overwhelming portion of mankind remained impregnable to reason and persisted in its perverse and persnickety ways. And so a new remedy had to be concocted.

In the nineteenth century, that new remedy was — Evolution. Man

might still in large measure be an unreasoning beast, it was argued, but it took him a million years to gain what little sense he has; give him another million years and he'll come around. Henry George, in *A Perplexed Philosopher,* recalls a conversation he had with an evolutionist who said, "You and I can do nothing at all. ... We can only wait for evolution."

Well, that might have been all right for the quiet nineteenth century, but the frantic twentieth century couldn't wait a million years — or even a thousand years. In the meantime, disastrous things could happen, and in fact were happening.

By now, the twentieth century's panacea has clearly emerged. It is: Government. Whatever the problem, large or small, the well-nigh universal attitude is that the government should take care of it, can take care of it, is taking care of it, will take care of it, must take care of it.

Education? It needs governmental aid. Science? The government should subsidize it. Health? There should be a governmental health program. Old age? The government must give help. Unemployment ? The government must step in. Strikes? Wages? Farm surplus? Housing? You name it.

So far has our reverence for government gone that when communism — which is based on an all-powerful government, and which we abhor — rears its head, we are convinced that the only remedy is for our own government to go and do likewise!

What is government that it should be invoked with such faith? Our collective selves, no doubt. But we turn to it with our supplications as though it were a deity, something greater than ourselves. And government responds by taking unto itself more and more of the garb of a deity — the kind of deity which ends by devouring its devotees, like the stork and the frogs in Aesop's fable!

If any of us frogs are left we will no doubt be hunting for the next panacea — and the Single Tax would not be the worst one to be taken up.

The various panaceas all have their place. After all, Reason is a good thing to have around; so is Evolution. So, for that matter, is Government, in its rightful place. And so is the Single Tax, which has not yet been accorded its rightful place.

Henry George News, *November 1960*

Liberty and Freedom

"WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE," someone asked at a meeting, "between liberty and freedom?"

Doesn't the fellow realize, I thought, that they're both the same? The speaker concurred.

But since then I've wondered whether there may not be a nuance of difference between the two words, even though they are used interchangeably.

Liberty, *libertas,* comes from the Latin; freedom, *Freiheit,* from the Teutonic. Interestingly, both originated in the names of gods of growth — the Latin *Liber* and the Teutonic *Fret. Liber,* however, is associated more closely with vineyards and crops, while Frei presides over woods and mountainsides. Thus the nuance is suggested — one deals more with cultivation and the other with nature.

Liberty is from the city-states of the Mediterranean; freedom is from the woods *(frith)* and wild country of the North. Liberty is from the settled, gregarious, rational Latins; freedom is from the roving, restless, imaginative Teutons. Liberty is logical, objective, social. Freedom is mystical, subjective, individual.

Liber, free, is the same word as *liber,* book, and is close to *libra,* balance. The association suggests a reasoned-out affair. *Frei* is the same word as the Teutonic word indicating family, and the word "friend" is also derived therefrom — sentimental connotations.

Liberty is of the city, freedom is of the country. The goddess of Liberty stands at the entrance to a great city. But — "From every mountainside let freedom ring."

In the words of Henry George: "Liberty! it is a word to conjure with." "Freedom is the natural state of man." Liberty is proclaimed by men who meet together and draw up a document. Freedom is a cherished cause to be fought for and won.

We speak of freedom from some form of restraint; whereas, one is at liberty to do something.

Thus we may say that freedom represents the intuitive feeling, the natural yearning of man to be free; whereas liberty is the developed idea as

men associate with one another. The desire of individuals for freedom is the prompting force; and liberty is the outcome, the code thought out so that men may be together and still be free (e.g., civil liberties)....

And while on the subject of language I want to register a protest against such over-used words as "image," which are bandied about so much they become meaningless.

It's a sign of the time, I suppose, that so many are preoccupied with so superficial a thing as images. What is needed is a new iconoclast to smash these "idols of the forum" so we may get back to realities.

"When words lose their meaning," said Confucius, "the people will lose their liberties."

Henry George News, *December 1960*

The Circumlocution Office

THERE IS A LOT OF MEANING in that little phrase of Hamlet's, "the insolence of office." And Shakespeare's fellow countryman, Dickens, years later gave a vivid illustration of it in Little Dorrit. In a chapter on the "Science of Government," he described the Circumlocution Office dedicated to the purpose of How Not to Do It, and presided over by a clan of bureaucrats with the apt Dickensian name of the Barnacles.

America has inherited the Barnacles (although England is far from having rid herself of them), and they are proliferating.

This is not to condemn personally the bureaucrats, some of whom at close range turn out to be surprisingly human and even sincere and diligent. It is just that within the set-up as it is, they can't help turning into — Barnacles. Rules and regulations have to be enforced. Any one who may have clashed, perhaps in righteous indignation, with the Circumlocution Office, is not anxious to repeat the experiment.

And so we take what is heaped on us, one-tenth of which would have ignited ten revolutions in 1776.

Some years ago, a Senate committee investigating the doings of the underworld asked one notorious character, "What have you done for your country?" He replied, "I pay my taxes." Nobody was much impressed. But years later, when a President at his inauguration said, "Ask what you

can do for your country," what else does our country ask us to do but pay taxes?

I hear only three times a year from the government — an income tax form from the federal government, one from the state government and one from the city government.

Those in office always seem to know what to do. I have never received an inquiry from any level of government as to my ideas on how taxes might be raised, or what to do with them or how to improve any aspect of government. From time to time, without waiting for an invitation, I have ventured an opinion, and have found that the Circumlocution Office is as well defended against an attack of ideas as any medieval fortress. The arrows they shoot back are in the form of courteous acknowledgments.

Tolstoy received this treatment. He wrote to the Czar urging the Little Father to seriously consider land value taxation as a way to avert revolution. He received a reply from the secretary of the Finance Minister saying that his letter had been filed away. I wonder what became of those files ?

Then there are the other things Hamlet complained of — the law's delay, the oppressor's wrong, and sweating under a weary life. One could write a book. Come to think of it, a book has been written — *Progress and Poverty.*

Henry George News, *January, 1968*

Quesnay's Predecessor

THE IDEAS OF HENRY GEORGE, as expounded in his major works, are related most directly to those of the classical economists. The accepted founder of the classical school is Adam Smith. He, in turn, acknowledged his indebtedness to the French Physiocrats, the pioneer school of economic thought which taught a single land tax and free trade. And the founder of the Physiocratic movement was Francois Quesnay, physician and intellectual to the court of Louis XV.

What about Quesnay? Where did he get his ideas from? We find that his chief work, the *Tableau Economique* (Economic Table), gives credit to the "Royal Economies" of Sully.

The *Due de Sully* — a century earlier than Quesnay — was the chief minister of Henri IV, and was put in charge of the finances of France. Quesnay's "Economic Table" is an undeservedly forgotten work; even more forgotten is Sully's "Royal Economies" (the title of his extensive memoirs) — which is a pity, for they would do much to explain the brief peace and prosperity of his nation in an age of disorders.

Sully's patron, Henri IV, came to power after nearly a century of civil and religious wars which left France exhausted and in ruins. Henri IV was an unusual ruler for that period (or any other), being intelligent, *de bon esprit*, broad-minded — and imbued with advanced ideas on religious toleration and international peace. This far-seeing monarch surrounded himself with able men, including his right-hand man, Sully.

It was Sully who was entrusted with the job of restoring the country from the ravages it had suffered. He set to it with the idea of rendering the landowners of the realm subject to the national interest — quite a task in a period when every duchy and barony was still a universe unto itself. Although he does not seem to have specifically developed the land-tax idea, he understood that land was the source of all wealth. He fostered policies that encouraged the cultivation of the soil. He also encouraged commerce, reduced the many internal restrictions on trade, and built roads. He saw to it that public finances were handled economically. When he came to office, France was staggering under an intolerable national debt. At the end of his administration there was a surplus in the treasury.

And so the reign of Henri IV was a relatively happy interlude between the carnage and confusion which lay behind, and the iron hand of Richelieu and the oppressive grandeur of Louis XIV, which was to come.

Project for a historical novelist: Dig up Sully's memoirs and cast them into a readable book, with attention to his fiscal policy.

Project for a historical researcher: Trace Sully's antecedent! Where did he get his economic ideas from?

Henry George News, *March 1961*

Skepticism is a Good Thing

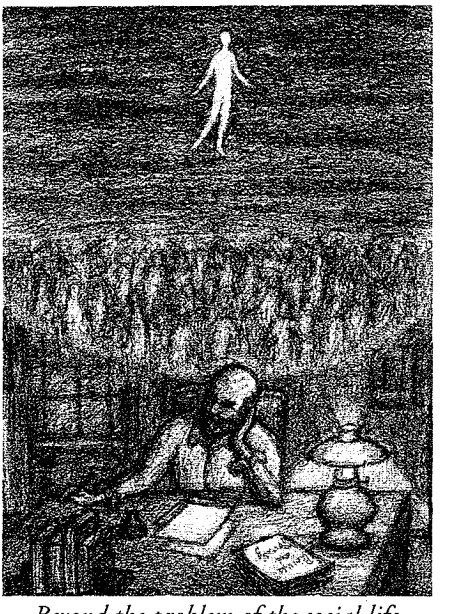
SOMETIMES a non-Georgist will look a Georgist over quizzically and muse, "you really think you have the answer, don't you? And you're pushing it with a single-track mind, like a religious zealot. Well, there's a lot more to the world than is implied in your naive beliefs!"

My non-Georgist friend, there is something to what you say — but you haven't said the last word, either.

Belief — faith, if you please — is part of the Georgist make-up. Religious zeal, if you want to call it that, is there, too.

But the zeal and the faith have been earned — by an arduous mental analysis, objective and factual.

"I have in this inquiry," wrote Henry George at the end of *Progress and Poverty*, "followed the course of my own thought. When, in mind I set out on it I had no theory to support, no conclusions to prove.... But out of this inquiry has come to me something I did not think to find, and a faith that was dead revives."



Beyond the problem of the social life is the higher and deeper problem of the individual life.

This is also what happens to the typical student of George. He must approach the subject with a free and open mind. He wrestles and reasons, argues and struggles — and when finally the whole picture emerges, he is filled with the excitement of discovery, followed by zeal in his new belief.

When a conclusion is so reached, and can be demonstrated objectively its proponent is entitled to some zeal. As for the Georgist philosophy not being the whole truth about everything — what is? Is it not something to have carved out of the confusing totality of life a corner where certain matters are clearly explained? Must it be discarded because all problems of the universe are not thereby solved?

Skepticism is a good beginning, and should be encouraged at the

out-set of any inquiry. But as the inquiry progresses, objective analysis should yield some results that one can believe. The eternal skeptic, like Peter Pan, never grows up. Presented with the most indisputable evidence, he prefers not to give up his skeptical throne — like the farmer who, even after he saw the giraffe, insisted; "There ain't no such animal." He is the victim of his own imperishable doubt!

On the other hand, the "true believer" is known to carry his credulousness to the point of irrationality, and to abide by his belief in the face of no matter what contradictions.

The Georgist will not fall into this trap if he is true to the inquiry he himself has made. He need only look at the facts squarely, ask questions about them, and reason the matter out.

Human beings need some kind of belief. Better to believe in something that stands the test of facts and reason. This test is met — I believe — by the Georgist philosophy.

Henry George News, *October 1960*

All Paths Lead to George

IN *THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS*, Alice walked out of the house to get to the garden, and saw a maze of paths. But no matter which path she took, she always found herself back at the house. After all, it took a special effort to get along in such unfamiliar surroundings.

It is something like that as between our maze of economic problems and the analysis made by Henry George. We may follow just about any current economic situation and we'll soon find ourselves bumping into George.

A recession and its attendant unemployment lands us squarely in George's territory, for his basic work was to track down the answers to these recurrent problems. The perpetual series of strikes and squabbles over wages also land us at Henry George's door. He saw that the fundamental need was to raise the general level of wages so that each would get his full earnings. Then there is the chronic — and currently acute — problem of public revenue and public services. While more and more governmental benefits and involvements are being laid out, there is greater and

greater confusion as to how to pay for all this. Back we are at Henry George House! For George's chief implementation was a radical tax reform. The spreading blight of slums in our cities is also right up George's alley. Land value taxation is a potent weapon in the war against slums.

It is quite remarkable how we keep running into George every time we follow the path of an economic problem. Although he worked out his ideas at a particular time and place, although he addressed himself to one basic problem — progress and poverty — yet he somehow touched a vital artery that runs throughout society, he hit upon fundamental underlying trends that still assert themselves today. In the world at large, too, though the paths stretch far and wide, we keep meeting Henry George. Surely the land question is the bottom question in the ferment going on in Asia, Africa and Latin America, in the global struggle over communism, and in the world problem of poverty, resources and population. Monopolization of land by a few, and the impoverishment of the landless masses — this is the central economic trouble with the world.

