A Word With You

ONE of the most celebrated features of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* is the part called "the Story of the Savannah." George relates vividly how a great city grows up from an uninhabited frontier—and the consequent effect on land values. At least, that's how it happened in the Nineteenth Century; and I present herewith the Twentieth Century Story of the Savannah:

Here, then, let us imagine, is an unbounded stretch of sandy soil and scrubby growth. Along comes the station wagon of the first immigrant. Where to settle he cannot tell, but he finally picks the intersection of Highways 66 and 155. Here he sets up the most basic of all businesses—a service station.

Soon there comes another immigrant. "Aha," he muses, "this must be a growing community." He settles by the side of the first comer and opens a real estate office. He acquires the sandy soil as far as the eye can see for 50 cents an acre, calls it Paradise Gardens, and advertises in all the Sunday newspapers that he is giving away one-acre lots free, but there is a closing fee of $50.

Another real estate office opens, and another, and another. A lawyer and an accountant soon set up shops, for our little community now needs to figure out the tax angles.

More people arrive and lots are now $5,000 apiece. Elderly people come to build their dream homes and find they cannot afford it, and so our community applies for federal aid (after all, we are talking about the New Frontier). Under Title I, federal money is given to buy some of the lots, and a semi-public housing project goes up. Other lots are ripening some more. Here and there are farmers being paid by the government to keep their land idle.

A missile plant opens, with government contracts, but not enough to employ everybody, and so our community applies for more federal aid as a distressed area.

Population still keeps on increasing. The town has grown into a city—a Miami, a Phoenix, a San Diego—and still it grows. Go to our settler now, and say to him: "I will give you the full value of your service station if you will give it to me and go again beyond the verge of settlement." He will not answer you—mainly because he is not there. He went to Las Vegas after selling his property for $500,000 to Zeckendorf, who is planning to build a 30-story motel and shopping center.

Come around again in another hundred years and I'll tell you the Twenty-first Century Story of the Savannah on a Satellite of Saturn. But perhaps by then we'll have a happy ending.

—**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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