

HOW DO WE EDUCATE?

Many followers of Henry George are disappointed with the slow progress his philosophy seems to be making. They wonder why so much time and effort is spent on the Henry George Schools attempting to educate the so-called common man, the housewife, "the little man". In their opinion, increasing efforts should be made along political lines, bringing pressure to bear on politicians to adopt some variation of site value taxation. This usually means a gradual shift, decreasing the taxation on improvements and increasing the taxation on the value of the land.

To begin with, the principal purpose of education in the view of many is to change public opinion from a tyrannical viewpoint to one predicated on free principles. It may be surprising to be told that public opinion tends to be tyrannical, but unfortunately such is the case. Public opinion tends to be biased one way or the other and usually with considerable vehemence, although not ordinarily displayed. That is why the practical politician tries to learn what most people are thinking and then rushes to the head of the crowd as their leader, all the time watching which way the crowd may be turning. In wartime the tyrannical nature of public opinion may come to the surface, sometimes in ludicrous ways, but only too often in a tragic manner. Because we were at war with Germany in WW I, no one dared to sell sauerkraut. Instead, they sold "liberty cabbage". Those of German extraction were viewed with suspicion and hardly dared voice their opinions on any subject. In WW II, the Japanese-Americans even though they were citizens were treated as enemies. In California, they were uprooted from their homes and farms, and placed in concentration camps for the duration of the war.

So, the sad fact is that public opinion tends to be tyrannical, and one of the main objects of all education is to try to inculcate tolerance and a belief in the principles of freedom. Since Georgism is the philosophy of freedom, par excellence, it is only natural that Georgists should educate and since memories are short, and new generations are always arising, education is a continuing process.

But it is not merely to develop public opinion favoring freedom that education is necessary. It has its practical elements. To the greatest extent possible, those who are considered opinion-makers, as editors, journalists, writers, educators, ministers, and civic-minded individuals are people Georgists should attempt to educate. But it is equally, if not

more important, to educate the so-called massman. He is the individual presumed to be too dull, too indifferent to do much of his own thinking, and too often willing to take the opinions of others. Whether or not it is true that the massman is quite as simple-minded and dull as the so-called intellectuals, whether of the left or right, believe, is a question. But he does have views however he may have obtained them. Even the opinion-molders have to take them into consideration when they attempt to change opinion. That is why editorials are often couched so carefully. Most newspapers were in favor of the landing of the needle-nosed Concorde SST at Kennedy Airport. However, public-opinion, particularly by people in the airport area were violently opposed. For this reason the editorials were models of the art of gently nugging people along a different path.

If there is such a person, as a massman, he may be considered to be the ground into which the seeds of change are to be planted. The opinion-molders are the seeds, but the ground must be well fertilized if the seeds

are to sprout. This fertilization is the education which the homemaker, the retired plumber, the young and the old receive. If the ground is barren, no matter how fine the seeds may be, the product, if there is even one, will be sad indeed.

But education on the part of the Georgists of Henry George's philosophy is particularly important for it may well be that site value taxation will gradually be adopted. The devastated areas in cities as the South Bronx in New York is bringing about a recognition that untaxing of improvements is a must if serious attempts to rebuild those areas are to be made. Increasingly variations of site value taxation are being urged by people with little or no knowledge of PROGRESS AND POVERTY. They're just using their common sense.

But therein lies the danger, and constitutes one of the most important reasons for increased educational efforts on the part of Georgists. The danger is that George's philosophy will be equated with site value taxation, as tho it were that and nothing more.

But this whole venture by George into the area of taxation was merely an expedient.

Wome, including this writer, believe it was a cardinal error. It tended to divert attention from his philosophy to tax reform. It probably would been better to have let others suggest site value taxation as an expedient to that George's philosophy was not so intimately tied up with it.

George was not interested in advocating a better means of raising taxes. He was interested in teaching people how to be free, how to bring about the condition where involuntary poverty would not exist. Possibly he built a philosophy better than even he realized for his philosophy is one which delimits the conditions necessary for each individual to be able freely to utilize his capacities to the fullest so as to make his life a memorable and enjoyable one.

So education is and must always be the principal means of spreading the Georgist philosophy.

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