There was some excuse for Alice: she had just gone through the looking-glass and it was a strange world that she found. But this is our own world; why are we so confused by it and why do we always get lost in the maze?

And above all — after the paths of economic problems lead so imposingly and so persistently straight to the door of Henry George — how is it that our leaders just as persistently turn away and get lost in the maze again?

Henry George News, *April 1961*

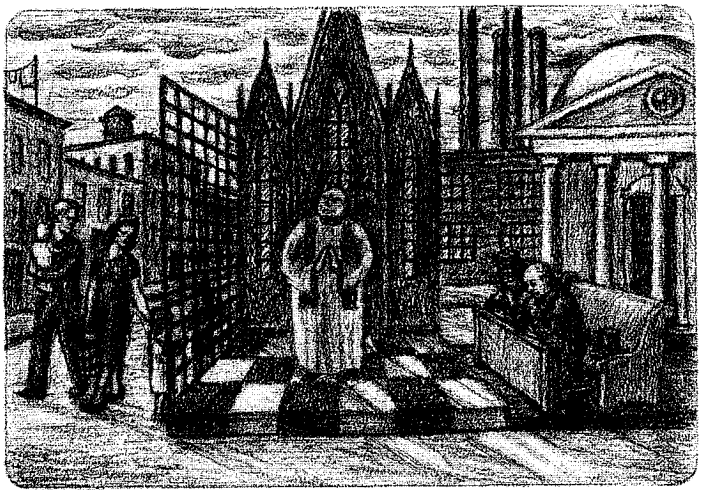
A New Religion?

THE WORLD SEEMS TO BE READY for a new religion — is even yearning for it. This is not merely a notion of some advance-guard thinkers — it is widespread among those who have been brought up in the old religions, and even those in the inner sanctums.

The Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church, the radical revisions of Protestant thinkers, the soul-searching of Jews about Judaism, the changing attitudes of Buddhists, Hindus and others, the proliferation of new sects, all bespeak a deeply felt need for a new approach to life's deepest questions. What may, or should, emerge from all this? A clue can be found

in the Kasidah:

"All faith is false, all faith is true: Truth is the shattered mirror strown in myriad bits; while each believes his little bit the whole to own." There is some truth in all beliefs; the main error has been in each taking his little section and building a wall against other sections. The job, then, is to piece together the mirror — not merely "eclecticism" or "syncretism," but an effort to get at the underlying truths and see how they connect with one another.



The Malthusian doctrine furnishes a philosophy by which the rich Christian may bend on Sundays in a nicely upholstered pew without any feeling of responsibility for the squalid misery that is festering but a square away.

A broad and universal view would have to be taken. Religions have tended to focus too much on individual salvation. A greater appreciation is needed of the sheer wonder of the universe and of natural law; and more attention needs to be paid to social and economic rightness.

All of today's world religions contain much that is useful from the universal point of view — and we may find forgotten truths in abandoned faiths, particularly the "nature" religions that celebrated the world and the seasons. One of comparatively late vintage was the "religion" that developed out of the French Revolution. Deistic, it worshipped Nature, Reason and Liberty. We could do — and have done — worse than pay homage to these three. It revised the calendar so that months were named after seasons (Brumaire, Thermidor, etc.) instead of pagan gods. It was catching on and might have prevailed had not Napoleon set back the clock (and the calendar) for his own purposes.

Nothing drastic is needed for a new universal religion — just a recognition of basics, the reign of natural law, and the freedom of each to fashion his own connection with God. It may be that the mirror is not broken

at all— just that we have spread a net over it and each has decided which aperture he will stand in.

There is room for everything and everybody — even a personal mysticism (which both the dogmatists and the rationalists deplore). The important thing is to accept ourselves as "part of the part" and to accept one another.

Henry George News, *November, 1966*

On Doing Nothing

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL and precious of human rights," wrote Rossini, "is that of doing nothing."

And yet the prospect of "doing nothing," especially in the years of retirement, scares more modern Americans than does the atom bomb.

People who spend most of their lives on the treadmill (and that's most of us), scraping, stinting, saving and chasing the buck, do so in pursuit of the vision of a more comfortable and secure life where they can get out of the rat-race and live a little.

Insupportable irony! When they finally get there, the "golden years" stretch out before them like a bleak desert. They either die of boredom or quickly seek "something to do" to keep from dying of boredom: a "hobby" or — a job!

This is certainly not as it ought to be. The age-old dream of mankind is to be relieved of the irksomeness of daily toil so that we may fulfill ourselves as human beings, to be delivered from compulsive activity so that our minds and souls may develop more freely.

Such is the vision of paradise nurtured by all creeds. The anticipation of the "messianic times" among the Jews envisaged every day to be like the Sabbath, with study and discourse on the higher things.

The greatest cultural achievements have come by permitting a chosen few to develop freely—usually at the expense of the many. How wonderful that modern technology can make such attainment possible for all! Why, then, should such a desideratum become so terrifying to us? The answer, I think, is in an economic system which promises abundance and takes it away as fast as it is offered.

The goal of economic comfort and security is always within sight and

yet always eludes us. We do not dare let up our pace on the treadmill. This, then, becomes the most important business of life, and our development as human beings becomes incidental, an afterthought, window dressing.

Hence, as the later years are reached, there is nothing in the social set-up or in the individual to prepare one for leisure, for development, for the higher things. Grooved into the nervous system is a lifetime habit of working and of regarding the "job" as the supreme fact of life. Eleventh hour artsy-crafty stuff, travel, etc., miss the point entirely. Too little and too late. It is essential that respect for the development of the whole human being be engendered in a whole lifetime.

Such a salubrious outlook can be fostered only when we shall have attained an economic system that permits of free and full economic opportunities so that our marvelous technology can really help lighten our toil and bring us closer to the Golden Age without fear of unemployment and idleness.

Henry George News, *August 1961*

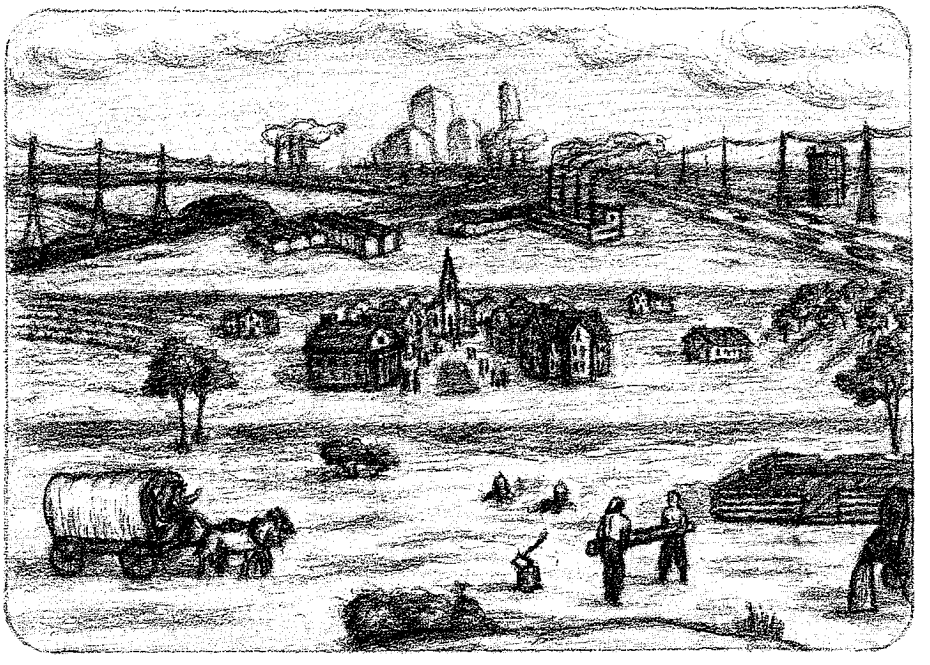
The New Savannah

ONE OF THE MOST CELEBRATED FEATURES of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* is the part called "the Story of the Savannah." George relates vividly how a great city grows up from an uninhabited frontier—and the consequent effect on land values. At least, that's how it happened in the Nineteenth Century; and I present herewith the Twentieth Century Story of the Savannah:

Here, then, let us imagine, is an unbounded stretch of sandy soil and scrubby growth. Along comes the station wagon of the first immigrant. Where to settle he cannot tell, but he finally picks the intersection of Highways 66 and 155. Here he sets up the most basic of all businesses — a service station.

Soon there comes another immigrant. "Aha," he muses, "this must be a growing community." He settles by the side of the first comer and opens a real estate office. He acquires the sandy soil as far as the eye can see for 50 cents an acre, calls it Paradise Gardens, and advertises in all the Sunday newspapers that he is giving away one-acre lots free, but there is a closing fee of $50.

Another real estate office opens, and another, and another. A lawyer and an accountant soon set up shops, for our little community now needs to figure out the tax angles.



More people arrive and lots are now $5,000 apiece. Elderly people come to build their dream homes and find they cannot afford it, and so our community applies for federal aid (after all, we are talking about the New Frontier) . Under Title I, federal money is given to buy some of the lots, and a semi-public housing project goes up. Other lots are ripening some more. Here and there are farmers being paid by the government to keep their land idle.

A missile plant opens, with government contracts, but not enough to employ everybody, and so our community applies for more federal aid as a distressed area.

Population still keeps on increasing. The town has grown into a city—a Miami, a Phoenix, a San Diego—and still it grows. Go to our settler now, and say to him: "I will give you the full value of your service station if you will give it to me and go again beyond the verge of settlement." He will not answer you—mainly because he is not there. He went to Las Vegas after selling his property for $500,000 to Zeckendorf, who is planning to build a 30-story motel and shopping center.

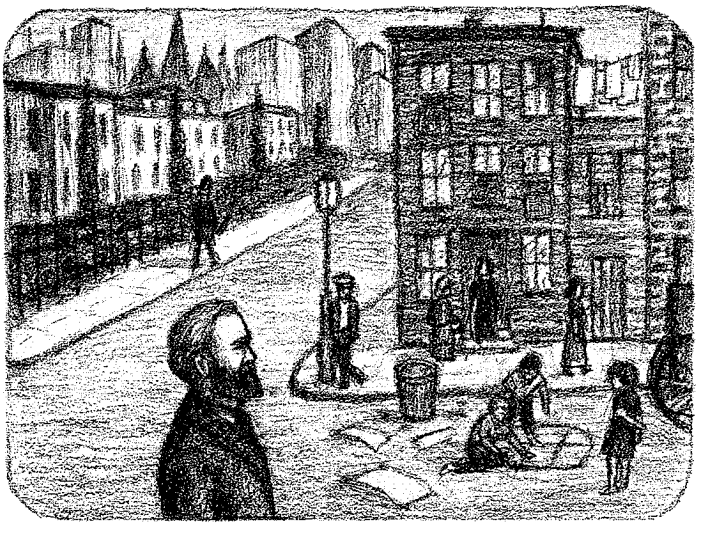
Come around again in another hundred years and I'll tell you the Twenty-first Century Story of the Savannah on a Satellite of Saturn. But perhaps by then we'll have a happy ending.

Henry George News, *October, 1962*

Making Democracy Work

DEMOCRACY, it is said, is not a good form of government; it is simply that every other form is so much worse.

It is understandable why many thoughtful people should be impatient with democracy—it is slow and clumsy in its processes; the people are too apathetic most of the time and too intense at other times; they are often swayed by glib meaningless phrases; they frequently think they can vote themselves benefits without paying for them; and in social life, democracy seems to breed vulgarity. And so one longs for the sturdy hand of a benevolent ruler, a well-ordered hierarchy and the good taste and good manners of an aristocracy.



The association of progress with poverty is the great enigma of our times.

However, we've been through all that, and we know it doesn't work. Benevolent rulers go mad with pride, or die and are succeeded by worthless tyrants; chaos succeeds order; aristocrats can become vulgar too, and in any case, their culture costs too much. And the people are trodden down.

So we might as well face democracy and see if it can be improved.

There was a Scottish laird who expressed what many of his class thought when he said that landless commoners were shiftless and rootless and had no interest in improving the nation; they could at any time pull out and move to another country; it was the landed proprietors who stayed on and looked after things with a sense of duty.

There was some truth in this unsavory observation. A stake in the land does sharpen one's interest in how things are run. But the laird was off

base when he blamed landless people for being born into wrong families.

A lot of these landless people came to America and, lo, they became landed.

While there was enough good land to go around, things worked out pretty well. If we want to refer to a model of democracy at its best, we generally think of the early New England town meetings. We should not forget that they were composed mostly of landed proprietors. These formerly landless people now had a stake in the community and were very careful about what should and should not be done.

