

the Henry George News

PUBLISHED BY HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE • APRIL, 1971

Revolution In Thought

by DAVID SKLAR

HISTORIANS vary in the meaning they give to the events they record. Some look for a single thread, some for several, but all look for meaning or, at least, an explanation of history.

A view of history that might be suggested is as a conflict between knowledge and ignorance. In this view, every step forward would come from the triumph of knowledge; every step backward from the triumph of ignorance. Knowledge would be seen fighting its way inch by inch through the web of ignorance woven into every society for the protection of what Toynbee calls "the dominant minority." The influence of "the creative minority" asserts itself during the growth stage of a society but is eventually supplanted by a dominant minority which is the effect of and the further cause of the breakdown of a society. Toynbee's analysis is also expressed by the mystics as the struggle of the forces of light against the forces of darkness.

With knowledge as our thread, we could proceed along the following lines: The object of knowledge is understanding of truth. Because of our limitations, we may never possess a complete understanding of truth, but the more we increase our understanding, the better equipped we are to solve problems, whether in aerodynamics or economics. It is only through understanding that man can be a problem-solver and nature's only progressive animal.

Truth is a most powerful force and the *only* real threat to those in the dominant minority. For this reason they take the greatest care to protect themselves from it in any field that poses any danger to their position.

The social sciences have most readily fallen into this category in the present age. The development of these studies in the 18th and 19th centuries presented the greatest threat to the dominant minority.

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Tenth Anniversary of PREC

THE Public Revenue Education Council was started in St. Louis by Noah D. Alper, former HGS director. The Council and its president have just celebrated their tenth birthday with a progress report that merits enthusiastic support.

The PREC was established to educate in various ways regarding the collection and expenditure of public revenue; the elimination of artificial barriers to the production and distribution of wealth; and the unblocking of natural incentives to maximum production. The film "Better Cities" has been a valuable addition to the program.

A long tabulation at the end of the decade lists 95,814 copies of articles, reprints and related material that have been distributed to local newspapers, television and radio studios, and to colleges, HG extensions and individuals from coast to coast. Not included are hundreds of unrecorded mailings, and more than 9000 letters.

The Council has introduced 40 universities in Missouri and Illinois to Progress, an Australian magazine which affords convincing evidence of the benefits of LVT. In Australia only the property owners are permitted to sign petitions and subsequently to vote on a change-over from taxation of land and improvements to a tax on land value alone. The number of communities operating under this LTV system increases as more property owners see the benefit in lower taxes and take the trouble to press for reform. Wherever the owners are free to improve their buildings without a tax penalty the deterioration of neighborhoods does not occur—proof that LVT is the answer to slum clearance.

Among the many educational innovations originating in St. Louis is a reading course in the "Economic Science of Public Revenue," which has been distributed to several hundred persons on request. This is a popular feature which will be expanded in the future.

The PREC has made its way modestly with an alert staff of officers and directors. Appreciation is extended by them to the loyal supporters who have made its continuation possible and who will be glad to know their welcome checks are tax deductible. The Council was declared a public foundation in 1969.

AJN: Apostle to The Remnant

by EDMUND A. OPITZ

ALBERT JAY NOCK was before the public in one capacity only, as a man of letters. He was in turn clergyman, editor, professor, essayist, biographer, student of fundamental economics—and a superfluous man withal! How he got that way, what ideas went into the formation of his mind, he explained in his *Memoirs*, an unusual autobiography of a distinguished and lonely intellect whose bent for privacy amounted to a passion.

Nock had an ample but refined capacity for enjoying life, even though he believed that, like a citizen of fifth century Rome, he was living in the last days of a dying civilization. Nock believed he was experiencing the "imperatorship and anarchy" Henry George had predicted. But human nature is resilient, and once the pessimist assures himself that doom is certain, then that's settled and cheerfulness breaks in—like the man in the tumbrel en route to the guillotine winking at the pretty girls in the rabble.

AJN devoted himself single-mindedly to the advancement of understanding—his own! Once he had unearthed a precious nugget of truth and put it on display where all who wished might see, he dropped the matter and went on to the next question. Training reinforced temperament to turn him away from even the slightest propaganda efforts; he never buttonholed anybody about anything. "Never argue; never explain," he would say with infuriating detachment. Nock believed, correctly I think, that he had uncovered the plain truth of things in the several areas of his interest, and he painstakingly set forth his elucidations in impeccable English, serene in his faith that this fully discharged his duty. This assumption back of this faith is that truth has an internal energy of its own enabling it, if we don't stand in its way, to cut its own channels and gain acceptance in minds ready for it. Trying to make truth palatable for minds not ready for it is no service to the people involved, for it clogs whatever thought proceses they have; and truth tampered with is truth lost.

