

ILLINOIS GEORGIST RIDES AGAIN

Volume 3, Number 1 (Winter 1990) of *The Illinois Georgist* was published this March. Articles include a full-length interview with long-time Georgist Bob King conducted by Adam J. Monroe, Jr (grandson of the late John Lawrence Monroe).

According to King: "The battle over tax abatement for particular projects focuses public attention on the wrong issues. The important question is not whether a particular hotel, office building, or factory will benefit the community, but whether public squabbling (and whispered private deals) is really an efficient and fair way to promote development... Everyone wants abatements, but only the favored few get them. As more abatements are granted, those who do not obtain them may rightly feel that they will be left holding the bag... Moreover, it is likely that decisions to grant tax abatements will be influenced by politics... Better rules can be written. The defect in the present system is not tax abatements, but that they have to be granted as special favors."

Other articles in this issue include: *Reflections on Illinois Property Tax Statistics* by Bob Jene, *Cook County Assessor Demonstrates an Advantage of Site Value Taxation* by Chuck Metalitz, and *God Help the Poor -- God Help Us* by Sam Venturella. This last piece is a well-considered reply to one by David Frum in *The Wall Street Journal* (2/15/90) entitled: *Free to Beg, Free to Intimidate*. Mr. Frum had deplored a recent federal judge ruling which protects begging as "informative and persuasive speech." Mr. Venturella takes Mr. Frum to task for ignoring the problem that many who beg have been

denied access to opportunity due to our laws protecting land monopoly, citing homeless Mexican farmworkers who built shacks on vacant land which they did not own in San Diego, aided and abetted by local clergy and public officials. "Could it be," asks Sam in defense of the ruling, "that there are within our governments some humane persons who recognize that something is rotten in America?"

To obtain a copy of this very interesting issue of *The Illinois Georgist*, contact the Chicago Henry George School.

SACRAMENTO UPDATE

Bill Holden, author of *Sacramento: Excursions Into Its History and Natural World*, spoke about Sacramento's Two Sesquicentennials: 1989 and 1998 at a dinner sponsored by the Sacramento HGS extension on March 21st at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Sacramento. Extension Director Evelyn Friend also reports that a meeting with Common Ground was held with Bert Anderson speaking.

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS?

Recent studies by the National Coalition for the Homeless reveal the following rough portrait of the nation's homeless population, which is increasing at a rate of approximately 25% per year:

- About 40% are families with children
- About half are single men
- About 14% are single women
- About one quarter are employed
- About 30% are veterans

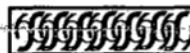
(from the Winter 1989 issue of *This Time*, published by Homeworkers Organized for More Employment, a land-trust group in Orland, Maine)

HOMELESSNESS

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Walt Rybeck's presentation offered a glimmer of hope. He focused on the Georgist reform that has the most immediate political viability: the two-rate, or graded property tax. Here is a way, he said, to meet three all-important challenges: to provide adequate revenue to meet the needs of the urban poor, and to provide incentives for the building of affordable housing, and to discourage land speculation. Mr. Rybeck pointed out the tremendous unused productive capacity of our cities. In the 106 largest cities in the United States, fully one-quarter of the land (excluding parks and publicly owned land) is currently idle. A tax on the value of that land would provide an incentive to put it to productive use. He cited studies on the effects of a proposed two-rate tax in Washington D.C., showing that under such a system, more than 80% of property owners would pay less tax than they do at present. Thus, Mr. Rybeck said, we have a reform that is not only effective, but one which can be sold.

It was generally agreed, however, that the problems of housing and homelessness go beyond technical fixes. "We are all squatters on the earth," Father Kuhn said, "And that is a fact that many people simply are not willing to face. This crisis is a symptom of a spiritual problem in our society." But Father Kuhn found encouragement in the fact that the movement for which Father Edward McGlynn risked his career in 1887 was still around, and addressing the same issues of social and economic justice.



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