If we want to see democracy at its worst, any of our large cities will do. The fruits of "democracy" seem to be corruption, bureaucracy, inefficiency, waste, slums, poverty, crime, vice and traffic jams. But of course this isn't real democracy. The landless proletariat rightly feel they haven't much stake in the community.

Political democracy cannot work without economic democracy. It is actually the latter that gives birth to the former. Without it, political democracy becomes an empty form. The ideal of democracy would be to make everyone a landed proprietor, giving everyone a stake in the common heritage of land.

Henry George News, *May, 1965*

The Meaning of Equality

ASSOCIATION IN EQUALITY, says Henry George, is the law of progress.

Some feel he would have done better to say, association in liberty; that "equality" too much suggests the egalitarian state where all men are forced to the same measure, procrustean style —the big ones cut down, the little ones stretched.

But liberty is not liberty unless all have equal liberty. So it comes to pretty much the same thing.

Forcing men into a procrustean pattern means that someone is doing the forcing, and so equality is violated. If I work and produce twice as much as a fellow worker and half is taken from me, my equality as well as my liberty is violated—for I am not being equally rewarded for my efforts.

But, beyond the synonymous quality of the two concepts, I think

there was another reason why Henry George chose the term "equality" — and that is, the essential unity of human nature.

George quotes approvingly Deutsch's observation on the past and present human condition: "They were even as we are." We need to apply this to the present, too, and say of the people who live on the other side of the hill, "they are even as we are."

George found the similarities among humans to be more striking than their differences. It is quite true that every person is a unique individual, just a little different from everyone else. But this is also true of snowflakes and maple leaves. Not one of the billions of these are said to be like any other one—yet there is no doubt that they are maple leaves and snowflakes. It is a case of "variety within unity."

Much more goes to make up a human being. The variety is rich, but the unity is still more impressive. Some "stupid" people turn out to have unsuspected talents — "smart" people have areas where they are totally dull — it may very well all balance out.

Even this, O Rome, must one day be thy fate!

The human brain is a marvelous creation of two billion years of evolution, and one brain is not much different from another. When the greatest genius of the 20th century, Albert Einstein, died, his brain was examined and found to be — an ordinary human brain.

Number one rule for writers and speakers is, "Don't underestimate the intelligence of your audience or overestimate their knowledge." And there's the key to it. We are endowed with essentially the same equipment, but different people do different things with it. Few would dispute that all should have equality of opportunity to develop their potentials.

The principle of equality of opportunity (which is another way of saying liberty) is after all, based upon the essential equality of all men.

Henry George News, *March, 1965*

Tolstoy's Warning

LEO TOLSTOY, for the first half of his life, enjoyed a career as a great and successful writer, a broad-minded aristocrat who did good deeds, and a happy family man. This busy and useful life was interrupted by a spiritual crisis which caused Tolstoy to doubt the value of all he had done. He felt deeply that all his good deeds, all his works of genius, all his happiness, were not soundly based. It was not enough, not enough for the true purpose of human life—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Tolstoy's agony was paralleled by the agony of his homeland, Russia. For while Russia in the late nineteenth century was moving forward as a civilized nation, there was deep trouble within. Serfdom had been abolished, age-old cruelties were being moderated, industrialization was beginning, there was an intellectual ferment. But it was not enough, not enough! These ameliorations were taking place on top of a system which still permitted privileged classes to live off the rest of the people. The improvements were not enough to stave off a revolution which rocked the world, which Tolstoy foresaw, and which to this day poses the world's number one problem.

Tolstoy felt that nothing less than a profound, fundamental reorienting of his personal life would do. He also realized that a similarly far-reaching reorientation was needed for his country. His probing led him to Henry George, whose ideas he accepted wholeheartedly. It was not enough for a do-good aristocrat to be kind to his peasants—the rights of all men to the land had to be asserted! Failing this, there could only be catastrophe.

Let us remember Tolstoy and Russia when we hear about all the improvements that are supposed to be taking place in our economic life. Technology keeps adding new inventions, there appears to be more leisure time, all sorts of great new projects are being hatched. Not enough, not enough! Meanwhile, automation is feared by workers more than the atom bomb, urban decay is spreading and the countryside is dying, and much of our economy is based upon preparations for a war that is impossible to imagine. Our progress and improvements are not soundly based.

There have been ameliorations before in history, on top of an unjust system. Conditions were improving in ancient Rome before her fall, also in

France as well as Russia before their revolutions. In the US the lot of the slave was improving before the Civil War. Let us heed the warning of Henry George: Unless its foundations be laid in justice, the social structure cannot stand.

Henry George News, *December 1962*

This Age of Ours

EACH EPOCH IN HUMAN HISTORY is given a name, sometimes according to the materials used — like the Stone Age and the Bronze Age; and sometimes according to the mental climate — like the ages of Faith and of Reason.

What, then, to call our present age? We can't call it the Age of Gold, because we're off the gold standard. Not unreasonably, we could call it the Age of Unreason—but that might not be fair, as we haven't completely abolished Reason. And it isn't quite the Age of Hypocrisy, which would be more characteristic of Victorian times. The Age of Anxiety ? That was true of the first half of this century, but we're over that, too.

The Age of Phoniness — that's it! Somehow that has a ring of authenticity about it (if such a thing is possible) . We're all riding the crest of a wave of phoniness. Instead of metal, wood, rubber, cotton and wool, we've learned to live with plastic substitutes. The food we eat has been denatured beyond recognition. We have Instant this and Instant that, and there is a pill for everything. The new houses we build are marvels of phoniness.

Paper prosperity keeps us happy, and the government guarantees us everything by taxing it all away from us. The price of worthless land keeps climbing, the inflationary spiral goes its merry way, and everybody is seeking a way to live off everybody else.

People's main concern is with the 'image' they project. This is not hypocrisy, because we're all very frank to one another about wanting to create the right image, regardless of what we're really like. That doesn't mean we're opposed to genuine qualities— it's just that that's incidental, the real problem being one of the right image. This trend has reached our taxing authorities. We no longer have a "collector" but a "director" of internal revenue—and it's the Internal Revenue *Service*, mind you!

Our cultural institutions are promoting a phony renaissance of the arts. If you notice it's phony, they will tell you brightly, "But that expresses the times, doesn't it?" Go to the church of your choice, they keep harp-

ing—it doesn't matter at all what you believe, or whether or not you believe it, just be nice and sociable and go to church.

One advantage of the term "Age of Phoniness" is that it is suggestive of another appropriate meaning — for "phony" comes from the word meaning "sound"—not in the sense of "valid," of course, but in the sense of "noise." And this is a noisy age! Besides all the jets and machines, everybody is sounding off, and the yakety-yak is sped around the world with marvelous technology. Hi-fi stereo imitates full orchestras in each household, and little children carry transistor radios.

Wonder what the next Age will be like, when they grow up?

Henry George News, *May, 1963*

Nature is Still There

A FAVORITE NOTION among modern economists is that land is no longer worthy to be considered separately as a factor of production. The works of man, they say, are now so considerable and are so comingled with land that there hardly exists any raw nature any more. Ricardo's "original and indestructible powers of the soil" is strictly a has-been, now that we have chemical fertilizers. As for our highly developed cities and industrial centers, we might as well write off land altogether, as man has obliterated nature completely.

This is quite a conceited outlook. Little man, in spite of all his vaunted progress, has scarcely scratched the surface of the globe. The greater part of the land area of the world is entirely uninhabited, and most of the rest but sparsely. There are only tiny clusters of densely populated areas here and there. We're not even mentioning the polar regions, the floor of the ocean, and all that lies under the surface of the earth, whose skin we haven't penetrated.

As for our cities, we haven't yet found anything but the solid surface of the earth on which to erect our buildings and pave our streets. Manhattan Island is a solid rock — contributed by Nature! — and it is this that makes possible the tall skyscrapers. Recently, builders have had to go back to a 1609 map of Manhattan in order to determine the natural features of the island, to see how building foundations should be laid. This after 350 years of the most intensive "obliteration" of

Nature in the world!

Just let man's works alone for a while and they start going primitive. A summer bungalow will go further back to Nature than intended when closed only for one season. Nature somehow manages to get along without man, but man can't get along without Nature.

I wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea to send some of our economists up in a space capsule. Not just to get rid of them — although that wouldn't be such a bad idea. Nor because — as one observer noted — it would be nothing new for them, as they've been up in the air a long time. The purpose would be to have them orbit the earth so as to get a good look at it.

When Colonel Glenn took his celebrated voyage in space, Australia was on the night side. The sturdy men and fair maids of Perth bent all their efforts on beaming a light to Glenn. They lit up the entire city with all available lights, and used every possible reflecting device to magnify the light. Glenn said later he thought he saw a light where Perth should be. This and only this was all the works of man he saw. The rest was silence and mists, sun and stars, oceans and continents. .. Nature!

Henry George News, *December, 1963*

Education and Unemployment

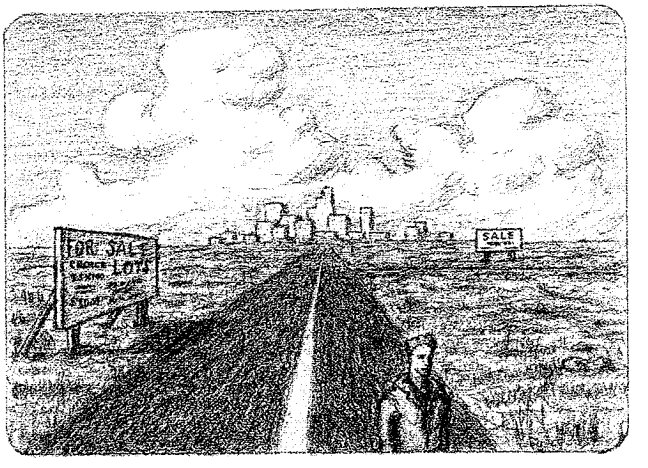
NOWADAYS "EDUCATION" IS THE MAGIC WORD. It has always been a good stock-in-trade. At commencement exercises and at Rotarian meetings the theme "we must educate" never fails.

But today a new significance has been added. In this era of growing automation, the necessity of education, of training and re-training for jobs, is being stressed. The forces of industry, of government, and of the educational world itself, are being galvanized for this great effort. A concerted drive is under way to keep high school students from dropping out, and to get them to go through college.

In the days of our grandparents it was considered quite an accomplishment to go through eight years of grammar school. (Both Henry George and Oscar Geiger had less than eight years of schooling.) In the next generation completion of grammar school became more common, but graduating high school was a rarity. College was strictly for the

upper crust. Eventually high school graduation became standard, and even during the Great Depression you had a fighting chance of getting a job if you could produce a high school diploma.

We're getting to the point (in these days of "prosperity") where a high school education is not considered enough to land a decent job. To the millions of youths who graduate from high school each year we can only say, "You are not prepared to take your part in the economy. You are not trained for the jobs that are open. Go and get more education."



Imagine that! Twelve years of education is not enough preparation to make a living! There are already signs that a four-year college education is getting to be just so-so, and soon sixteen years will not be enough! A new Parkinson's law could be that "job requirements rise to meet the level of education."

It has been said that more training is needed today because there is so much more to learn in the complex modern world. But I think this has been over-rated. In the first place, children learn more on television — and in that venerable institution, the street — than they do in school. Also, one learns by doing, not by cramming for an exam. Besides, our economy is not at all ready for the super-educated people it claims it wants. College graduates find themselves in jobs that could be handled with ease by willing persons with an elementary education. Naturally if someone can display a sheepskin the law of supply and demand will favor him over the fellow who hasn't got one.

In short, unemployment is still unemployment, and it's still with us; and when there are more men than jobs it's going to be tough. More education is nice, but it's not the answer.

Henry George News, *August, 1964*

The Urge to Own Land

AN INTERESTING EDITORIAL in the April issue of *The American Home* begins with the question, "Why is it that ownership of land disagrees with so many of us?" This has been going on, says the article, "since heaven only knows when," with all sorts of wars, disputes and lawsuits over land ownership. The editorial sensibly advises that we should not consider ourselves as "landlords" but as "caretakers" and that we should have regard for the rights of others to the use of land.

This is most encouraging, and even though *The American Home* doesn't answer its opening rhetorical question, it does draw the right conclusions.

That rhetorical question may be worth looking into, however, as we often hear it said that the urge to own land is so deep-rooted in man that the Georgist reform cannot buck it. In fact, students of nature find that even birds and animals stake out land claims for themselves, and woe betide any rival who invades their territory.

What then? Are we fighting nature? Not so. For the birds and beasts are merely seeking to live and propagate and to find the necessary means and security for doing so. And we certainly do not ask any less than that for man!

It is natural and right for man to seek enough land to secure his livelihood. We must not forget, however, that all men are in this situation.