The hard truth is what Nock is talking about; truth with the bark on it, truth unsophisticated by even good intentions, undiluted by ulterior considerations. Are there minds ready for this kind of truth? Nock believed that every society has such minds else it would fall apart. Every society is held together by a select few—men and women who have the force of intellect to discern the rules upon which social life is contingent, and the force of character to exemplify those rules in their own living. Nock called these scattered few "the

Remnant" in his brilliant essay, "Isaiah's Job."

Nock does not tell us whence his methodology derives, but we do know that his devotion to the philosophy of Henry George was life-long, and that as a student he read these words: "Social Reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting; by complaints and denunciation; by the formation of parties, or the making of revolutions; but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas. Until there be correct thought, there cannot be right action; and when there is correct thought, right action will follow." Nock's book on George appeared in 1939.

It's a lovely notion, runs the thought, but is it practical? will it work? Well, it appears to be working in Mr. Nock's case, although not all the returns are in and one can't say for sure. Albert Jay Nock's reputation while he lived was limited, and none of his books had much of a sale, except his *Jefferson* and the *Memoirs*. Nock's death in 1945 passed relatively unnoticed. But then things began to happen; the posthumous publication of a *Journal*, two volumes of letters and a volume of essays; a new edition of the *Memoirs*, a reprinting of four of his out of print books with a fifth imminent; and formation of The Nockian Society which has just published *Cogitations from A/JN*.

Nock sought to improve the quality of human life, and the forces he set in motion are still at work in those sensitive enough to feel them.

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Albert Jay Nock's birth, The Nockian Society published *Cogitations*, a 93-page collection of his wry and elegant observations on men, manners and civilization. It is available at \$1 from The Nockian Society, 36 South Broadway, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York 10533.

A copy of Nock's essay, "Isaiah's Job," is free on request from the society at the above address.

The general preoccupation with money led to several curious beliefs which are now so firmly rooted that one hardly sees how anything short of a collapse of our whole economic system can displace it. One such belief is that commodities—goods and services—can be paid for with money. This is not so. Money does not pay for anything, never has, never will. It is an economic axiom as old as the hills that goods and services can be paid for only with goods and services; but twenty years ago this axiom vanished from everyone's reckoning, and has never reappeared. No one has seemed in the least aware that everything which is paid for must be paid for out of production, for there is no other source of payment.

From Albert Jay Nock's *Memoirs*

Libertarians At War

by OSCAR B. JOHANSEN

It is probably a sad truism that a man's progeny rarely ever measure up to his hopes. And looking at the libertarians of today one feels that Albert Jay Nock would have been disappointed with them, but probably not surprised. In a very real sense, those commonly known as libertarians or rightists may be considered as the intellectual heirs of Nock, for many of them freely acknowledge their indebtedness to him. But while they may have embraced his views in whole or in part, few apparently have adopted that imperturbable and dispassionate appraisal of men, and that unruffled disdain for organized reformist action, that so characterized the urbane man of letters.

The rightists have been split and are assailing each other with a vehemence reminiscent of the battles between the socialists and communists. Differences which had been smoldering for a long time finally erupted at a convention in 1969. Those generally called conservatives are now labeled the old right. They combine the economics of the Austrian school with a fierce anti-communism which appears willing to embark on a holy war to destroy communism even though such a war may result in the creation of the ubiquitous state here at home. Though undoubtedly aware of the danger they apparently believe the menace of communism is worse.

On the other hand, those referred to by conservatives as "atomistic individualists" are now known generally as the new right. They also embrace the economics of the Austrian school but appear to have imbibed more of Nock's loathing of the state. Because they look on the state as little better than a gangster organization, they feel the individual is morally justified in resisting such obvious incursions of individual rights as conscription. In essence, the old right appears to have a practical approach which takes into consideration present-day modes of thought and the possibility of attaining some goals. The new right takes a more idealistic though impractical position.

