

A Robert Clancy Reader

Georgist Journal, Winter 1987-88:

Discussing with some friends about why the Georgist philosophy is not more widely accepted after all these years, I suggested three "I's": Ignorance, the Interests and Inertia.

Re the first: Ignorance is above all the major obstacle. This is not simply a matter of people not knowing the existence of our philosophy but of the difficulty of following its reasoning. The vested Interest in the private collection of the rent of land exerts a tremendous Influence on politics, education etc. It is not to be underestimated.

Inertia is the tendency to go on doing things in the same way, even after a better way is demonstrated — a quite universal trait.

In our discussion, other "I's" were suggested: the Income tax was one — this tax is so entrenched that people — those who pay as well as those who collect — have difficulty in imagining any other mode of taxation. Indifference was also cited; only a small minority are concerned with questions of fundamental reform and equal justice and liberty. There is also an "if" factor: "If only the Single Tax were adopted at the very beginning" or "If only some important leader would get behind it," etc. And we may cite the Indisposition of non-converts to think, and even the Indisposition to talk about it or do anything about it for fear of being ridiculed. Finally, there is simply "I" as in "I'm all right, Jack." Seeking, or having found, a little comfortable niche somewhere, let the rest of the world go to hell! We could go on with Iconoclasm and Idiocy, to say nothing of world Insanity.

Getting carried away with this Imagery, we also have to cope with our own Inadequacies: Impatience with our glacially slow progress whilst Illogical Ideologies are steaming ahead; our Irritation at the difficulty of getting a hearing; our Insistence which sometimes turns people away; occasionally our bizarre Inventions of methods to attract attention; and other Idiosyncracies.

And that's only one letter of the alpha-

bet! So we have 25 other multiple obstacles to overcome. But at least there are some more positive words throughout the alphabet. Staying with "I", we have a powerful "Idea" that has in it the "germanitive power of truth." So let us continue to spread Information about it and keep up the Inclination to Illuminate the world with it. Let us maintain our Independence, be Immune from the world's discouragements, and have the Idealism to believe It will eventually triumph. We may well reckon with an Invisible Influence which will take time to become manifest.



Henry George News, Nov. 1964

The private collection of the rent of land acts as a heady narcotic.... The grimness with which this privilege is grasped bears this out. People do not act with a fraction of the hysteria when earned income is taken from them as when unearned income is taken from them.

For when earned income is

taken, a person can calculate how much has been taken and he knows how he can recoup that amount. But when the unearned income of rent is taken away, the proprietor has been despoiled of an aladdin's lamp, a mysterious source of the bounty that he would not know how to replace. And so the countenance of this privilege is protected and defended like nothing else on earth.



"The Enslavement of Laborers" from *Bob's Illustrations to Progress and Poverty*, 1955

Henry George News, April 1966

The wage-price spiral seems to be a mysterious thing, with no one seeing how it starts, and each blaming the other for starting it. The real culprit, the increase of land rent, escapes detection. As the value of land goes on its inflated way, absorbing the benefits of progress, it presses against the returns to labor and capital. They in turn

exert pressure — usually against one another — to keep up their accustomed returns. They seemingly succeed by getting a monetary return which apparently puts them ahead of the game. More money is printed to take care of the increase — and the invisible, insidious drain of inflated land value goes on. The more obvious things get blamed.

Excessive taxing and spending by the government doesn't help — but we have had inflationary periods without big government — but with land speculation. Reform the currency, cut down big government, curb the unions and control big steel — and we would then most probably have the most rampant land values ever, and the biggest inflation ever.