The "disagreeable" part of the business comes when man seeks more than his share. "Woe unto them," says Isaiah, "that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!"

The urge to own land becomes more intense as insecurity increases — insecurity brought about by the monopoly of land by a few.

The private collection of the rent of land acts as a heady narcotic. This is what makes "the most rational and considerate individual," in the words of *The American Home,* "start acting in a most peculiar fashion." The grimness with which this privilege is grasped bears this out. People do not act with a fraction of the hysteria when earned income is taken from them as when unearned income is taken from them. For when earned income is taken, a person can calculate how much has been taken and he knows how

he can recoup that amount. But when the unearned income of rent is taken away, its proprietor has been despoiled of an Aladdin's lamp, a mysterious source of bounty that he would not know how to replace. And so the continuance of this privilege is protected and defended like nothing else on earth.

But despite all the irrationality, there is a trace of rationality in man, and so there is still hope that we can buck — not nature, but the unnatural.

Henry George News, *November, 1964*

Theory vs. Performance

"THE SUPREME MISFORTUNE," said Leonardo da Vinci, "is when theory outstrips performance." And oh, how many a tale hangs thereby!

Some thoughtful people get together and decide that humanity should be saved. So they invite like-minded people to form a League to Save Mankind. There is a meeting, and the members agree on saving mankind — but there is much ado about constitution, by-laws and dues.

Then one member, Miss A, reminds the group forcefully that all this talk is not enough — something must be done. All concur heartily. Mr. B gets up and says that is not enough — something definite must be done. Enthusiastic applause. Mr. C insists that something definite must be done *now.* Ovation. There is a unanimous vote for this proposal, and a committee is appointed to look into the matter. The meeting ends on a note of euphoria.

You are the chairman of the committee. You phone one of the members, who happens to be Miss A. Can she meet tomorrow evening? Heavens no! She has tickets to the theater, No, not the next night, she works late. No, Friday is club night. She is so busy you feel a bit guilty for imposing on her.

You try Mr. B. He wanted something definite at the meeting, but now he's rather vague about it. Besides, he, too, is busy, and it's a big job — what about all the other members? However, he offers you advice, sympathy, suggestions, criticisms, philosophy — everything except a helping hand.

Surely Mr. C will come to the rescue? Yes, he still wants something done now — but he's not interested in piddling projects, only something

tremendous. You plead with him to start doing what we can and perhaps we'll move forward slowly — he counters every argument. He won't waste his time, he wants all or nothing, and since he can't have all, he cheerfully settles for nothing.

As for the rest of the members, they are shocked that nothing has been done. Didn't they vote unanimously for the proposal?

The years melt away. So does the League.

Ten years later you meet Miss A (who is now Mrs. X). She remembers the episode and says it is too bad something wasn't done. She shakes her head sadly over do-nothing people.

You meet Mr. B. He knew all along we wouldn't get anywhere. Mankind doomed and League members didn't even lift a finger. Disgusting!

Mr. C still wants something done now. Whenever we're ready with something big enough, call on him. Then he disappears again into the booming, buzzing confusion of the world that is too much with us. O, tempora! O, mores! O, Leonardo!

Henry George News, *November, 1963*

Alaska's Wise Revenue Policy

VERY INTERESTING NEWS comes out of Alaska. The state revenues from oil have paid for public works and government services, and there is still a handsome surplus. It has been decided to distribute this as a "dividend" to its citizens on a per capita basis. These revenues are also being used to do away with the state income tax, at least temporarily.

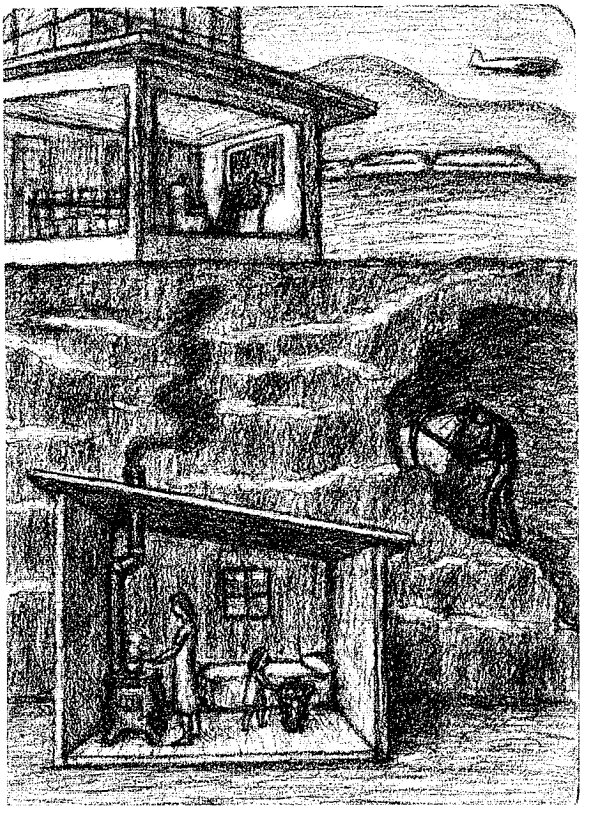
Governor Jay S. Hammond, a Republican, says, "We're taking wealth that belongs to the people and making sure that at least some of it is funneled directly through their pocket. Some people call this socialistic, but it really is very conservative."

The province of Alberta, Canada has done similarly with its oil revenue, and it is a rapidly developing area.

The Federal government is looking askance at the Alaskan bonanza — and so are the libertarians (strange bedfellows!) — The proposal of the Libertarian Party was to do away with Alaska's income tax but not to take any more revenue than minimally necessary. This outlines the

weakness of the Libertarian position which only looks at government and does not mind enormous unearned profit by private monopoly. The position of conservative Governor Hammond is closer to the Georgist position.

The Alaskan dividend comes close to what the late Gaston Haxo proposed.* Years ago, Joseph G. Thompson broached a similar idea in his essay "A Basic Income."



All the advantages gained by the march of progress go to the owners of land, and wages do not increase.

Was this proposal realized just from the logic of the situation without Georgist influence? Or was there possibly a greater Georgist influence behind the scenes than was visible (as was the case in Alberta)? Could the attitude of the untutored Eskimos and Indians in Alaska — that the land, and hence its rent, is for all — have seeped into the attitude of the white settler?

In both Alaska and Alberta, the oil interests did not get a chance to become entrenched before public action was taken. In places where they are entrenched, admittedly the job will be harder.

Another lesson to be learned is that the Georgist philosophy involves much more than shifting the tax from buildings to land in cities. We should indeed promote this in cities — but our horizons should not stop there. There is a whole world out there, lots of riches from land in all its forms, and it deserves more of our attention.

Georgist Journal, *Summer 1980* *[*Gaston Haxo's proposal, as reported in the Spring 1980* Georgist Journal, *was for the rent of land to be collected and then be distributed on a per capita basis.]*

LVT and the Constitution

ONE OF OUR GOOD FRIENDS, Lawrence D. Clark, Sr. wrote to President Reagan proposing land value taxation. This was referred to the Treasury Dept. from which Mr. Clark received a reply to the effect that the property tax is traditionally a local form of taxation; that the US Constitution only permits taxation levied in proportion to population; and that the 16th amendment was required to allow taxation of incomes.

This letter is actually a form letter the like of which has been sent by the Treasury Dept. as a response to Georgist letter-writers for many years. It is nice to know that there have been enough petitions to the government from Georgists to warrant maintaining a standard reply; but not so nice that the reply is meant to fend off the petition.

While it is true that most Georgist efforts have been local, it is also true that a national land value tax would be closer than any other current national tax to the original Constitutional specification. Land values, after all, do arise in proportion to population.

As a matter of fact, the Federal government did levy a tax on the land values of the nation, pro-ratable among the States, several times — in 1798, 1813, 1816 and 1861.

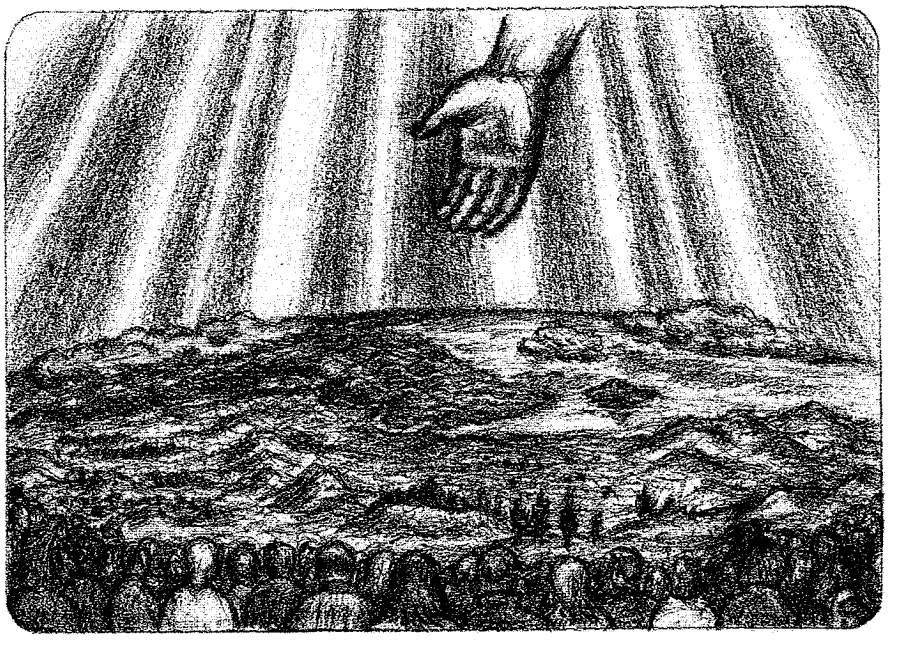
Even the 16th amendment which gives the power to tax incomes "from whatever source derived" would certainly seem to give the broadest possible discretion in deciding which incomes pay how much and which are tax exempt — which has been amply demonstrated in practice.

The trouble is not so much in the constitutionality — or even in precedence — it is in the indisposition of our government to embark upon the course of land value taxation that we propose. So that throws the ball back to us. It makes it a matter of converting enough people of leadership and influence to our ideas.

The constitutionality is the least of the problems. As indicated, I believe the US Constitution already permits land value taxation on a national level. If it is interpreted as not permitting it, an amendment will be adopted when we are ready, as the 16th amendment was adopted.

But when will we be ready? That's the trillion dollar question!

Georgist Journal, *Autumn 1981*



Opportunity in Antarctica

IN MARCH I WROTE to the US Secretary of State, Alexander M. Haig, Jr. about the continent of Antarctica, intrigued by reports of increasing numbers of people in that icy outpost at the South Pole, without any agreed-upon jurisdiction.

There are claims to sectors of Antarctica — some conflicting — by Argentina, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, France and Norway. The US and the USSR have both renounced claims to any territory there — one of the few things on which they agree — and do not recognize any other claims.

With scientific exploration becoming more permanent, population increasing and the likelihood of extracting mineral resources, it is perhaps time to pay attention to this area at the bottom of the world.

I suggested that the US sponsor a resolution in the United Nations that a government of Antarctica be formed consisting of representatives of the nations with claims there, plus the US, the USSR and Britain. This government should be supported by rentals from those occupying sites, whether they represent projects sponsored by governments, scientific

organizations or private companies. In addition, a royalty on any minerals mined should be paid to the Antarctic government. Governmental functions would include development of an overall transportation and communication system and a coordinated legal system.

I supposed that Antarctica was as remote and uncontroversial as you could get; but soon after, the Falkland Islands crisis erupted. These islands are not far from Antarctica; interestingly, a sector of Antarctica is considered a Falkland Islands dependency, and South Georgia Island in that sector was involved in the Argentine take-over (though it is uninhabited). This shows that there is no place in the world that is remote any more.

Some sort of agreed-upon world order seems called for — consider the alternatives — but in a way that does not raise the spectre of world tyranny, a matter that has to be taken seriously. And while we're at it, we might note that international disorder is a concomitant of internal national disorders. It has been pointed out that the Argentine leadership engineered the Falkland Islands invasion as a distraction from domestic problems.

Now, about the North Pole...

