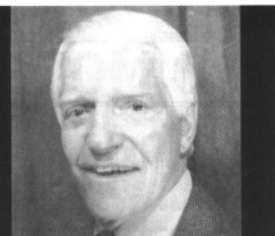


LETTERS

YOUR VIEWS
edited by
JERRY STOVIN



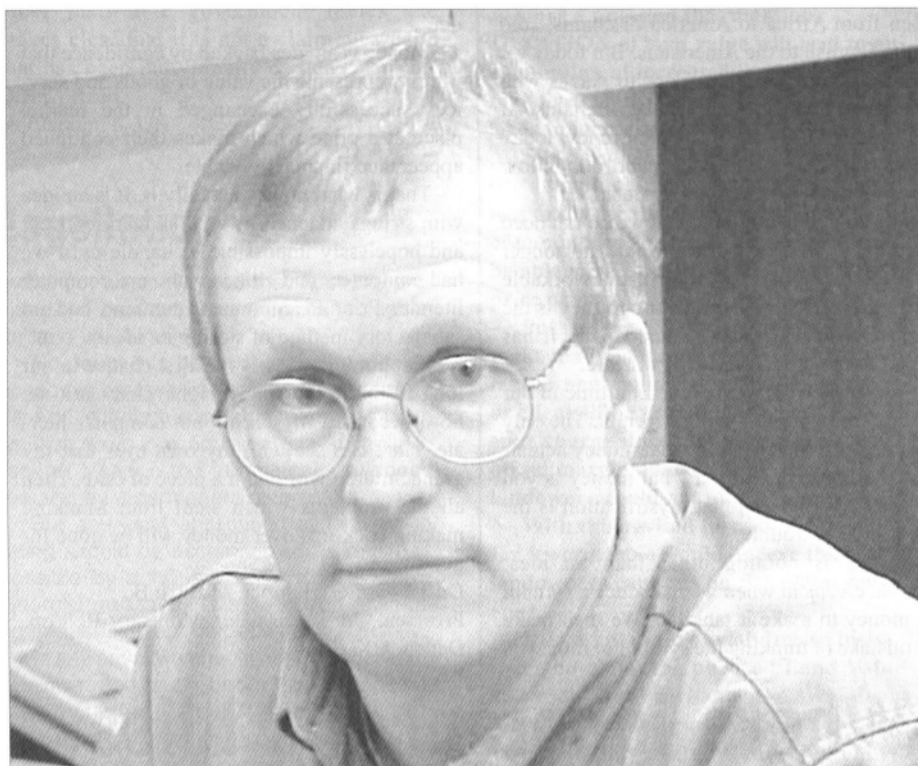
Internet is a poor substitute for a living Georgist community

Sir, The late John Hatherley's letter (*L&L*, Winter 2000) returns us once again to a distressing subject. Every year there are fewer and fewer people carrying the torch raised by Henry George. At our annual get-togethers, there are fewer and fewer Georgists attending. The response has been to find others to join forces with, to invite to meet with us, and hope we will influence their thinking and their actions. I would prefer that we hold an annual celebration or convention with emphasis on discussion of George's contributions to moral philosophy.

Bob Clancy used to say that we should not worry about the smallness of our numbers, that George's ideas would survive because they were true and would change things because they are just. Here in the United States, a handful of us have been teaching Henry George consistently on and off for decades. In my case, just two decades, but still with countless hours before groups of three or five or 10 or, occasionally, 20. Are there more Georgists out there because of our efforts. A few, for sure. Unfortunately, even in New York City where, except for a troubling period during the 1970s, hundreds of people have each year been engaged in discussion of Henry George's ideas, there are few people who have chosen to help us carry the torch.

After some years of reflection, I have come to believe the reason our numbers have continued to fall over the decades is that Georgists have never established a physical place where people could come to study and learn, to live and interact with others who share the same moral philosophy. The schools are an important outreach to the general public, but they are isolated and only occasionally serve to bring people together for reasons other than to take a course or attend a lecture. What I am referring to is a community that is dynamic and multi-purposed.

There was a brief moment in time



FEATURE LETTER by EDWARD DODSON

when the community of Fairhope in Alabama might have grown into such a place, but there were not enough people even there who carried the torch. Perhaps a similar opportunity existed for a moment in England or Australia. Georgists were fortunate to have attracted Joseph Fels to the movement, but neither he nor his contemporaries had this vision. In mid-century, the one person who might have taken on the challenge was John C. Lincoln, but nothing of his writings I have read indicate he thought a Georgist centre and community was needed.

Is a Georgist centre, in a community populated by Georgists, a practical objective or a foolish dream? Plenty of Georgists have spent a considerable amount of their personal savings supporting one initiative or another. Our corner of the world is one of rather scarce financial resources. The number of very reasoned and reasonable ways to spend these financial resources is

almost unlimited. And, some of us believe time is running out. Science and technology are not outpacing the consequences of "rent-seeking" behaviour. For every environmental improvement there seem to be ten global disasters occurring. For every improvement in the well-being of some, millions of people are born into the world without a chance for a decent existence.

Finally, and getting back to Mr. Hatherley's frustration, there is not much to the Georgist movement that remains after a century. Maybe a thousand stalwarts scattered around the globe. The closest thing we have to a centre, to a community of Georgists, is the internet. As good as this is, it is a distant second in my view to a real place where the movement can be grown as a community grows.

Edward J. Dodson,
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