

# The Georgist Journal

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## COMMENT

What is right and what is wrong with our Henry George movement?

First, what is right. The movement has persisted, and its survival for nearly 100 years is something of an achievement. Many movements begun around the same time have since collapsed or petered out - such as those based on Edward Bellamy and Thorstein Veblen, the Progressive movement, the cooperative movement, etc.

Another good point: We are urging something for the common good. When there is, for instance, testimony before a legislative committee, most witnesses plead for their own special interest; a Georgist will plead for a reform that is in the general interest - a rare thing.

Third, Georgists are motivated to do things. We explain our ideas, embark on projects, give talks, write letters, distribute literature, testify, enter political campaigns. And usually because we want to do so, not because we are ordered to do so.

What then is wrong? The first wrong thing is that there are not enough Georgists. Nearly a century after Progress and Poverty we still seem a voice in the wilderness.

Although we are speaking of the "movement," do we really have a movement? We strongly tend to be individualists. From the beginning, Henry George himself did as his conscience or inclination led him, but left no permanent organization. Father McGlynn started his own organization and other leaders just went ahead and did things.

Friends reproach us because we are not more like such groups as Common Cause and the Ralph Nader movement. They are well-organized, with groups and sub-groups given assigned tasks to carry out. However, Georgists are not in the habit of taking orders but prefer to think out things for themselves. Hence we keep splitting up into various small groups or act as individuals. We still do not agree on a name for our movement but keep thinking up new ideas!

Is there then a "Georgist movement"? If so, it is basically a movement of ideas. We seem to be at our best when expounding our ideas. We seem indifferent to the task of submitting to organizational discipline.

Should we settle for that situation? Or is it possible for us to find a little more agreement and cooperation? We could surely be more effective if we managed to find some basis on which to work together - without giving up our individuality!

Perhaps as a start we could agree to accept all the various organization, publications and individual efforts that are launched - even welcome them. We might be respectful of different emphases and approaches, also national and regional differences. We could try more communication and exchange among ourselves and find ways of helping one another. Maybe we could even agree on an umbrella title, such as the "Henry George movement," as suggested by Graham Hart.

(Summary of remarks at Bryn Mawr conference, July 1975.)

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Robert Clancy, Editor. Readers are invited to submit suitable articles, letters, etc., for publication.