Georgist Journal, *Spring 1982*

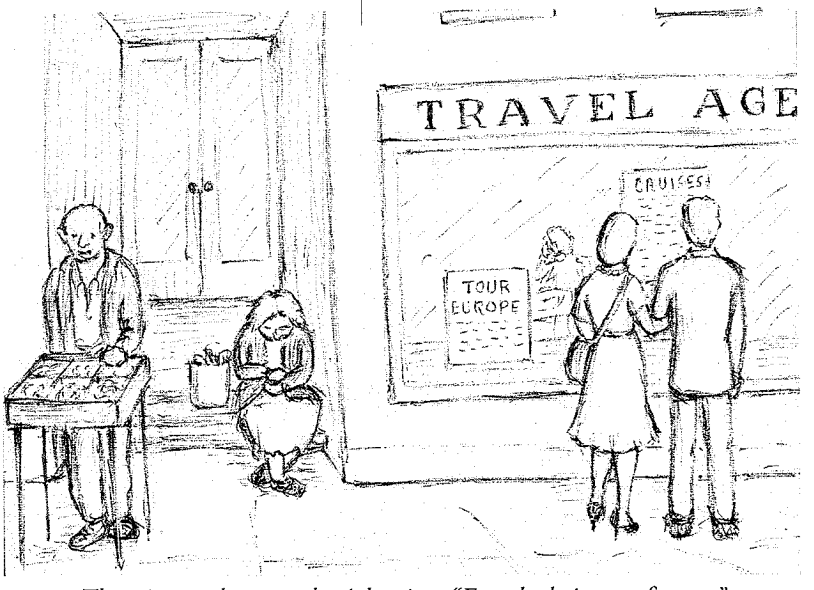
Homelessness in New York

THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESS PEOPLE is becoming more and more conspicuous in our big cities. There has always been a hard core of homeless drifters, but now increasing numbers of city dwellers are joining their ranks. They include older people who have not the wherewithal to pay for a residence, as well as larger numbers of younger people.

In New York it is getting more and more difficult for a person of average means to find an apartment for rent; and in the surrounding areas, the prices of homes are likewise out of reach. Dim prospects for a young couple starting out. What sage advice is offered to them? "Stay with parents... save your money... double up with other people."

As for the homeless, even the palliative of providing shelters for them is running into trouble as no neighborhood wants them around. Not having an address, they cannot apply for welfare. Civil rights groups are campaigning for the "right" of the homeless to vote. Egad!

It has become commonplace to see these castoffs of society



There is a rush across the Atlantic... "Everybody is out of town," they will say. Not quite everybody, though.

hanging around public places — railroad stations, subways, public libraries, dozing, begging, foraging in trash cans. Their presence should be a reproach to us, but instead we have become dulled to it, have developed a blind eye and walk around them. I used to wonder about cities like Calcutta where so many people live in the streets while those better off simply ignore them — but now it's happening here.

Meanwhile, gleaming structures are going up — office buildings, luxury apartments and the like — with high, high rents. Some of these wonders are even given tax breaks, while no solution is in sight for the homeless and near-homeless.

This is in contrast to the situation in New York in the 1920s when, to solve the housing shortage, multiple-dwelling builders were given a ten-year exemption on the building tax, while still paying the land tax. Moderate rental dwellings sprang up all over the city and soon landlords were competing for tenants.

That should give some clue as to what should be done today. Instead, we have retrogressed, and are no better off than when it was said, nearly 2000 years ago: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has not where to lay his head."

Georgist Journal, *Spring 1985*

Land Speculation and "Smart Growth"

As rural areas have been attracting people from cities looking for a place to live, protests have been mounted by rural dwellers, conservationists and others. The villain is taken to be the "developer."

Northern New England has been one of the areas affected. In Vermont, there has been an active business by land companies in acquiring land, subdividing and selling at a big profit, often without any preparation of the land, roads or water. This has prompted the Vermont legislation to pass a stiffer tax on land sale profits, slowing down this activity considerably. What worries Vermonters are the housing developments that follow the sales.

Maine is experiencing a similar situation (as we are informed by Ted Burke, a friend in that state), being invaded from the more urbanized south of New England. Not wanting "over-development," Maine legislators looked at Vermont's remedy, but turned down a similar measure. They are still not sure how to keep their state from being spoiled.

One of the problems is the failure to distinguish between land (the gift of nature) and improvements (the products of labor). The developer becomes the bad guy, because the job of building is not separated from the practice of land speculation.

If the distinction were more clearly perceived all along the line, it would be seen that the invasion of the countryside is itself due to land speculation and the high price of land in urban and suburban areas. It is the non-development of these lands that causes the push outward.

People ought not be blamed for wanting a place to live — and the high price of land in populated areas has made it almost impossible for the average new home-seeker to acquire a home. No wonder they spread out to rural areas.

Vermont's tax on land sale profits is better than nothing, but it is starting at the wrong end — at the point where the land values have already escalated. The place to start is at the beginning — to tax land values and thus prevent them from zooming to speculative levels.

If this were done in New England's urban areas, Down Easters would not have to worry what kind of weapon to use to fend off outsiders. For

then people could afford homes in more settled areas, and rural areas could then be conserved and used more appropriately.

Georgist Journal, *Autumn 1988*

Let us suppose an imaginary world where men could support themselves in air, and could produce from the material of the air...

The Three "I"s

DISCUSSING WITH SOME FRIENDS about why the Georgist philosophy is not more widely accepted after all these years, I suggested three "I's": Ignorance, the Interests and Inertia.

Re the first: Ignorance is above all the major obstacle. This is not simply a matter of people not knowing of the existence of our philosophy but of the difficulty of following its reasoning. The vested Interest in the private collection of the rent of land exerts a tremendous Influence on politics, education, etc. It is not to be underestimated. Inertia is the tendency to go on doing things in the same way, even after a better way is demonstrated — a quite universal trait.

In our discussion, other "I's" were suggested: The Income tax was one — this tax is so entrenched that people — those who pay as well as those

who collect — have difficulty in imagining any other mode of taxation. Indifference was also cited; only a small minority are concerned with questions of fundamental reform and equal justice and liberty. There is also an "if" factor: "If only the Single Tax were adopted at the very beginning" or "If only some important leader would get behind it," etc. And we may cite the Indisposition of non-converts to think, and even the Indisposition to talk about it or do anything about it for fear of being ridiculed. Finally, there is simply "I" as in "I'm all right, Jack." Seeking, or having found, a little comfortable niche somewhere, let the rest of the world go to hell! We could go on with Iconoclasm and Idiocy, to say nothing of world Insanity.

To remove want and the fear of want, to give all classes the decencies and refinements of life, the opportunities of mental and moral development, would be like turning water into a desert.

Getting carried away with this Imagery, we also have to cope with our own Inadequacies: Impatience with our glacially slow progress whilst Illogical Ideologies are steaming ahead; our Irritation at the difficulty of getting a hearing; our Insistence which sometimes turns people away; occasionally our bizarre Inventions of methods to attract attention; and other Idiosyncracies.

And that's only one letter of the alphabet! So we have 25 other multiple obstacles to overcome. But at least there are some more positive words throughout the alphabet. Staying with "I", we have a powerful "Idea" that has in it the "germanitive power of truth." So let us continue to spread Information about it and keep up the Inclination to Illuminate the world with it. Let us maintain our Independence, be Immune from the world's discouragements, and have the Idealism to believe it will eventually triumph. We may well reckon with an Invisible Influence which will take time to become manifest.

Georgist Journal, *Winter 87-88*

The Four-Letter Word the Economists Forget

WHAT'S NEW in the post-Laffer world of economic thought? One development is a concept called "rational expectations".

"Expectations" is a term that has come into currency in recent years. In 1969 I wrote an article for *Land and Liberty* on "Black Power", pointing to the increased restlessness for improvement among American Negroes. I referred to a term used more than a century ago by Lord Macaulay in a lengthy article in the Edinburgh Review in which he explained that revolutions were caused by rising expectations.

Since then, I have seen this term used by writers on the social scene. I don't know if my article in some way caught somebody's attention and the term was picked up and passed around. I'm willing to be disabused of this idea if I learn that the expression was used in years prior to 1969! At any rate, the credit belongs to Macaulay for coining the phrase.

The "rising expectations" theme in social analysis was followed by "falling expectations". In the 1970s the idea of growth and progress did not appear compatible with economic, social and political troubles in the world. Prospects for an era of peace and prosperity were dim; the best that could be expected was to hold the line, "zero growth" was preached, recession lowered performance, "stagflation" set in, and the decline of civilization — whether by bang or whimper — was foreseen.

This disillusionment also harks back to the "black power" theme. At a big rally in Washington, Negroes and other minorities commemorated the demonstration at the same place twenty years ago when Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I have a dream" speech.

Although the dream was valiantly upheld, disappointment — "falling expectations" — was widely acknowledged and persistent poverty and unemployment, especially among blacks, was noted. It will take more than speeches and rallies to solve this problem.

Now we have "rational expectations". This is a term circulating among economists in an attempt to refine economic analysis which has not done very well either in advising or forecasting. This school of thought is outlined in the book *Rational Expectations* by Steven M. Sheffrin (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

The idea, according to economist Herbert A. Simon, is to provide "satisfactory solutions for the real-world decision problem... unattainable optimization is sacrificed for in-practice attainable satisfaction". And since economists love to coin words and phrases, this is called satisficing behaviour.

"Conditional expectations" is another variation of this theme. This school notes that people make economic decisions based on the incomplete information available to them. Furthermore, their expectations involve past experience; something that happened under previous similar conditions is likely to be a guide to present decision-making. Yet Jude Wanniski could argue that the totality of decisions involves all the information available — "the world electorate is always right".

Mr. Sheffrin would like to apply the theory to such a volatile institution as the stock market, but he muses: "If changes in information about dividends cannot explain movements in stock prices, what can?"

Perhaps the well-known economist, Eliot Janeway, gave the best answer. In a radio commercial for AT&T, as a final fillip his "interviewer" asked: "Will the stock market go up or down?" Mr. Janeway, replied: "Yes, but not right away."

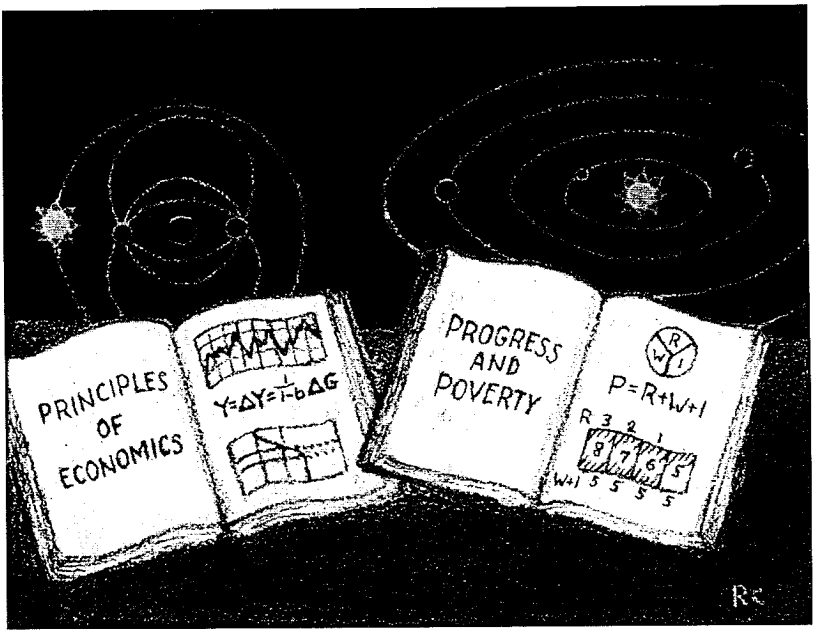
Not untypical of economists' prognostications on the economy!

Another economist, James Tobin, is quoted by Mr. Sheffrin as criticizing the "rational expectations" school as follows: "They are all inspired by faith that the economy can never be far from equilibrium... With such faith the orthodox economists of the early 1930s could shut their eyes to events they knew *a priori* could not be happening... Keynes might say this is where he came in."

Yes, this is where Keynes came in — but his theories also used assumptions which eventually did not hold up.

The "rational expectations" school concentrates on the same parameters used by most contemporary economists — interest rates, tax rates, inflation rates, money supply — so there's no breakthrough here. Not necessarily identifying with any particular school — whether Keynesian, supply-side or neo-classical — they feel that rational expectation formulas can refine economic analysis in general.

But it would seem that economic analysis needs not merely a refinement but an overhauling.



Most economists today shut their eyes to the influence of land, land prices, land speculation — "the power in the land". The nearest Sheffrin comes to it is when he makes a passing reference to "inelastic supply". Otherwise we encounter unsatisfactory explanations that we've seen before — that supply outstrips demand, causing a recession; that laborers may prefer leisure at certain times rather than accept a prevailing wage and so we have "unemployment"; that answers lie in tinkering with interest rates, etc. (Can we speak of "irrational expectations"?)

In speaking of "expectations", economists are ignoring a big one — the expectation of a higher return for land, causing it to be held out of use or underused. With the "inelastic supply" of land, increased demand escalates its price to dizzy levels — and many who cannot afford it are forced out of business.

This is the "information" missing from the calculations of today's economists and econometricians. This is the unnoticed obstruction that is upsetting the "equilibrium" dear to economists. This is why, while puzzling over their various factors and inputs and computerized data, they always seem to miss the boat.