Georgists may wonder what this has to do with them. To return to Nock he was as thoroughgoing a Georgist as ever existed, but he was too skeptical to hope that people would ever have enough common sense to adopt George's ideas. Libertarians who read Nock conscientiously cannot help becoming acquainted with George and absorbing some of his views.

Since the libertarians are split into two factions, however, the Georgists might consider occupying the center. Georgism is libertarianism par excellence. It recognizes the supremacy and democracy of

the marketplace and the freedom of individuals to attain whatever goals they desire consistent with the rights of others.

If Georgists had some of the serenity and reasonableness of Nock they might be able to reconcile some of the differences among the libertarians. When rightists must engage in dialectics let them attack the leftists. Their socialistic welfare concepts have so long dominated intellectual thought that they far outnumber the rightists.

Libertarians differ largely in degree, since they all want more intellectual, economic and social freedom for the individual and less power for the state. Rome wasn't built in a day though it was built. Freedom of a higher order than ever existed before is possible, but it won't be attained in our lifetime by the present ferment.

Alex Duris of Hendersonville, North Carolina, has taken early retirement, and the increased leisure gives him more time to work with a newly formed group bent upon preserving certain local natural resources.

At a conference of soil conservationists the director of the State Department of Local Affairs, Irvin Aldridge, said, "Unless we begin now to control our own use of our land, we are headed for total disaster. Land use plans are the only hope we have of keeping North Carolina an attractive, prosperous state."

To protect the environment by wise planning he suggested a land bank as a possibility, but said a method more interesting to him would be one similar to that operating in Hawaii—a system of tax zoning which levies property taxes at different rates determined by land usage.

The following notice appeared in the German weekly, Die Zeit (Munich), with the caption, "A rise of 2036 percent."

The Lord Mayor of Munich gave this explanation concerning property and land law: "As to the misdirection of investment-capacity, we ought to remember that building costs increased in Munich since 1950 by a bit more than 200 percent, wages paid to construction workers by a bit more than 300 percent, and the cost of living index by approximately 100 percent—but land prices rose by 2036 percent."

This means that owing to the rise of land prices the Munich municipality has paid, since 1955, for land needed for public purposes, an additional sum of 875,000,000 DM out of tax revenues, or money collected from Munich's citizens.

Here is proof of George's theory. (1) In the long run, unless you bring land prices down by land value taxation and exemption of improvements, all surplus value accumulates in the hands of landowners (not necessarily in the hands of capitalists or the proletariat). (2) If you fail to tax land values, no government will find the money to buy much needed lands for public purposes or to pay adequate compensation for them. Then a government must either refrain from building roads, schools, hospitals, etc. or expropriate lands without compensation. (3) A wise guy will refrain from working and investing in his trade or manufacture, but he will buy some land and resell it after 20 years at a net profit of 2036 percent, unless land value taxation and exemption of improvements gives him a true inducement to work and to invest usefully. And this brings us to the "dawn of nothing," to the end of progress, and to general poverty the world over.

David B. Ascher
Haifa

The Truth of Revenue Sharing

by ADELE BUCKALTER

LET us not be confused by the altruistic connotation of this wholesome sounding phrase, revenue sharing, as it is dealt out to us in the press and over the air.

We hear much about the advisability of controlling education, housing, child care, medical services and welfare on a community level. Why then should the revenue for these programs go to a bureaucratic government which will waste the lion's share and permit the rest to filter back to the place of origin. If our ever expanding central government restricted itself to the functions enumerated in Article I, section 8 of the Constitution it would remove itself from all the unnecessary forms of business activity in which it now engages, leaving these to private enterprise which would be able to earn a suitable profit while bringing prices down to the level of the open competitive marketplace.

In a nation where individual freedom of expression has always been encouraged, why is there not more insistence on a return to collection and disbursement of revenue where it is actually used, and why is taxation so little understood? Before the income tax was instituted, that most inequitable levy ever perpetrated on a free people, the principal source of revenue was from land. It was and still is assessed and collected locally. But this property tax suffers from being too familiar. Neglect and failure to correct a tax pattern inherited from abroad has caused sullen acceptance and virtual paralysis. A very simple reform which has been proposed at various times in history, if it had been heeded, could have saved us from some of our present stress.

The well known property tax, when it is laconically and infrequently assessed, is the misunderstood paradox, for it really comprises two very different taxes. One part is on the value of the land or site and the other on the value of improvements, if any—and because of the careless neglect to separate the two we have lost an important link for creating community responsibility and interest. It is the presence of people that makes land valuable. All land increases in value with the increase of population and with the productivity of this population. Thus an ever increasing fund is available for necessary community services.

