

Coming to Terms with Our Terms

By FRED FOLDVARY (Treasurer, San Francisco Henry George School)

I'm glad to read that Jeffery Smith has endorsed the use of the term "geoism" as an alternative to Georgism (GJ No. 47, p. 7). As many Georgists or geoists know, the term has actually been in circulation for a few years already. I have used it and its variants in various articles, including "Geo-Libertarianism" in Land and Liberty and a "Geoist Manifesto" in The Storm! I've also used the term in various libertarian magazines, and other libertarian writers have started using it. I introduced the term "geoism" in The Connection, a libertarian periodical, as a substitute for "Georgism" several years ago and as far as I know this was the first usage of it. Those who attended the International Conference at Cambridge in 1984 may recall my talk on the term "geoism", which received a favorable response.

I have no desire to do away with the term "Georgism", but feel that a more generic term is also desirable, for the same reasons that Jeff Smith set forth in his Georgist Journal article. His "geonomics" is also an interesting coinage which ought to be studied.

Whether to use Land Value Taxation, Tax Relief on Improvements, Public Revenue from Sites Exclusively, or some other name for our program depends on the context one is dealing with. A presentation to a city council requires a different approach than a discussion with a Chamber of Commerce or a lecture to a student group, and possibly a different terminology. In a couple of articles in libertarian journals, I made up the term "Site Protection Fee" or SPF for the geoist program, which describes the collection of economic rent in a nontax context. It is a fee paid to the community in order to protect the site that one has title to, a protection which includes police, courts, public works, national defense, and most importantly, the recognition of the land title.

Though Georgist or geoist economics and philosophy is universal, its implementation can be diverse. That's why we have so many terms to contend with. There is no "one size fits all" in applying geoism. Context is everything in applying our program. So the various terms we have come up with - LVT, TRI, PRSE and SPF - can all be used, depending on the context of our audience.

(Mr. Foldvary is now Treasurer rather than President of the San Francisco HG School as mentioned in GJ No. 47. He has begun the Geolibertarian Newsletter which may be obtained for \$4 a year from Fred Foldvary, 1920 Cedar St., Berkeley, CA 94709.)