This is the key to the overhauling needed in economic analysis.

Land & Liberty, *Nov.-Dec. 1983*

Who Takes the Prize?

THE 1984 NOBEL PRIZE FOR ECONOMICS was awarded to Sir Richard Stone, a retired Cambridge University professor, for his work on developing systems of national accounting — double-entry bookkeeping on a grand scale.

This prompts a look at previous Nobel laureates in Economics.

The Nobel prizes were established by the estate of Alfred Bernhard Nobel (1833-1896), a Swedish inventor and engineer who developed dynamite and other explosives which he thought were so dreadful that wars would be abolished.

Annual awards were established in Literature, Chemistry, Physics, Medicine and Peace. They were started in 1901 (the Boer war was going on) and have evolved into the world's most prestigious awards.

A latecomer was Economics, a sixth category started in 1969.

In establishing the prize, the Swedish Academy of Science wanted to stress the scientific aspects of the subject — indeed, they referred to it as Economic Science. They gave emphasis to techniques, methods, fact-finding, and sought to avoid ideology. Thus they aimed to put Economics on a par with the other sciences.

How has this worked out? Looking at the list of prize winners, we see that from 1969 to 1973, they stayed close to their concept of Economic Science. The laureates worked in Econometrics, mathematical models, methodology (which, however, is not quite the equivalent of the nitty-gritty in other sciences). But then there was change.

In 1973 there was a serious global recession. The OPEC cartel stunned the world with its dramatic increase in the price of oil and the conventional Keynesian wisdom suffered blows because of stagflation. The supposed verities were shattered, and lo and behold, the Nobel prize went to ideologues.

In 1974 the prize was divided between Hayek, an apostle of the unregulated market, and Myrdal, a proponent of government intervention. And in 1975 the prize was divided between a Russian and an American. So if ideology could not be avoided, they at least tried to straddle the fence!

Thereafter, it is as though the billiard balls were scattered on the table,

with a great diversity of approaches: monetarism, international trade, decision-making processes, Third World economics.

Then from 1980 to 1983, there was another interesting change. It was back to Econometrics — but with a difference.

The 1980 laureate, Lawrence Klein, served in the Carter administration and was a proponent of national policy-making. The 1981 laureate had served in the Kennedy administration, was a Keynesian and an opponent of Friedman. One reviewer asked: was the Swedish Academy of Science sending a message?

But in 1982, there was another change. The winds of conservatism were blowing. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were gaining in credibility and other countries were going conservative. And the 1982 laureate was George J. Stigler, a strict marketplace economist. In 1983 the laureate was Gerard Debreu, who had undertaken studies on the equilibrium of supply and demand in a market economy, seeking to verify Adam Smith's "invisible hand." In 1984 — with no great changes in the world but with conservatism being challenged — we're back to "impartial" economics with Richard Stone.

Thus we see that the Nobel decisions were affected by changing trends and the climate of thought and they could not consistently maintain the Olympian detachment they at first thought possible.

The Nobel prizes for Physics, Chemistry and Medicine indicate over the years advances in these fields. Each succeeding contribution is built on previous work and progress made.

But such is not the case with Economics as currently taught and practiced. For a time — a few years perhaps, or even several years — a set of ideas and policies seem firmly in place. Then comes an unexpected crisis and different ideas challenge the conventional wisdom. Perhaps one or more of these ideas become adopted and the same process is repeated. It is as though an unseen obstacle or gap breaks down the gears of economics.

Dating from Adam Smith, economic thought has been cultivated for some 200 years. For about the same period, physics has been developing as a science.

But whereas physics has made phenomenal progress, economics is still floundering. There is not a common ground. Economists vie with one another with contradictory theories and claims. The uncontroversial contribu-

tion of the 1984 Economics laureate, Richard Stone, in developing a super book-keeping system, hardly compares with advances in other sciences. Increased understanding of how things work is what matters, and prizes don't go to people who improve ways of counting stars or blood corpuscles.

Real economic progress cannot be made without paying heed to the big basic issues. Can we look at the business-cycle theory of the Russian economist Kondratiev without noticing that he was exiled to Siberia for dabbling in capitalistic economics? Is it enough to perfect mathematical models while the world is going haywire? While debts and deficits are mounting everywhere, does an improved method of keeping accounts help much? Can developmental economies be worked out matter-of-factly while the Third World is mostly in the grip of domineering elites? Can an economy be described with no reference to the disinherited masses? Can models be constructed without regard to the effects of bureaucratic interference in the market?

And can growth be plotted while avoiding the hottest issue all — the distribution of wealth?

If the hope is that neutrality in such matters will make economics more closely resemble other sciences, such as physics, this is not the case.

The fact of life most persistently ignored by today's economists is the monopoly of land and the rent of land.

Classical economics did recognize the special nature of the rent of land, and did notice that the landowner as such made no contribution to production. The phenomenon which they recognized to some extent was fully brought to light by Henry George — that the rent of land increases with the growth of society, that an artificial increase presses against other returns, and that it must be diverted from private pockets to public uses.

Economists have chosen to soft-pedal the importance of this knowledge, choosing to merge land and rent with other factors and returns.

Paul Samuelson has a good demonstration of the law of rent in his textbook, but then he does not integrate it with the rest of economics.

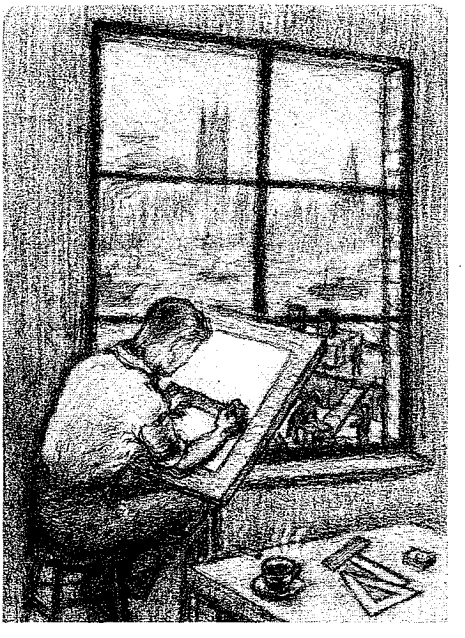
Million Freedman and Herbert Simian have mildly endorsed land value taxation, but place no special importance on it.

Supply and demand economists do not notice that land is different from reproducible goods.

Computer models and forecasts take no notice of rent.

With this all-important factor missing in current economics, it is no wonder that the gears keep getting stripped. It is as though in physics no importance were attached to some basic phenomenon such as light or magnetism or gravity. No doubt physics, in those circumstances, would be in the same sorry state that economics is in today.

We cannot help calling to mind Macaulay's observation that if the law of gravity offended any large pecuniary interest, there would not be wanting learned arguments against it. Let's face it — there is much pecuniary interest in land and its rent! Could this be another "invisible hand" in economic thought?



As for the other Nobel categories, Literature is in a class by itself, as a masterpiece can be written in no matter what year. But the other categories are supposed to show some advance. Such has been the case in Physics, Chemistry and Medicine.

It is only fair to admit that human and social affairs are much more complex than the other disciplines and that we have a long way to go to approach comparable understanding.

In this domain, besides Economics, there is the Peace prize, which was Nobel's primary interest. It has been awarded almost annually since 1901, and during that same period we have experienced the two worst world wars in history, plus a host of nasty lesser ones, plus the most monstrous of all hanging over our heads.

The awarding of the 1984 Peace prize to Bishop Tutu of South Africa shows that the Nobel people are not avoiding controversy in that field.

But by comparison, Economics is an even hotter topic than Peace. Economics concerns how all of us live in both wartime and peacetime, how wealth is produced and, above all, how it is distributed. Unless this is squarely faced, there is likely to be further evasive dabbling in Economics with periodic crises.

Land & Liberty, *March-April 1985*

Dollar for an Acre!

LAST YEAR MARKED a little-known bicentenary in the US — the Land Ordinance of 1785. This was the first land reform of the new nation, and together with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, had lasting consequences. They were adopted by the short-lived Continental Congress, which was superseded by the Federal Constitution (1787-89), and were surely its most important actions.

Some of the thirteen original states on the eastern seaboard had laid claims to lands to the west and after some bickering relinquished them to the national government. In relinquishing Virginia's western lands in 1784, Thomas Jefferson drew up a plan to survey and settle them. The Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 were modeled on this plan. The land was divided into rectangular sections with townships of 36 sections of six miles square. The revenues from the central sections were to be reserved for public education.

The land was sold to prospective settlers for between $1 and $2 per acre. This seems little enough, but in those days it was a lot of money. Much land was bought up by speculators who reaped profits from the settlers coming in. So both land reform and land speculation were part of US history from the beginning.

Still, by one means or another, the westward movement began which was to populate the country from coast to coast. And the Ordinances set precedents for the formation of states, observed into modern times (the latest being Alaska and Hawaii).

The goal sought by Jefferson was the settlement of lands by small working farmers and the avoidance of land monopoly. But this cannot be achieved by fiat. A better grasp and application of Physiocratic principles (with which Jefferson and his colleagues were familiar), which included a single tax on land, would have made the goal attainable.

Actually, there was a national land tax in the days of the Continental Congress, but the power of vested interests was too strong, and in the transition to the federal government, the land tax got lost in the shuffle.

Still, the need for land reform was recognized by responsible leaders throughout US history — the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Reclama-

tion Act of 1902 were examples. Some of this is outlined in *Land Reform, American Style*, edited by Charles C. Geisler and Frank J. Popper (Rowman & Allanheld, New Jersey, 1984). After a brief historical survey, the book deals with present-day land problems.

Most of the situations presented by various authors deal with agricultural land — a persistent tendency when "land" is discussed, as though cities are not built on land. But even in this more limited context, the harm wrought by land monopoly is evident. Family farms are going under, big corporations do gigantic farming, much farm land is owned by non-farming absentees as an investment.

Some of the authors give in to the contention that family farms are "inefficient", not reckoning that they are mostly working the poorest land and that their enemy is not technology but land monopoly. Given fairer conditions, small farmers could cope in a free market. Who would not prefer fresh produce brought promptly to market, to the mass-produced, chemicalized, artificially ripened and stored stuff in supermarkets?

Appalachia — a large area in the eastern US — is dealt with. Much mining as well as farming is done in this region, and absentee landownership, undertaxation of land and widespread poverty are conspicuous.

An interesting chapter is "Land Reform and the Church" by John Hart. Statements by Catholic Bishops, especially those working in rural areas, are cited. Among the principles they invoke are: "The land is God's. People are God's stewards on the land. The land's benefits are for every one." The work of other Christian denominations on land reform is also cited.

Whatever happened to the Sagebrush Rebellion? A chapter by Frank Popper, "The Ambiguous End of the Sagebrush Rebellion," says it just ended, it wasn't settled. The idea was to get federally owned lands transferred to the states which were to make them more accessible for use.

But after taking a second look at the lands and the responsibilities, the states backed off. Meanwhile, landowners had good friends in the Reagan administration who were willing to grant them choice parts of the public domain on easy terms. No need to rebel!

One interesting point made in the book is that "land reform" was previously thought to be something needed for the Third World; now it is recognized that the First World needs it, too. Not that the Third World's

land problems have been solved — in fact, says the book, landownership is more concentrated now in the Third World than before World War II. This situation surely deserves a book by itself.

The community Land Trust movement is examined by John E. Davis. Land, mostly in rural areas, is acquired by these trusts and leased to settlers in an endeavor to "reallocate equity of land". The movement has been influenced by Henry George in that rent is collected for the community — but there are differences: more control is exercised than George might have advised under his "single tax"; and one of the purposes of the trusts is to preserve rural areas and hold off urban development, which is not quite a Georgist goal.

Toward the conclusion, the book finally does pay some attention to cities, but disappointingly, discussing mostly condominiums, rent control, zoning, etc., which have more to do with buildings than with land. Hardly anything is said about land value taxation as a reform to restore rights, promote development and make our cities livable. A pity, because a discussion of "land reform American style" ought to have more to say about the land reform of the American Henry George.

Still, it is promising to see a call for more attention to the land. For years we have been told that "land doesn't count any more." Now it is more clearly seen that we cannot sweep land under the rug! A greater focus on land — even if it begins just with agricultural land — can bring to light problems that can best be dealt with in ways that prominently include land value taxation.

Land & Liberty, *March-April 1986*

Missing the Point

IN *SOCIALISM AND AMERICA* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), author Irving Howe, a socialist, wonders why socialism has not been more appealing to Americans. In a recent lecture, Dr. Robert Hessen of Stanford University, an anti-socialist, wonders the opposite, and titled his talk, "The Paradox of Socialism's Continued Popularity."

This often happens with polarized ideologies; each side thinks the other is dominating (cf. religious fundamentalists and secular humanists).