Local governments are in trouble because they cannot ask taxpayers for any more money to meet their enormous budgets, but they are overlooking in many instances holders of valuable vacant property who are paying relatively little in return for expensive utilities and

services. These are the speculators who are waiting for the big bonanza. They invest nothing but benefit by every costly new improvement that is financed by other taxpayers.

Land, the free gift to all, was used nomadically by early tribes who moved on to newer fields as they used up the grazing opportunities of an older field. Even in the early switch to a more settled agricultural life, land was held and cultivated as common ground by the entire community. American Indians used the land in this way and they could never have imagined anything so unprincipalled as the European concept of private property in land. They willingly agreed to share their land with the newcomers, sadly unaware that they had surrendered all rights to its use. Much of the warfare that followed could be traced to this total misunderstanding.

As population increased some of the early settlers, realizing that the most productive land in the community would soon be in great demand, appropriated the best of it for themselves, often by dispossessing the natives. By holding vast tracts in anticipation of future increases in value they forced new arrivals, in order to find homesteads and good farmlands, to leap over and beyond those lands to more distant areas. As they moved westward new communities were established and the same inequitable practices were repeated.

Local governments, in collecting revenue, have, with very few exceptions; taxed unimproved property at a rate lower than similar land with fine improvements. This has had a strong tendency to retard the improvement of property by those whose income is more than enough for their needs, and who do not need to develop their land but can afford to let it lie fallow or unproductive, to create fortunes for their children or grandchildren.

The important point that has been continually overlooked by the new settlers is that vacant land in a desirable location has the same value as adjoining land which is improved. If the two plots were taxed at the same rate what would be the quick and logical eventuation? Simply this, the person, corporation or foundation that owned this unimproved or underimproved land would no longer find it to his advantage to retain ownership of such parcels. The higher tax would negate any future advantage that might accrue in later years. In order to profit from such land the owner would have to use it productively or let it go by default, as is presently done with land where taxes are in arrears.

As such additional land is made available, the price will seek the level at which it can be developed most profitably. Production will then take place and wages will accrue to the labor employed on it.

This tends toward achievement of full employment and encouragement of new enterprise, because of maximum interest on capital. There is then no need for management of the country's money or for manipulation of the economy by government agencies.

If land were taxed fully, according to its location, the vacant and improved alike, the tax fund could be staggering. Local collection of taxes under such circumstances would render unnecessary the myriad of other taxes, both apparent and concealed, that now plague us. With these eliminated the cost of virtually all products would be lower. At present we pay indirect taxes to the manufacturer who considers this indirect tax a cost of his production like any other and allocates to himself a profit on this expense. Distributors handling his product also add their reward based on its cost to them. This obviously includes the indirect tax the manufacturer has had to pay, plus his profit, as stated.

If these indirect taxes were eliminated and if prices dropped as a result, there would be an increasing need for labor to satisfy the growing demand. A tendency to full employment would result with wages reaching their full potential, eliminating much if not all of the incitement to "job actions," violence and the pressures associated with a dissatisfied labor force.

By this system the hordes of people now employed to devise, explain, collect and adjudicate the present tax system could be deployed to more useful, productive and satisfying fields where additional personnel will be needed to satisfy the increased demand for goods and services.

Once the local government realized the potential wealth under its jurisdiction and established proper assessing methods and accurate records for all to see, the community could emerge from its lowly position and assume the obligation for its own financial needs. Every local community could become responsible and solvent if its property tax structure could be reformed in the manner described by Henry George. It could then share its revenue with state and federal governments and suggest to them that they recover their roles as delineated by the founding fathers.

A newly formed Southern Pacific Land Company will consolidate and accelerate the development of more than five million acres spread over 11 western states, including valuable mineral rights. In 1969 the Southern Pacific had an income from real estate rentals and natural resources of \$23.7 million.

Location value taxation might hasten development of all these opportunities, cutting down the need for other taxes.

Lancaster M. Greene

Site Prices: Out of Sight

by SYDNEY MAYERS

A NEWS dispatch from London reveals that prices of residential building lots in England have doubled since 1963; and the average London price is \$75,000 an acre, five times the national level. Meanwhile, back in New York (reports The Times), office building sites have been put together in recent years at costs ranging from \$200 to \$500 a square foot, those on Third Avenue and Avenue of the Americas, where most new construction is taking place, running upwards of \$400 a square foot.

