

A Word With You

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 François 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 Duc 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 antecedents. Where did he get his economic ideas from?

—Robert Clancy

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

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

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