

A Word With You

EVERY student of Henry George is confronted with the question of how applicable the theory is to current events.

The beginning student follows the Georgan analysis and goes along with it while he is at his study. But away from his study it seems unrelated to the world he knows—the world of real estate, the stock market, bookkeeping, housekeeping, inflationary prices, tax regulations, and so on.

The more advanced the student becomes, the more he can relate the basic principles to what is going on about him. He does not have to be so frequently reminded that economic laws are really out there plugging away and not just dozing in a textbook.

The thorough Georgist eventually sees the law of rent operating everywhere, in a parking lot and a bowling alley, in Cuba and Viet Nam, in the war on poverty, and the civil rights struggle. He needs must say what he sees, at the risk of being considered a "pest" and a "nut." It is well to be discreet, however. It is quite true that the law of rent operates everywhere, but there also exist other things, other laws, other values, which deserve to be respected. I came across an old newspaper headline while browsing in our files: "Single Tax Will Cure Some Immorality, Speaker Says." Our Georgist friend evidently was reserved enough to say "some" and not "all."

Another tendency we must watch out for is that of pretending to know more than we do. Economics is one of those subjects—like politics—in which many people like to pose as experts, claiming to know a lot of untold inside stories. This, too, is an area where restraint ought to be exercised.

We Georgists do see something that is very important and very neglected in current economic affairs. We do not see it all, however, and we need not feel obliged to know and account for all the details of the rapidly changing scene. We should be willing to study and learn, while never forgetting the golden lesson we *do* have to teach.

Still another pitfall amongst us Georgists is the encounter with one another in interpreting current events. Each of us tends to bring his own baggage of opinions and predilections into the Georgist camp and call it "Georgist," expressing shock that anyone else could have brought along any other kind of baggage.

But eventually we discover that the philosophy of Henry George attracts a great variety of people, of all sorts of backgrounds, faiths and political creeds. In the carrying out of a principle, there is no single way, but a choice of alternatives. There will always be disagreements on the best way, but if we "keep our eye on the ball," we may yet work together enough to win out.

—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, 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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