Though such astronomical land prices are clearly stimulated by inflationary speculation, they nevertheless logically reflect the pressure of intense demand for severely limited areas. Since there is just so much space in midtown Manhattan and in urban Albion, frantic bidding for the little that is available understandably tends to send prices soaring. Yet, after centuries of constantly mounting site values, one is still shocked at their never-ending increase. Unfortunately, few are shocked sufficiently to try to curb the skyward pace.

Natural economic law being what it is, the staggering rise in the cost of land is not confined to places like the USA's and UK's chief cities. Thousands of miles to the east a similar phenomenon prevails, on the island of Hong Kong. This tiny British crown colony has less space and, because of its unique status, more demand for land than London or New York. The result is predictable—but hold your hat!

A plot of 53,000 square feet, consisting of reclaimed land on the island waterfront, has been sold by the Hong Kong government to a company planning to erect a 50-story office complex. The price, which was set at an official auction, was \$45 million, or over \$800 per square foot. This establishes a record, but one may confidently anticipate that the record will in time be broken. Incidentally, and interestingly, the government's profit on the transaction amounted to 200 times its outlay, the cost of reclaiming the site having been about \$4 a square foot.

Whether it be London, New York, or another boom town, wherever speculation in land coincides with economic demand for that limited necessity of life, prices will be based on "what the traffic will bear." That excessive rents, privately collected, will follow inordinately rising land costs, is obvious. And the depressing effect on wages and interest that must inevitably ensue cannot but lead to ultimate catastrophe. All this, let it again be noted, arises from private land ownership and privately appropriated rent: causes that an equitable system of site value taxation would promptly eliminate.

The Goal of Good Assessment

PERRY PRENTICE spoke in Washington, D.C. before the Conference on Property Tax Reform in December, and said in his opening remarks that he knew of nothing more important to this cause than getting Mr. Nader to turn people loose on the subject. The most important event in the history of America, he said, was that Columbus discovered it, but he died without realizing what he had discovered. Similarly the settlers, on arriving at the James River, looked for gold, and not finding any thought they might as well go back to England.

In the conference in Washington he thought they too were discovering something more important than bad assessments, which were just one part of the bigger problem of reforming property tax so its misapplication "would no longer subsidize almost everything we don't want for our cities by undertaxation and no longer penalize what we do want by overtaxation."

Property tax reform, he said, has to start with providing a sensible base. We must first correct what's wrong with assessments, but the principal importance of assessment reform is that once you have good assessments, then you can go after what is fundamentally wrong with the property tax.

He pointed out the familiar contrast between the two halves of the property tax that couldn't possibly be more different. One half he said was defined as a tax on the unimproved value of land—what it would be worth if the owner had never done anything to improve it. He called this the "tax on a value that is 99.44 percent unearned increment, a value created not by what the owner has done or spent, but by an enormous investment of other people's money and other taxpayers' money to make land in this location accessible, livable and richly saleable."

Consider how big the investment of other people's money is. To make one more residence reachable in metropolitan New York the amount, according to figures of the regional planning association, was \$16,750 in 1965—\$20,000 now. On the west coast the figure was only about \$1,000 less for making one more residence around Los Angeles livable and saleable. This constitutes a subsidy substantially larger than the farm subsidy and all the subsidies for foreign aid.

Referring to another part of the conference where emphasis was placed on the fact that underused land is assessed at a very small fraction of what land that is put to good use is assessed at, he said one reason for this is that assessors tend to confuse the property tax with the income tax. If land isn't being used for income they figure you

can't collect a big tax on it. The result—land is undertaxed in direct proportion to its underuse.

The other half of the property tax being on the improvement, is a tax on what owners have spent their own money for, so heavy taxes on improvements will discourage, inhibit and in many cases prevent them from being made.

"To the best of my knowledge and belief," said Mr. Prentice, "heavy taxation of land is the only kind of taxation that actually results in increasing the available supply. If you put heavy taxes on production you usually discourage production. But if you put heavy taxes on land you bring more land out of cold storage.

