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Comment

SPREADING THE WORD

Robert King of Chicago relates how a friend, Charles Metalitz, already inclined toward Georgist ideas, saw a woman in Florida carrying a sign, "Tax Land Not Buildings." He said, "That's Henry George's proposal! Is there a nationwide organization that I can join?" And thus he eventually became associated with the Chicago Henry George School. (Wish we knew who that woman was.)

Recently, an Arizona friend, Edward Rock, on a holiday trip to Australia, was walking on a Melbourne street when he was surprised by the sign "Henry George Society", and thus he discovered our friends there. The Melbourne group had recently changed its name to Tax Reform Australia - well and good, but if the Henry George sign had not been retained, they might not have been recognized, and so the encounter might have been missed.

Our Atlanta hostess for this year's North American conference, Mary Davis, had discovered Henry George many years ago but did not know for a long time that there was a related movement. Since she found out she is doing more than her share for the philosophy and movement.

The moral of the above anecdotes is, I suppose, "Don't hide your light under a bushel." But something more.

Henry George developed a philosophy and started a movement that has become eponymous - not unique and not to be rejected. His name appears in encyclopedias, histories of economic thought, social histories, often in general histories, and most textbooks on economics, taxation, etc. Along with this, and associated with George, the "single tax" also appears extensively, as does "land value taxation." Thus millions have been at least briefly exposed to his name and the most widely known label for his reform. We are often tempted to reject these in a quest for something more pure and impersonal, and perhaps to avoid the frequent quizzical reaction, "Oh yes, Henry George - the single tax." But in this desire to change, we could be throwing out the baby with the bath water. Instead of the "oh yes" reaction, we risk getting no reaction at all. We also risk missing valuable connections with friends and allies.

We should certainly "spread the word" and seek to make new friends. But there is another benefit to speaking out, writing letters and otherwise making known our partiality to George, and that is the discovery of friends we didn't know about. Such has been the case with the Intermountain Single Tax Association. It was supposed that securing 20 members would be extraordinary - instead there are now something like 120 members - people with whom there had previously been no contact.

Whatever our internal differences and external struggles, Henry George and the single tax are assets we would be well advised to conserve.

R.C.