Is it any wonder that to the slaveholders of the South the demand for the abolition of slavery seemed like the cant of hypocrisy?

In addition, in this case, each side is vague on what socialism is.

Hessen admits that Americans dislike the word "socialism" but that they want much of what socialism proposes. What he means is that Americans want a good deal of the "welfare state", and for purposes of discussion a distinction should be made.

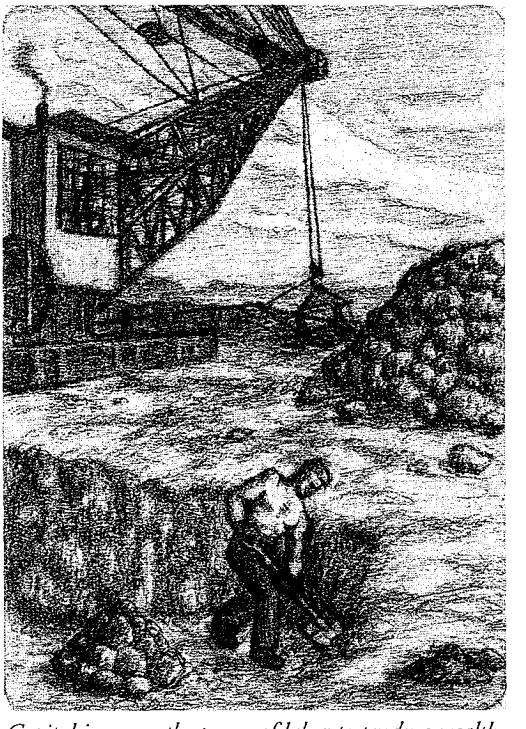
The Scandinavian countries, loosely called "socialist", are really welfare states, with most commerce and industry in private hands. Americans, for the most part, also want industry in private hands and not in government hands. They do, however, want the cushions provided by the welfare state — unemployment insurance, medical assistance, social security, etc. As for Howe, he has written a whole book about socialism without defining it.

The polarization may not be as extreme as it once was. Hessen's "new" libertarianism rejects the Social Darwinism of the 19th century with its law of the jungle. Howe wants more private initiative than socialism formerly tolerated. But contrasting programs are still there.

Hessen wants "capitalism" and the market to take care of everything, but with "rights" respected. Howe wants a planned economy, but

democratically managed, not from the top. Hessen challenges the idealism of socialism, contending that its "brotherhood" requires coercion. Howe challenges the ability of capitalism to create the good society and says the "cooperative commonwealth" is a true ideal.

The libertarians are strong when it comes to the advantages of a free market over a planned economy, but weak when it comes to monopoly — especially land monopoly — and the victims of today's society: the unemployed, the homeless, the poor. All they can say is that government interference doesn't work. The socialists take cognizance of the economically distressed and the continual struggle for a living wage. But they are weak on incentives to produce and on enlarging the "pie" to be distributed.



Capital increases the power of labor to produce wealth.

An example of the weakness of socialism was seen in France. President Mitterand extended extra benefits to workers and reduced working hours — but had no plan to increase productivity. The weakness of the libertarian argument is seen in the US after more than four years of conservative economic policies. Poverty has increased, unemployment is up, the number of homeless people continues to grow.

Howe admits that a new socialist program must avoid the dangers and inefficiencies of centralized control and instead advocates democratic management of industry. Sounds nice, but in fact there are already many examples in the US where workers have taken over failing firms. Some of these labor-owned enterprises work, some do not.

The point is missed in proposing "industrial democracy". Many workers do not want the responsibility but just want to do the job, get paid and go home. The important thing is free choice — and the more freedom

there is, the more choice there is.

Hessen does not very well explain why Americans want the welfare state. He follows the inadequate argument that some naughty professors enamored of socialism spread its teachings and make it popular. This argument ignores the fact that, although governments pretty much followed a policy of non-interference in the economy for well over a century, there were periods of deep economic distress as well as chronic poverty. Is this not a better explanation of why people today demand the buffers of the welfare state?

So socialists and anti-socialists make their points by ignoring vast chunks of economic reality. Each side has a bit of the truth that they pass off as the whole truth. Their paradoxes are illuminated as soon as we study the question of economic opportunity. The basic economic opportunity is access to land on which and from which all people must live and which must be settled on equitable terms. This is missed by both camps.

It is true that the free market offers results immensely better than a planned economy — but it must be a truly free market with opportunities open to all.

The economic truths by-passed by both camps are the ones taught by Henry George. To attain the truly good society and the truly free society, we need to attend to the opening up of access to natural opportunities, to freeing the land from monopoly by his "simple and sovereign remedy" of fully taxing land values and allowing the free market to function properly. Amazingly, socialism and anti-socialism are almost reconciled in this way.

Land & Liberty, *July-August 1986*

George vs. Marx

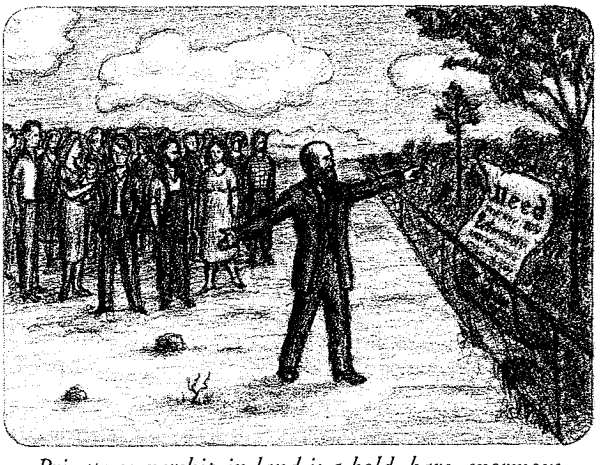
ONE THING I'VE WONDERED ABOUT is why scholars are so seldom attracted to Henry George's philosophy as an area for study. Karl Marx seems to command much more attention among them. Why should this be?

One could argue that Marx has had a great deal more impact upon world events than George. But I wonder. Marx wrote an almost unreadable book, *Das Kapital,* and I doubt whether more than a tiny fraction of those who call themselves "Marxists" have attempted to wade through it.

The appeal of communists to the masses scarcely makes use of the convolutions of Marxian theory, but is rather on a primitive gut level: "They have; you have not; we take from them and give to you." But the catch is, who is "we"? When they take over, it's too late for second thoughts.

George formulated his theories not only from extensive reading but from wide-ranging practical experiences and he was always engaged in the affairs of the world. Marx ensconced himself in the British Museum library and spun his dialectics there. Maybe this is more on the wavelength of scholars?

Marx has been wrong on almost everything — on the exploitation of labor by capital (neglecting to distinguish between land and capital) — on the disappearance of capitalism — on the appearance of communism in the most advanced countries (it has appeared in the least developed countries) — on the realities of life under communism, etc. This does not deter scholars from studying all phases of Marxism.



Private ownership in land is a bold, bare, enormous wrong, like to that of chattel slavery.

George, on the other hand, made an analysis that holds up — that delivers the goods even when applied to a small extent — that coordinates with the longing of mankind for Liberty — that has inferences and aspects that point to a fruitful philosophy of society and of life — that is based on love rather than on hate.

Why do all these treasures remain untouched? One consideration not to be overlooked is that scholars, like others, seldom break new ground but usually "follow the leader." Scholarly papers have been written on such-and-such a theme, so more will be forthcoming.

Happily, there are exceptions. Charles and Mary Beard, in their monumental work *The American Spirit,* wrote a considerable appreciation of George's conception of civilization as expounded in his last work, *The Science of Political Economy.* When more scholars eventually decide to dig into the Georgist philosophy, they will find "wonderful things."

Georgist Journal, *Summer 1982*

How to Make an Endless Frontier

In 1893 at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a young historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, delivered an address before the American Historical Society. It was entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History".

His thesis was that the frontier was the cutting edge of American civilization and determined its democracy, its individualism, its culture.

This process took place as settlers pushed westward into the expanse of the frontier where land could be obtained cheaply or even free.

At this same Columbian Exposition Henry George attended one of the earliest Single Tax conferences. It does not appear that George or Turner were aware of one another's presence there. George most likely did not know the 32-year-old history professor, but Turner knew about George and was influenced by his views on the importance of free land.

Turner's short essay (later expanded into a book) had a greater impact than any other single work on the interpretation of American history. Up to then, historians did not quite know what to make of the multifaceted mosaic of "American history." Here was a clear and plausible unified theory.

Turner came at a time just as the frontier was closing. He was not the first or only one to notice this. Others were concerned about it — and not just Americans — Lord Bryce, for instance. But Turner put it all together. He had his critics but his thesis held its own.

Now the whole Turnerian hypothesis is being challenged. A historian, Patricia Nelson Limerick — herself a westerner — has written a book, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (W.W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 1987)

Instead of heroic trail-blazing she sees an often sordid story of greed and conquest. She sees complexity rather than simplicity, a fragmented set of stories instead of an onward march, dependence on federal government rather than independence.

Ms. Limerick complains that Turner has written from the "white male" point of view and did not give the plight of women and minorities due attention — Indians, blacks, Chinese, Mexicans.

Many other historians, in rebellion against Turner and in an exercise

of "deconstruction" that is now in vogue, are also exhuming bad deeds of frontier times. But these are hardly new revelations. We knew about outlaws, feuds, gold rushes, Indian decimation and the plight of other minorities.

And, asks Ms. Limerick, "what about land monopoly and land speculation?" What indeed! This certainly happened (and continues to happen) and it hastened the closing of the frontier. Jefferson thought there was enough land in America to provide settlement for hundreds of years. Instead the frontier was closed less than three-fourths of a century after his death.

But despite all that, an opportunity was offered by the expanse of the American frontier that was unique in history. It offered multitudes of immigrants and people from the east coast a safety-valve when they were hard pressed by economic conditions.

Ms. Limerick says it is America's "creation myth" that the availability of land attracted people and that a pioneer spirit molded life on the frontier. But 19th century observers and participants saw it happen. Why deny, more than a century later, that it happened? By focusing on the particular mishaps and misdeeds, Ms. Limerick and the other deconstructionists do not see the forest for the trees.

The people who migrated west were ordinary people, warts and all, seeking a new life. Taking a perspective that is less myopic, the civilization built up was, in spite of everything, a phenomenal accomplishment.

As for what to do with a society after the frontier is gone, Turner thought the government would have to become more active and involved in making up to people the benefits previously offered by the frontier.

Indeed, this has come about, what with the extensive welfare programs undertaken by the government.

Henry George had a better idea. Recreate frontier conditions by publicly collecting the rent of land through land value taxation. This would cause much good land to be disgorged by monopolists and speculators. Persons seeking land for homes, farms, businesses, would find it much easier to obtain.

A reform like this would not depend on the accidents of history and geography, but on a knowledgeable and rational creation of a perpetual frontier.

Land & Liberty, *July-August 1980*

Crime and Punishment

THE RISE IN CRIME in the US is of deep concern to the citizenry. The prevalence of thefts, muggings, burglary, etc. in urban areas has changed the living habits of a nation. Many have fled the cities for the suburbs, only to find that with the flow of population outward, crime follows. There are very few places now that are "safe."

This has led to a demand for more police protection and stiffer law enforcement. Candidates for public office have a ready-made issue when they talk of "law and order." Just as the death sentence is being abolished, there is a strong undercurrent in favor of its return.

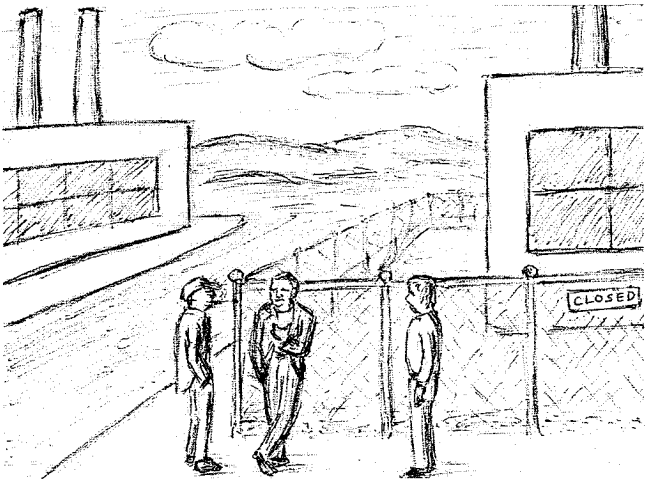
Whence shall come the new barbarians? Go through the squalid quarters of great cities, and you may see, even now, their gathering hordes! How shall learning perish? Men will cease to read, and books will kindle fires and be turned into cartridges!

The burden of crime is already straining our institutions beyond their capacity. Court calendars are jammed to the breaking point, prisons are overcrowded. This is all out of proportion; the legal and penal systems of a society ought to be in the background helping to maintain civil tranquility. That they are being pushed to take such a dominant role indicates a malaise in our society which must be probed.

