

ANNUAL REPORT TAX REFORM AUSTRALIA, 1991

Office and headquarters at 31 Hardware Street continue to operate as meeting place, bookshop and resource centre. The movement acknowledges with gratitude the capable and indefatigable work of Mrs. Loma Sutton as Office Supervisor.

"PROGRESS": Our monthly journal continues to be produced. We are grateful for the co-operative attitude of our printer, the distribution work done by Mr. Noel Wigmore, and the general work of our office supervisor. Miss Eva Best has played a major role editorially. The question of combining Georgist periodicals has been further considered, but no change yet made.

BOOK LAUNCH: For some years Mr. George Charles has been successfully operating classes with the University of the Third Age. His notes were published in book form – "Elementary Economics". A successful, well-attended book launch took place in July.

ADELAIDE CONFERENCE: Several members attended the Georgist Council conference in January.

RADIO BROADCASTS: Weekly broadcasts have been held on the FM community station, 3INR Heidelberg, since August. Broadly speaking, the Secretary and Mr. Charles have alternated. For three months Mr. Rowan Forster, a radio professional, interviewed the two former, but from November onwards he became unavailable owing to work commitments. Mr. Morris Williams was interviewed twice, and Mr. Jeff Ferguson once. Little response has been received, but it has been felt worthwhile to persevere. The transmitting range of the station is limited.

MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS: As well as his U3A classes, Mr. Charles conducted two series at Hardware Street on Tuesday mornings with some interesting and interested pupils.

MEETINGS: Apart from the Book Launch, a highlight was the Commemoration Dinner in September. A well-attended gathering was addressed by Mr. Terry Dwyer, architect of the attack by the Catholic Welfare Commission on the consumption tax. A good meeting was held in April for discussing methods of promotion. Other general evening meetings were poorly attended, with the exception of the successful Christmas Social.

SITE VALUE RATING: Mordialloc Council announced its intention of switching away from SVR; a poll was enforced, and SVR was retained with 68% of those voting being in favour. This was slightly greater than the poll about five years ago, but then the Council was neutral. Congratulations to Mr. Lance Hutchinson for his efforts in collecting signatures and to the energetic band of locals.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENTS: Legislation before the Victorian Parliament about the viability of Site Value Rating and ratepayer polls is a cause for concern. Ed Heywood and Morris Williams have done valuable work in monitoring the situation.

LAND VALUES RESEARCH GROUP: Messrs. Bryan Kavanagh and Ian Davis have been doing valuable work with this group.

GENERAL COUNCIL FOR RATING REFORM: This council, with Ed Heywood as Secretary, has been active with the proposed amendments to the Local Government Act. Literature was sent to various inquirers, and especially to Pakenham, where a change to the rating system is under consideration.

CONSUMPTION TAX: Material on this topic includes articles in "Progress" and a reprint of Dr. Dwyer's Commemoration address. An attempt at a combined public meeting was made for November, but did not eventuate. Instead, a literature distribution effort took place. Some valuable liaison was established with other groups.

PRESS LETTERS: Although it is harder to have these published, and to monitor their publication, some successes have been achieved.

LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION: This takes place in many ways to a variety of targets. A new leaflet aimed especially at youth was issued. Prepared by a pair of professionals, it is highly regarded.

VICTORIAN LAND TAX INQUIRY: The report was eventually published; from our viewpoint it was a mixture. At least it was stated that land tax is here to stay. (Seven Georgist submissions were made; several appeared in "Progress").

MELBOURNE WATER: A submission recommending SVR was made.

CITY SQUARE SPEAKERS' FORUM: Two of our members participate regularly.

VERY FAST TRAIN: It looks as if this project has been dropped for the time being at least. Roland Staub's liaison work was valuable.

VIDEO: Sales of "The Third Way" continued slowly during the year.

R. KEALL VISIT: The visit of this New Zealand activist was welcome; during his stay he presented a paper (published in "Progress") with an innovative idea for promoting Georgism. This must receive further consideration.

GENERAL: Valuable work has been done, quietly and steadily, by various individuals, particularly in political parties and church groups. Liaison with other Georgist branches and overseas Georgists has continued, as well as with other groups.

The year ahead presents some major challenges; counteracting the proposed consumption tax; combating the threat to site value rating.

The holding of the International Conference in Melbourne in September 1993, though under the aegis of the Georgist Council of Australia, will entail the need for extra effort from Melbourne Georgists.

CONCLUSION: We are in a frustrating period in Australia – an acknowledged recession, but actually a depression, especially as indicated by the disturbing level of unemployment. Our message is needed urgently, but how hard it is to get it widely publicized! By keeping the flame alight, however, we are not merely being true to ourselves, but also making it possible for the opportunity to be taken when circumstances become favourable, as well they could.

Geoff Forster,
Secretary.