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Henry George News, June 1967

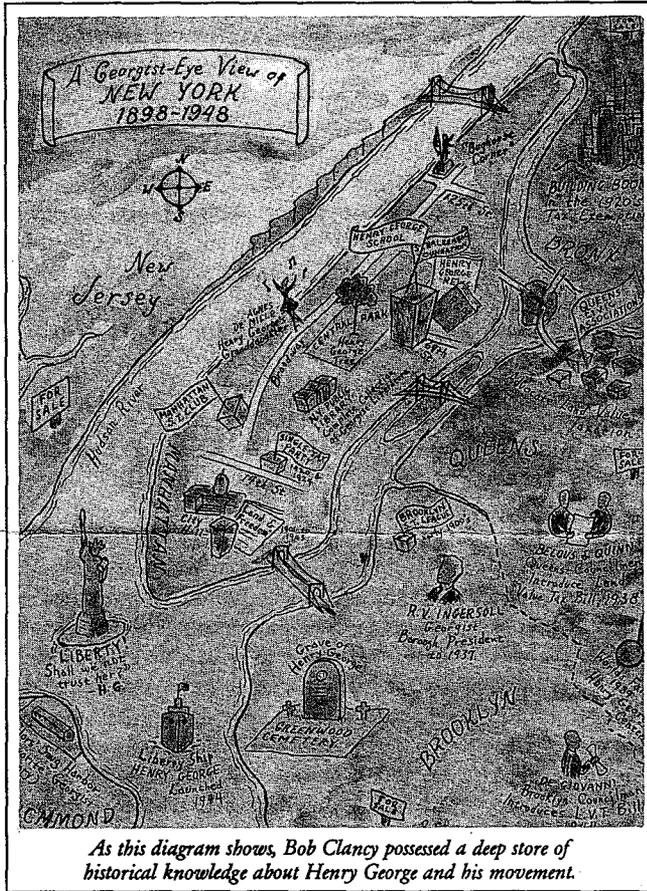
Many Georgists of today are attracted to various conservative or right-wing movements, and there are reasons for this. These movements seem to favor individual liberty as against government encroachment, and this cuts a lot of ice with Georgists. But a word of caution is in order against too close an identification.... While there are some things in common, there are some serious differences.

There is among right-wingers a strong tendency to blame poverty on the poverty-stricken; and if any help is needed, to depend on private charity. Although they are cool toward public welfare, they are not quite against more government, for they want a stronger police to quell signs of discontent among the poor. In this mood, they are seldom if ever receptive to another way, the Georgist way, of getting rid of poverty.

The devotion of right-wingers to freedom is open to question in other respects, too. They find it hard to swallow that freedom means equal freedom for all mankind, and do not want to inconvenience the present owners of the earth in order to give the disinherited billions a chance. "Freedom" to them means "do not disturb those who possess."

Years ago, left-wing causes seemed to have something in common with the Georgist cause because they too were protesting against the status quo. But the differences were too great. Since then, the status quo itself has become more leftist, thus giving our protest against more of a semblance of right-wing protests....

Grumbling about taxes and regulations is pretty universal, and this is what makes it seem that the right-wing movement is going places. But a protest without a program cannot get far.... We do not need to link up with dubious causes, whether of the right or the left. Our greatest strength will come from remaining (*continued on page six*)



independent and promulgating the full philosophy. "I am for man," said George, and it's as simple as that.

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Land & Liberty, January-February 1990

A theory about history has set the intellectual world abuzz — even not so intellectual Washington.... In his article "The End of History" Francis Fukuyama declares that "Something very fundamental has happened in world history," and that is "the triumph of the West, of the Western idea," that is, democracy....

Apparently, "history" is understood to take place when rival world outlooks contend with one another. The triumph of liberal democracy and a market economy is rapidly becoming world-wide and is discrediting the various command economies and dictatorial governments.... While we may be gratified by the apparent triumph of western liberal democracy, we should keep firmly in focus the conditions in our midst that could easily lead to a lot of "history."

There is the growing gap between the rich and poor, the plague of drugs and crime, the housing problem and the growing homeless population, the frenzy of financial markets, the increasing foreclosures of small farms, the vast problem of pollution and ecological damage, to name but a few of our economic problems.

There's enough there to ignite revolutions and disorders that would hardly be benign. At the bottom of economic activities lies the land — and so at the bottom of economic disorders lies the land. Certainly more attention needs to be paid to inequities with respect to access to land.

Most of the world's population is landless and in poverty. A more just system compatible with the freedom we vaunt must be sought. We have the key to this in the taxation of land values which would vastly improve equitable access to land. Adoption of this measure would not end "history" — but it would make it a lot easier to take.

- R. C.