

IT IS A TAX By CRAIG CRINGAN (Director, School of Economic Science, Toronto)

It is a wrong idea to try to get our movement to substitute some candy-coated euphemism for that hated word "tax."

The main reason for advocating a change in wording is that it might help to sell the Georgist concept. I have tried words like "land rent" and "land dues" many times but this only makes it harder to sell. In switching away from the word "tax" in talking about something which most people regard as a tax, we immediately arouse suspicions of: (a) trying to pull a trick on the listener, or (b) stupidity in not knowing a tax when we fall over it.

The philosophic basis for switching to words such as "land dues" is because we believe it is an economic fact that the rental value of land is created by the community in general and by government services in particular. If a majority of the knowledgeable people of the country believed this premise, I think that a better word than land tax would soon slip into use. Until such thoughts become much more widespread, it is futile to try to force a different wording.

Instead of worrying about words, let's concentrate on fundamentals. We are on the verge of important breakthroughs, new ideas have surfaced, especially at recent Georgist conferences, which may strengthen the case for the Single Tax, or whatever you want to call it. Economics is a living science and should not suffer petrification, arbitrary treatment or imposition of ideas on others.