Why has private enterprise, which has created such an abundance of everything else, failed our needs in housing? Because we harness the profit motive backwards and make it more profitable to let property decay or lie idle than to put it to good use. This is one of the biggest reasons why we have a housing shortage and why America has failed to develop even one really good city. It is also why it subsidizes slum formation, urban decay, premature subdivision and sprawl by under-taxation. It penalizes, discourages and prevents improvement and good land use by overtaxation. "So don't overlook the fact that the goal of good assessment is property tax reform, for without it you're never going to meet the need for good housing in this country," the speaker warned.

Referring to a statement made earlier by the Governor of Pennsylvania which he thought alarming, namely that the property tax was no good and should be abolished, Mr. Prentice told of a group of leaders of the housing industry who went with him to Europe in 1962 to see what they could learn.

There was lots they could have learned, but they didn't learn anything, because they kept congratulating themselves that they were giving home buyers in this country more than the builders were giving in Europe. In England there is no tax on land as long as it is used for hunting or admiring the view. France has no property tax at all. In Switzerland the prices were very high. A house estimated at about \$35,000 by American standards brought \$135,000. This, said Mr. Prentice, is what happens when you don't tax land.

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To me the chief harm of not taxing land values is the damage to our moral values: the inurement to increasingly heavy taxation, the consequent denial of property rights and the obscuring of what justice is in a complex modern economy.

Steven Cord, in Equal Rights

How to Spend the Surplus

by LAURENCE KOBAK

"BALDERDASH!" That's what I say to students of George who express fears that the single tax would fail to furnish sufficient revenue for the expenses of government. "One of our biggest problems," I tell them, "will be to dispose of the enormous surplus in revenue which would be generated by the single tax."

Most of the expense items in federal and local budgets are a result of our maladjusted economic system. These outlays would disappear once the influence of the single tax had time to exert itself. Over half of our taxes now go to alleviate effects of poverty. Expenditures such as those for welfare, large police forces and most of the federal regulatory functions, would become unnecessary.

Once the release of human creative energy brought about by George's simple reform begins to burst forth, the income raised from the rent of land would far exceed our expectations. That means governments would be faced with an ever-growing surplus. What should be done with this surplus? Certainly government can think of ways of spending money for schools, museums, bridges, roads and other modern-day pyramids ad nauseam. I'd like to think that the state's largess would soon reach the point of satiation for most citizens. Sensing this, some political leader might very well come forward with a variation of the following proposal: let the surplus be divided equally without regard to the income of the recipient. The surplus, or social dividend, might at first amount to a thousand dollars per adult. If he earned nothing, he would receive a thousand dollars. If his earnings were \$50,000 a year, he would still receive a thousand dollars.

The objections now raised to welfare disbursements could not be applied to the social dividend. Welfare payments are funded by taxes on labor and capital. Naturally, producers protest at what amounts to theft of their property. Such demurrals could not be raised to the social dividend for it would come from surplus remaining from the collection of economic rent—that which was left after the necessary expenses of government. No person's labor or capital would be taxed for the social dividend.

I believe that most people would welcome this approach. Other methods of dealing with the surplus would be far less satisfactory. For example if the government builds more art museums, it favors museum goers at the expense of all other citizens. Wouldn't it be better to give everyone his social dividend and the opportunity to spend his money on the goods and services he deems most important?

Sound good? Well, a social dividend of a thousand dollars is just the beginning. The single tax economy would grow at a much faster rate than our present crippled system can achieve. Thus the economic rent of land would increase and so would the social dividend. I think it's reasonable to expect that the dividend would not be long in reaching a level of as much as \$5,000 a year.

Not many people would be satisfied with an income of \$5,000 a year. Most would choose to work in order to enjoy a higher standard of living. But for some people leisure is more important than money. No stigma would be attached to accepting the dividend for it would be distributed to all without respect to income from other sources.

Michigan's Georgists sorrowfully report the death of Henry Rogers of Detroit, an architect, president at 38 of the Urban Design Development (and planning) group, which he founded in 1966. He was active in other local and national groups and in the last year he became an enthusiastic advocate of Henry George's philosophy and was writing his thesis for a master's degree on this subject at the time of his death. A copy of Progress and Poverty was placed at his side in the casket by his friends who requested that he be dressed in blue denim working clothes and a construction worker's hard hat.