Why so much crime today? Among the theories is that there are "criminal types". But then why are we breeding so many of them? Another explanation is the excessive "permissiveness" of modern society and the charge that the law has become "soft" on criminals. There may be something to this — but it leads to the sorry conclusion that a repressive society is the only safe one and that liberty is not to be trusted. Furthermore, it is by no means clear that a more powerful police and penal system would work as it is sup-

posed to. If all the personnel in police and jurisprudence were infallibly honest and just (and perhaps omniscient and omnipotent as well), we might rejoice at an increase in their numbers and power. But they are fallibly human, can be corrupted by bribes and become arrogant in their authority, and they can let crooks go while victimizing the innocent. Putting the solution in their hands is no solution.

We can add that the kind of "punishment" our system metes out does not deter crime; on the contrary, first offenders are often turned into habitual criminals by our prisons. The worst punishment for our crime wave is suffered by society at large.



Most of the crimes that are causing so much alarm are committed by those who have no real stake in society. Most frequently the motivation is economic, and poverty is the chief factor. Slums are well-known as breeders of crime. Scholars of the subject have pointed out the poverty-crime syndrome, which includes disrupted families, poor living conditions, getting in with bad company, lack of opportunities, etc. There is also a realization born of experience amongst those just above the poverty line that good honest toil does not quite lead to riches. Most, in spite of this knowledge, opt for honesty, to their credit — but there are those who find that it does pay to be dishonest.

Plenty of examples of dishonesty are to be found in the upper reaches of society. A good number of those in public office — including some who preach law and order — are guilty of misdeeds and dishonesty. And occasionally the tip of the iceberg is seen wherein underworld elements work hand in hand with respectable elements.

While pondering what types of punishment would be best and whether our main concern should be to make the criminal repay or to rehabilitate

him — we might look at another aspect of the problem. William James once speculated as to how the energy, dedication and sacrifice that are expended in war could possibly be geared to peaceful and creative pursuits. One might say the same of crime. If the talent and skill that went into crime could be diverted toward productive uses, how much society would gain! If this were possible, it would also release the manpower now expended in seeking, arresting, trying and punishing criminals. To approach anywhere near such an ideal state of things, society would have to realize certain conditions, among them the following:

People who are, or might become, criminals would have to find incentives in honest work that are commensurate with their abilities. This means that there would have to be some place for everybody — openings and opportunities for all — which is not the case today. Education in traditions of honesty and decency is a very important influence — and no doubt this is helping to keep so many honest. But young people emerging into the world have to find out that what they have been taught is not at variance with what is practiced in the world — which is not the case today — and this is what is making so many dishonest. Also, people will need to have the assurance that a lifetime of productive toil enables them to get ahead and not stay on the treadmill.

The crime problem is one more aspect of the economic problem — and the fact that crime is increasing shows how far we are yet removed from solving the economic problem.

(A good reference work in the subject is *Crime and Criminals*, one of a series of *Inquiry into Crucial American Problems*, edited by Jack R. Fraenkel. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., U.S.A.)

Land & Liberty, Sept.-Oct. 1973

The Energy Crisis

ON TOP OF ALL THE OTHER CRISES this battered world is suffering there now comes the "energy crisis". America, still reeling under the impact of crime, Watergate, strikes, inflation and environment problems, now has still another problem.

More specifically, it is an oil crisis — a shortage brought on principally by the unwillingness of Arab countries to export petroleum to coun-

tries sympathetic to Israel. Thus it is more a political crisis than a resource crisis. As usual, it is man's misbehavior that has brought us to this pass rather than any defection of nature.

If there is any natural shortage, it signaled itself long in advance. It was long known that fossil fuels took millions of years to evolve and that we are using them up at a rapid rate. Experts have been warning us for at least half a century. The wonder is that we are still discovering immense reserves of oil undreamed of a few years ago (the north slope of Alaska, the North sea and other locations). And there are other sources of energy — some debatable but many holding untold possibilities. No wonder there is a widespread feeling that the present crisis is being manipulated by powerful interests (and not just Arabs) behind the scenes.

The giant oil monopolies have exercised great influence on the government of the US and other countries. The powerful oil lobby have succeeded in getting legislation they want in controlling markets and prices, exports and imports, and favored tax treatment, especially the oil-depletion allowance. They have also succeeded in discouraging the development of other sources of energy.

Not much use has been made of hydraulic power, sea-thermal energy, wind power and the earth itself (geothermal energy), all pronounced by scientists to be feasible of development as alternative sources of power. Atomic energy is more controversial but the main bottleneck is the technical one of finding a satisfactory cooling system that would minimize the risks. There are a few successful atomic energy plants in existence, and if as much research and skill went into further development as goes into atomic bombs, new vistas could surely be opened up.

Another source — solar energy — has scarcely been tapped. It is a limitless source of power and it has been demonstrated that it can be harnessed for specific purposes. Magnetohydrodynamics and synthetic gas are other possibilities that have remained almost untouched.

One would suppose that we could get on with it without grinding to a halt. Is it possible that these other sources are more difficult to monopolize than petroleum and thus investors are not as interested?

One thing to be said for crises is that they force us to take stock and do something (though unfortunately not always the right thing) since we can no longer bumble along in the same old way. We are beginning to be

conscious of the enormous waste we have made. Though I do not think this is the crucial issue, it does not hurt to take account of the wasteful way in which energy has been consumed. Buildings use more than half the electrical energy in the USA. And they are poorly and inefficiently planned for this purpose. Automobiles are all-devouring monsters and suburban families find that even two cars are not enough. We spew forth our energy wastes with little thought of conservation of energy.

But the real problem is still the one foreseen by John Stuart Mill — the equitable allocation of the world's resources. We have not yet tackled it on a national scale when an international resource problem is dumped into our laps. We are not only unprepared to deal with the crisis thrust upon us by the Arabs, but with the entire question of world resources, including the ocean which is beginning to churn up as an international problem.

The existence of rich petroleum resources in Arab countries points to an anomaly: because of an accident of nature, a people having little use for the resource they happen to be living over can hold the rest of the world at bay until it comes to their terms. We are unwilling to meet this problem in a firm and just way because it would challenge tradition and practice in our own backyard.

While we are improvising ways and means of dealing with the "energy crisis" — including much ill-advised governmental regulations — let us also see in it an opportunity to bring nations closer to a realization that the land question is the most basic of economic questions and that it will continue to dog us until we face it and solve it equitably.

If we could make a start on a national scale to establish more equal opportunities for all to the bounty of nature, the world problem, including the energy crisis, would become much easier of solution.

Land & Liberty *Jan.-Feb. 1974*

Human Rights and the Georgist Philosophy

THERE IS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY a strong current of concern about human rights. Controversial issues include the rights of ethnic and racial minorities; the rights of women, including the right of a woman to have an abortion vs. the right of a fetus to life; the rights of children; the right to purchase and own guns; the death penalty; the right to die, especially in incurable cases; the right to freedom from discrimination based on sexual preference; the right to conscientious objection; and others. To make matters more complex, all sides invoke the standard of "rights."

In many cases, the US Constitution, with its Bill of Rights, is cited. Reliance on the Constitution as the ultimate arbiter of rights is sometimes carried far. An array of "rights," far beyond anything dreamed of by the Founding Fathers, is promoted. Further, the Founding Fathers advised that the Constitution was not to be venerated as a dogmatic and untouchable icon, but that it was presented as a good instrument for starting the new nation on its way; and that each generation must look at new situations and issues and make whatever changes were deemed necessary.

Nowadays, there is a reluctance to invoke "natural law" and "natural rights" because they appear too intangible and too subject to different interpretations. Ironically, however, the framers of the Constitution accepted natural law and natural rights and based their deliberations on these concepts. It is clear that the Framers assumed the existence of justifications deeper than documents and laws, and though it is not made explicit, the inference of a higher mandate in nature, or universal conscience, appears to be present.

Some of the "rights" that are promoted today go beyond human rights. We hear of the rights of animals, the right of the earth, of nature. This arises from a concern that man is damaging the natural environment. What is needed is ongoing discussion and dialogue so that a clarification of issues, a conceptual foundation, a common language, a rational and balanced outlook may emerge, and that courses of action may be more fully defined and pursued.

The Georgist philosophy is sympathetic to the ideal of freedom in general, and is disposed to favor democratic reform and the observance of civil

Even during the famine, grain and meat and butter and cheese were carted for exportation along roads lined with the starving and past trenches into which the dead were piled.

rights. The main thrust, however, is in the economic domain. The rights it emphasizes are: the right of all persons to the use of the earth; and the right of every person to the fruits of his labor. Henry George argued that these rights were founded in nature. Everyone comes into the world in the same way and requires the use of the earth's resources in order to live, so the right to life must include this right. Nature yields her fruits only to labor, and so the right to the fruits of one's labor is also founded in nature.

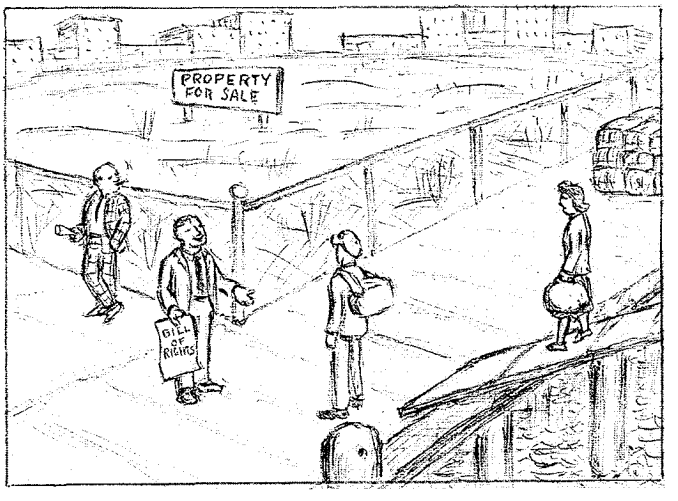
Where a "social arrangement" comes in would be in mechanisms for implementing these rights. George gave his prescription: the abolition of taxes would reinforce the individual's right to his product, and the taxation of land values (to the extent of collecting all or nearly all the rent of land) would place all persons on an equal basis with respect to the use of land.

This reform was presented as more than an arrangement but rather as a measure founded in nature. For the value of a person's product is due to his labor and he is therefore entitled to it; but the value of land is a social value created by the presence and activities of all people working and living on many different kinds of land — therefore the rent is due to society just as the individual's product (via wages and interest) is due to him.

While George supported the fundamentals of civil democracy, he maintained that it was incomplete without attention to the economic rights he pointed out. He invoked the American and French documents on liberty. However, although they begin with general principles on a high level, they veer off to details on civil and political rights.

Similarly, most of today's efforts in the field of human rights tend to overlook the importance of economic rights. Not entirely, of course: it would be difficult to discuss the right to life without touching on economic rights. But, where economic rights are discussed and debated, they are generally not sufficiently clarified.

Besides groups working for civil rights, various conservative and libertarian groups emphasize the "free market", and, in particular, property rights. However, property is seldom defined and certainly includes land — in many cases land is especially meant (despite ambiguities on the justice of acquiring land in the first place).



Ambiguity on "property" is not only a shortcoming of conservative groups, but of many groups of various persuasions; also of most governmental documents and statements. Often "human rights" are spoken of as opposed to "property rights." In the Georgist view, the right to property is also a human right — that is, the right to property in the fruits of one's labor.

The Georgist philosophy holds that a just and prosperous society cannot be sustained unless these basic economic rights are secured. In order for human rights to be more fully achieved, the distinction between land (and its rent) and wealth, and what to do with both, must become more generally understood and accepted.

From the Henry George Institute's correspondence course in Human Rights

Why do you stay with it?

I GOT "STUNG" with the George philosophy at an early age — and by an exceptional person — Oscar Geiger, founder of the Henry George School. He and Henry George left me with something that has lasted through the years.

Yet it has not quite been an automatic carrying on. There has been decision-making all along the line and there have been times when I was at a cross-roads where I had to decide anew whether I would continue actively with the Georgist cause. With all the ups and downs and with the slow progress and setbacks, I do not regret staying with it.

First, I am working with something I believe in. That's important — "to thine own self be true."

Second, I have been impressed by the fact that in all these years I have not encountered any convincing refutation of the Georgist philosophy. It holds up, it conforms to the facts of life, it does not require being an irrational "true believer."

Then I have found validity in what Henry George said about the future of the truth he made clear. He did not promise "easy acceptance," but he did promise that "it will find friends"; and he said that it must eventually be accepted. The first two have proven true, and the third, I suppose, has to be taken on faith. But it is a well-grounded faith, since so much else has failed — and since people, when they do heed the George philosophy, generally agree with it.

Georgist Journal, *Winter 1982*