

# The Georgist Journal

Number 36

Summer 1982

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## COMMENT

## SCHOLARS IGNORE HENRY GEORGE

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.

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."

R.C

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