"Hank" Rogers had organized classes in economics in his organization, had bought and distributed 100 books relating to Henry George, and had shown the film "Better Cities" to black groups and planning organizations. He had been instrumental in finding employment in the building trades for many qualified blacks. His understanding and presentation of the LVT principles, when he addressed civic meetings, were so exceptional that it was hoped he might become Detroit's assessor.

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Detroit's Committee for Better Cities issues a newsletter edited by Luella Baron. The film "Better Cities" has been shown 50 times by this group, and many future bookings are on tap.

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The Royal Oak extension under leadership of its director, Robert D. Benton, has just begun a correspondence course in economics. Four faculty members will read papers and lead pupils through the course. This may prove to be more practical than weekly meetings, although one basic economics class is being held in Royal Oak at present.

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Stanley Rubenstein, director of the HGS Long Island extension, is teaching the basic economics course to 45 students in two senior classes at the Jericho High School. He is there as a guest lecturer and takes over the class while the regular instructor sits in the back of the room.

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Periodically the HGS extension sent its newsletters to department heads and teachers of economics in Long Island high schools. In addition speakers have been sent to economics classes on request, following notification that they were available. At the Jericho school when this offer was made to the department head and the teacher, they requested and received permission from the administrators to invite the guest lecturer.

Mr. Rubenstein, a high school teacher presently on sabbatical leave, is free to do some writing and to take on such assignments as the above. Considering the active program he has set up for his Long Island extension it is certain that he will not loiter in idleness.

But they have emerged victorious in the 20th century to discredit all belief in the possibility of discovering truth. The social sciences became overlaid with meaningless statistical studies which dazzled the unwary student. Popularized half-truths such as those of Marx, captured his mind and diverted him from inquiring into the studies of more profound scholars who were either ignored or deemphasized by the respectable authorities.

The underlying philosophy behind ideas prevalent today must be combated. How can we hope to find a solution to social problems when truth is believed to be a matter of opinion that varies with the individual or, with the time, place or social mores? How can we argue against the idea that there are no absolutes, that all truth is subject to change and therefore cannot be relied on or even discussed?

The essence of the current philosophy is only a pretense and is not seriously believed. Would the space ship have been launched on the assumption that truth is in the eyes of the beholder? It is the reliance on established principles that has allowed us to accomplish all that we have. Social scientists seem to take the absurd position that there are two universes: one where man can rely on natural law, and another where natural law does not apply.

Whether the prevalent philosophy is valid or not may be an open question but its effect is to lead us away from a simple, direct solution to our social and economic problems, because according to this philosophy no solution is possible.

The first step must be a return to the idea that cause and effect in social phenomena can be traced and their observation can lead to a definite solution of problems. But this involves a total revolution in the current mode of thought. Only a thorough understanding of ideas can equip us for this. But so equipped, we become a force to be reckoned with. Weakness comes from insufficient understanding; undreamed of strength from thorough understanding. The enemy is much weaker than we think.

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SAN FRANCISCO. In March the HGS presented a seminar for over 300 teachers at the annual conference of California Social Studies Teachers. In the past decade this branch of the HGS has mounted an action program to reach opinion leaders in the community through conferences, seminars, invitational classes and the monthly newsletter *Analyst*.

Several branches of the Northern California HGS now have part-time paid secretaries and are growing in strength and independence. A new printing press permits flexibility and economy in meeting the many publication needs. The purchase of two copies of the "Better Cities" film has given their speakers entree into dozens of community groups in recent months.

SAN FRANCISCO—July 7-11—Hobby Tax, Fisherman's Wharf

Will you be there for the Henry George School Conference?

The U. S. Government owns 553 million vacant and unappropriated acres, in western states and Alaska. This is land which is marginal—barren wastes, rugged peaks, etc. Alaska has the largest holding of 273 million acres, followed by Nevada with 48 million and Utah with 23 million. The pioneers were not interested in such land. Today, however, it has become extremely valuable, and in 1969 the Department of the Interior realized almost a billion dollars from mineral and timber rights. This made it the largest money maker for the government outside of the Internal Revenue Service.

If a billion dollars can be collected annually from what was once considered worthless land, what would be collected today from the rest of the land which was and is considered really worthwhile?

An indication of how enormous the economic rent of the U. S. must be is brought out by the news that the Interior department in December accepted 108 bids for drilling space off Louisiana's western coast. They totaled \$845,832,735. And yet people will say the treatment of land is secondary to capital. Will they ever learn?

From the February Gargoyle, NJHGS