

ARDEN ENCLAVE

George Collins

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Our branch of the Henry George Schools was formed in 1950. We organize and conduct classes in the ten-week course in fundamental economics provided by the New York headquarters, using George's PROGRESS AND POVERTY as a text. The course is still free to any adult though a small charge is made for the text. A question sheet and guide is provided each student, at each session, to guide the study of the next lesson. Free and open discussion is encouraged and required. We have ten or a dozen courses a year, averaging fifteen or twenty students each.

Our students tend to be interested and active participants in current public issues. Many of them are writers, and contribute articles and letters to the editor. Julian Hickock is a veteran and accomplished writer of letters to the editor. We also hold public forums, interact with the university students and some college professors. Altogether, we feel that we are an important part of public affairs in Philadelphia.

Arden is a land-value tax community, six miles north of Wilmington, Delaware. It was founded in

1900 by George Stephens, a noted sculptor and leader in the Single Tax Movement. Many people are craftsmen and artists there and earn their living by their art. They are also noted for their summer theater and presentation of Shakesperean and other plays.

Population may reach one thousand now, all the land is owned by the Arden Association and each householder has a lease from the association for his land, instead of buying it outright. It is a modest, tree-shaded village. The pressure against it is immense, both economically and politically. The area around it is suburban and land values are increasing rapidly, and they go up in Arden too. The community collects enough rent to operate the village; if they collected the full rent of land from each land user, I venture that many of the people in Arden couldn't afford it. A new resident coming in buys the house from its owner, but not the land which might be \$6000 a lot, half an acre or so.

The trustees of Arden see that they need so much to run the town and they pro-rate this to the plot-holder in accord with an agreed-on ratio of values for each plot. Leases can be bought and while this isn't a true Georgist principle, I would say that Arden is a good demonstration of the viability and possibility of the land-value tax. From the land rent, Arden pays its county and state taxes, and, of course, for these they are assessed on both land and buildings. That discourages any expensive building; Arden has only average homes. It used to be mostly a summer colony, but now has year round residents.

DISCUSSION:

Question - Why, after all these years, doesn't Arden collect all its land value?

Collins: Georgists, in and out of Arden, have their ideals and think largely in terms of principles. But the world is full of practical people who think and act in daily, practical measures. Most people, even in

Arden, want low taxes and are willing to pay only what is needed. They don't want to give up the full rental value of their land.

Question - Does a newcomer buy the lease from the homeowner or from the corporations?

Collins: From the corporation. All the land is owned by the corporation. Fifty percent of the land is put aside for permanent green and woodland. Fifty percent is in leaseholds. Now there are no leaseholds for sale - all are taken and only in case of death or removal is one available.

Weaver - While Arden is only a partial demonstration of a land-value tax community, it does prove that land rent can meet the costs of society. If the people want the services which government provides at a certain place, people will pay more for the land there. If they don't want them, they will pay less.

Collins: We have to remember that Arden is not a city. It is a suburban village; it doesn't have all the complex problems of a big city and it doesn't solve all the problems of a big city. We need to remember this when we make claims for what it proves.

Question - Are there wealthy people in Arden?

Collins: No, they are all very modest properties. Residents in Arden look askance at anyone who builds an expensive home; because of county tax on improvements, that will cost more taxes. The county doesn't care what Arden does. It levies its taxes on both land and buildings and if there are bigger better improvements, the county tax goes up.

Question - Do the Arden people understand and teach the George principles?

Collins: In the past two years the Philadelphia George School has held courses there. Some residents attend.