

The Henry George News

published monthly by
Henry George School
of Social Science

50 East 69 Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

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Volume 44 Number 3

Subscription \$5 per year
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*Application to mail at Second
Class Postage Rates is pend-
ing at New York, N.Y.*

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Earth Day

April 22, 1980

The fundamental concept of the earth as man's common heritage, whose bounty is to be shared by all and preserved in trust for the future, is central to both Georgist and environmentalist ideology.

Yet Henry George's message has won wide recognition among only a few enthusiasts in the environmental movement. Perhaps, those who wish to preserve open space have been unjustly frightened by the idea of higher taxes on land. On the other hand, Georgists may be unduly suspicious of those opposing economic development for ecological reasons.

We believe environmentalists and Georgists have more in common than they perhaps realize and would find even more, by listening to each other. Georgists need to remember that the highest and best uses of land are not necessarily dictated by economics alone. Environmentalists must realize that preservation of natural resources is feasible only if we encourage development where and in the manner that is appropriate.

The earth may indeed support all its inhabitants without artificial controls on growth, but it may do so only with the proper distribution of resources. George's refutation of the Malthusian "doomsday" would be a valuable lesson even today.

In this spirit, Georgists everywhere should join in celebrating Earth Day by helping those who would serve our planet, a goal we all share.

PLANETARY INHERITANCE DECLARATION

by John McConnell, originator of Earth Day, 1970

1. That all men are created equally free and independent and have among their inalienable rights certain fundamental property rights during their sojourn on this planet.
2. That a beneficent Creator has provided this Earth-home, this nest in the stars, with an abundance of land and natural resources, enough that with care and cooperation a good life can be enjoyed by all members of the family of man.
3. That among the equal rights of men is the right to an equal share in nature's bounty; a right of each man to his planetary inheritance—his share of land, water, minerals, or an appropriate equivalent in food, housing, or other benefits. No one can, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity, or any other man's posterity, of the right to his portion of Earth. All natural resources belong equally to every living person.

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