

# A Word With You

YOU have indubitably heard, more than once, the classical story of the classical Georgist: It was at the funeral service of a member of the community who was not particularly popular. The minister asked, "Would anyone like to say something about our departed friend?" There was silence in the audience. Finally, a man in the back row stood up and said, "If nobody has anything to say, I'd like to say a few words about the Single Tax."

History mercifully does not record the reaction of the audience. Though the story is cited to illustrate the single-track mind of Single Taxers, it also illustrates another characteristic of the classical Georgist. There are two kinds of people, the "social" person and the "ideas" person, and he usually fits the latter category. This does not mean that our Georgist is anti-social, as he is laboring for *social* acceptance.

But there is a difference of emphasis. While the ideas person likes company, if it comes to a choice, he'll stay with his ideas. The social person may have ideas, but if it threatens his social standing, he'll give up his ideas. The social person may discover the Georgist philosophy and rejoice in it, but he runs the risk of having to lunch with his colleagues and be met with the taunt, "Well, well, and how is Henry George today?" To the social person, this can be more devastating than a battery of syllogisms, and he's apt to give up his George.

As this is set down, it sounds rather reprehensible, and it seems more heroic to give up company and stay with ideas. But what we like to hear or read about is not necessarily what we act out in life. What parent does not warn an idealistic child, "Your ideas will threaten your position in the world, you must renounce them?"

The social sense of belonging wins out again and again. The slick operator moving on the edge of the law, knows well the jargon of lawyers and policemen, and he gets along better with them than does the ignorant, innocent bystander. The tax finagler who knows how to move around the pieces on the difficult forms, columns and sub-sections, thereby shows he "belongs," and doesn't get the harassment meted out to the poor but honest bungling taxpayer.

The fellows who persist in their ideas are very much in the minority — but they always manage to show up. In ancient Babylon, the aristocrats would be having a nice, quiet orgy, now and then throwing a baby in the fire for Moloch, when in would barge one of those nudnick prophets, ranting something about right and wrong. In Rome, there was always an unsociable Christian around who would refuse to worship the emperor just because he wasn't a god. And so it has always been, right down to the funeral parlor. And so, let us pray, it will always be.

—Robert Clancy

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The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 89th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021, 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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