

A Word With You

SOMETIMES I suspect I'll devolve to the point where I'll catch people by the lapel, pour the single tax into their ears, and demand their immediate conversion if they cannot refute it on the spot.

In my calmer moments I realize that our ten-week course does the trick far more effectively. But meanwhile, my exposure to the blitherings of non-takers of the course—especially those in government, economic education and mass communication—leaves my nerves raw and turns me into an intolerant fanatic (my enemies will seize eagerly on this).

Now all this talk about the recession. I've anxiously scanned reams of twaddle on the subject—but no, not a word about the possibility of the runaway price of land having anything to do with it. How could it be missed that it is so antiseptically absent? They've managed to squeeze in every other possible explanation under the sun—including the sun, what with the sun-spot theory.

The few references ever made to the single tax—or, for that matter, to the whole general subject of land and land values—are confined to specialized textbooks dealing with lesser known aspects of the history of economic thought—never in relation to current economic problems. And the stuff that is said starts me drivelling again!

Rent? Why that's such an insignificant fraction of the GNP that it shouldn't even be mentioned! A tax on rent? Horror! The walls of civilization would come tumbling down around our heads! Natural rights? There ain't no such animal! The single tax? It would be immoral, unjust and unrighteous to deprive the landowner of his rent! The single tax would not be enough for today's big

government! The single tax would put too much power into the hands of government! . . . It's not unusual to find all six of the above arguments within the covers of one book.

What about the 552-page analysis of the economic problem in Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*? Your cavalier critic will turn to page 552 and point disdainfully to words like ". . . the Golden Age . . . the City of God on earth, with its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl!" There, now! George was nothing but a utopian dreamer.

Well, in the first place, I do not see why human beings, if they are so minded, should not have a city with walls of jasper and gates of pearl. In the second place, why should not a scientific discovery be accepted regardless of what its author claimed for it?

The fussy arguments against land value taxation remind me of what our good friend M. S. Lurio said in reference to Murray Rothbard's diatribe against the single tax: That critics somehow demand perfection when criticizing the single tax, although they will blandly tolerate the most abominable conditions existing today—the old story of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.

That good little old ten-week course in Fundamental Economics, which does open people's eyes, saves my sanity, such as it is. May it also save the world!

—Robert Clancy

Vol. 21, No. 6

May, 1958

The Henry George News is published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science 50 E. 69th Street, New York 21, N. Y. Publication Committee: Lancaster M. Greene, Chairman; Otto K. Dorn, William S. O'Connor; Alice Elizabeth Davis, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, November 15, 1943; at the post office of New York, N. Y. under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions, \$2 a year; single copies, 20c.