

**Georgists
Infest
World Bank
Online
Land Forum**

During the last two months of 1998, the World Bank conducted an "Internet Forum on Land, Real Estate and the Economy". Their stated goal was to explore "how to realize the full benefits of land and real estate assets – that is, real property – to the economy, and how to extend these benefits to the poor."

Cliff Cobb and Bob Elgin learned of the upcoming open forum, and *The Georgist News* got the word out. Among the many Georgists who participated were Alfred Andersen, Bryan Kavanagh, Caspar Davis, Ed Dodson, Jeff Smith, Harry Pollard, Nicolaus Tideman, Tony O'Brien and Adam Monroe.

"After getting off to a technical and somewhat arcane start," reported Caspar Davis, "The World Bank's listserv became the site of a lively clinic in Georgist policy." Although some attempted to introduce social justice issues, but the tone of the forum was more technical than philosophical.

The Georgists' heaviest hitter was Prof. Mason Gaffney, who contributed well-supported comments on a wide variety of issues. According to Gaffney, the forum went "unusually well, considering the auspices and audience of orthodox World Bank suits. Georgists, in fact, set much of the agenda. Anti-Georgists took the bait and responded at length, opening the way for refutations and dialogue. Some made excellent foils. They were, in general, woefully unprepared for the deluge of Pro-Georgist thinking and retreated in silence before the onslaught." Prof. Gaffney noticed two people with Lincoln Institute e-mail addresses, one of whom "chimed in on green taxes and the Coase Theorem, but not LVT. He seemed sincere and conscientious... (but) the idea of questioning existing entitlements to land seemed novel to him."

Georgists, said Adam Monroe, "bit our tongues and remained civil and sober throughout – little or no preaching. (I) just asked 'innocent' questions – very effective. The medium is perfect for focusing on vulnerable or indefensible premises that are taken for granted by others."

Will Georgist participation in this forum effect World Bank land policy? The consensus was that it probably wouldn't. On the other hand, all agreed that Georgists acquitted themselves competently – and much more visibly than usual. The entire discussion is archived on the Net at: <http://www2.worldbank.org/hm/landecon>.