

Small Steps To Giant Leaps In Capetown

Important progress toward land value taxation has been made in Capetown, South Africa. A Site Value Rating system was recently adopted by the South Peninsula Council to assess and tax the land value of the newly designated Cape Metropolitan Area. A group of six Substructures, the districts encompass thirty-nine former municipal areas with a population of nearly two and a half million people. In South Africa, Australia, and other countries, rating is another word for tax, and Site Value Rating taxes the value of the land, just like Land Value Taxation. Under the new system, revaluation of the area will be completed by the end of 1997, emphasizing land values only. According to Godfrey Dunkley, President of the International Union, should the new measures be successfully established in Capetown, more than seventy percent of the total rates collected in R.S.A. will come from SVR. Though the Council agreed to provisions that would allow for a possible return to a land and improvements valuation system, and individual municipalities could decide to give rebates and remissions to property owners, the steps taken so far are convincing and impressive.

Henry George School Makes the News

In the Tuesday, April 15th edition of the New York Daily News the Henry George School was featured in a half page article titled School Gives Ground For Land Tax, thematically timed for the dreaded tax day. Written by the City Beat columnist Bill Bell, the article provided a brief overview of the nature of the school and the Henry George Institute, and a description of the life of Henry George and the basis of his works and beliefs, built around an afternoon of questions and answers with George Collins and Lindy Davies.

Many of George's most important arguments are covered in Mr. Bell's interview. Included is *(continued on page eight)*

An Anthology of Henry George's Thought *by George Collins*

In 253 pages consisting of seven heavily endnoted chapters, a seven page bibliography, with a frontispiece of George's 1897 photograph, and an introductory essay by the author, Dr. Kenneth C. Wenzer's *An Anthology of Henry George's Thought* is a valuable compilation of George's writings taken from the pages of his newspaper *The Standard*, his personal correspondence from the Henry George Papers in the New York Public Library archives, excerpts from his books, and other ancillary sources. The book is volume one of Dr. Wenzer's "Henry George Centennial Trilogy", published by the University of Rochester Press in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his death in 1897.

The anthology is cited as "...the first addition to George's published works in a century." And an important addition it is. It puts before even the most assiduous Georgist reader George's direct engagement with the questions of his day which would otherwise remain accessible only to researchers.

The book demonstrates that no issue, economic, social, political or philosophical, was beyond the compass of what George considered man's fundamental relationship - his relationship to the land. In these works we see both abstract principle and practical strategy brought to the service of individual liberty. George's logic, perception, and humanity can be fairly judged in the way he addresses each topic.

The chapters following the author's introduction group the selected passages from his books, articles, letters and speeches on a thematic basis. The author admits the inevitability of "...some overlapping of subjects. The second chapter, *Exhortive Works*, starts with galvanic pieces such as "Ode to Liberty" from *Progress and Poverty*, the lecture "Moses" and the *Salutatory* printed in the January 8th, 1887 debut of the *Standard*, capturing the reader at the outset with some of George's most eloquent and passionate prose. Other chapters like "On Government, Politics, and the World" contain snippets of letters to notables William Lloyd Garrison Jr., son of the famed abolitionist, on the nature of political policies, and to Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, for which George served as a foreign correspondent in Ireland, regarding the best course of action for Michael Davett, the Irish agitator, in the attempt to "...topple Mr. British Crown..."

The chapter "Georgism versus Socialism" has some of the most closely reasoned arguments for and against both ideologies that one may consider, and George's strategy with regard to alliances with those who have similar dreams but dissimilar methods or objectives. And anyone who thinks that George either dismissed or failed to fully comprehend the role of money as it applied to the economy then or would later as the economy grew must read the very short but pointed "Various Matters: On the Debt" and "Politics that Mean Something" in the chapter "On Sundry Important Matters."

In the opening preface Dr. Wenzer stated that his mandate for the anthology was to "...preserve what I consider to be George's most important thoughts with as little intrusion as possible." And he does indeed achieve that, for the selections are not edited. There are however, some descriptions of George's ideas and interpretations of his statements in the introduction and in other essays preceding various chapters which may represent a misreading of his work. Georgists are said to have "...for instance, a potent belief in God and community ownership of land." George is as well said to have had "...a steadfast belief in the perfectibility of man..." and was "reticent" about noncompensation to land owners.

However much supporters of George may have favored community ownership, George was unalterably against any communal or socialized ownership. He spoke always of equal rights to and individual decisions over the use of land. He refuted all arguments for land nationalization and rejected confiscation or public purchase as methods for establishing common rights. Far from proclaiming his perfectibility, George saw man as being virtuous or villainous depending on the degree of opportunity and equity afforded him. And nowhere nor in any way does George ever countenance compensation to land owners.

But, as Dr. Wenzer says, "For the most part, George's words speak for themselves." Carefully read, this admirable compilation would, as Dr. Wenzer hopes, "answer some questions inherent in his political economy" not clear to the reader of his seven books.

If I were to wish for anything more it would be to see a chapter devoted exclusively to rights. George's supreme concern was the individual and his rightful entitlement. Liberty, he said, is justice and justice is the natural law. While that principle is everpresent and a repeated theme throughout the contents of this work, there are so many marvelous gems that could make up a separate chapter that it seemed a natural category within this structure. Its absence, however, does not render the volume deficient in its organization or purpose. Volume 1, *An Anthology of George's Thought*, available from the Schalkenbach Foundation for \$35.00, is a welcome exposure to George's broader public debates and private thoughts. It should leave every reader eagerly anticipating Volumes 2 and 3 of *The Henry George Centennial Trilogy*.