

THE GEORGIST JOURNAL



Number 82

Winter 1993-94

Comment

A century ago, the general outlook was optimistic and the feeling prevailed that we could look forward to a great future with everything improving. Nowadays the prevailing mood is pessimistic and the future is not cheerfully anticipated.

There are still many signs of progress, new technology continues to emerge, the world is in closer contact than ever. Yet these signs of progress are often regarded with apprehension.

Large firms improve their technology and efficiency but the outcome is that hundreds, even thousands, are laid off as the jobs can be done with fewer personnel. The normal progress of countries reaching out to one another is interrupted as the importation of goods from one country to another is seen as a threat to domestic jobs.

While these misgivings existed in the U.S. in the 19th century, the fears were lessened because the frontier still existed and it was possible to move on and start a new life on free or cheap land. New inventions were in demand and they kept appearing as they were seen as benefits, enabling more to be produced with less effort or opening up new vistas of progress.

The situation was different in Europe where free land was long gone and the only hope was to be "employed." Karl Marx did not have to turn the prevailing view around in saying that "capital" employed "labor" and

THE GEORGIST JOURNAL (ISSN 0887-6290), 121 E. 30th St., New York, NY 10016, USA. Robert Clancy, Editor. Readers are invited to submit suitable items.

exploited it. Improved inventions that reduced labor were not welcomed. Each country had a barrier around itself which finally erupted into World War I.

The depletion of free land today has made America more like Europe, with the same fears and tendencies. Recoiling into nationalism is taking place everywhere.

All these negative developments in the way of progress are at bottom effects of unsolved economic problems.

The Georgist reform of opening up access to land via a tax on land values would go far toward reducing the tensions and retrogressions. Instead, the U.S. government, among others, finds greater demands on relieving the situation, requiring more funds, and it can only think of more punitive taxes and multiplying nuisance taxes.

There is a simple solution at hand, and our government and leaders had better find it.

R.C.
