

OPEN FORUM 2

UNITY! WHY WE NEED A WORD AND THE WORD I THINK WE NEED

John Loveless

THE KEY message and unique selling point of Georgism is that our ideas would bring about a better society than any currently in existence. We need therefore to alert people to the fact that our political philosophy is new in the sense that it has never been heard of or properly considered by the great majority of people, argues Dr. JOHN LOVELESS, Chairman of the Centre for Incentive Taxation.

THE BEST way to make people aware of the novelty of Georgism is to find a single word, not previously associated with a mainstream political philosophy, which describes the kind of society that would be created by the application of Georgist economics.

In my opinion, we should not look for a word which describes how we expect to achieve a better society. Georgists have been trying to do this for 100 years without success. Most people don't care how a car works; they just want to know if it is better or worse than another model. Similarly after Georgism is implemented the laws and policies which brought about its realisation would merely be considered as normal and sensible and other viewpoints would have to justify their ends and means.

We need a word which encapsulates the key benefits Georgism would bring to any society: unity, justice, prosperity, liberty and peace. Secondly we must choose a word that is readily marketable. It must be easy to say and resonate with peoples' deepest desires. Too many of the words that Georgists propose are hard to pronounce or confusing and they fail to produce a subconscious attraction in the hearers.

Unity is the deepest and most consistent of all human aspirations and our policies would deliver to all a much

more satisfying unity based on greater justice, freedom and prosperity for all. I suggest that Georgist policies would do more than any other political philosophy to unify societies that are currently deeply divided. However, the ideas of justice, liberty, prosperity, co-operation and enlightenment are possible sources of a suitable word.

ADVANTAGES OF THE WORD UNIONIST

I HAVE no doubt that the word which best describes what our policies would produce is UNITY. The movement would therefore promote UNIONISM and a supporter of the movement would be a UNIONIST. My reasons for thinking this are as follows:

1. If we look at the dominant political philosophies of our day we see that they are divided and polarised. We have left and right: Democrat and Republican; Socialist and Capitalist and openly partisan parties like the Labour party and the Conservative party. This is because both sides accept the same modern view of the science of political economy which is intellectually bankrupt and totally confused. The true science of political economy espoused and elucidated by Henry George and Adam Smith is utterly ignored and rubbished by 99% of present day economists.

The application of Georgist policies

and principles would end all this division and produce a strong central caucus of parties with a broadly harmonious view of the optimal society. This political unity would be reinforced by the unification of the science of political economy, at last, into a truly scientific discipline. Around this central broadly unified core would wax and wane small groupings of radicals of left, right, fascist, green and other persuasions.

2. The universal application of Georgism would help to unify, economically, every community in the world. It would eliminate the polarisation of urban areas into rich and poor quarters and it would end the migration of landless peasants to the urban ghettos. There would no longer be such division between localities and regions for every urban area and every region would have a broadly similar appeal.

3. It would unify societies as noted above in 1. and 2. and it would unify nations because trade would become more and more free. Economic freedom at home would encourage economic freedom abroad.

4. It would unify all people everywhere because, freed from the crushing reality of what is effectively slave labour, every person would regain their self-respect. The rich would deserve their riches and the

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poor, much reduced in numbers, would only have themselves to blame, except for the incapacitated, who would be comforted by a State well able to afford help. Indeed, a proper unity between people can only be established by the unity of free individuals.

5. Conflict would be dramatically reduced. Many historical and present day conflicts are essentially wars between left and right.

6. It is a fact that the idea of unity is the most fundamental of all the ideas of man. (See for example John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 153). Ultimately we are all, virtually always, striving for unity. We hate disunity, as may be witnessed in countless ways (e.g., the quest for the European Union is years ahead of our emotional readiness for it and European politicians are so captivated by the idea of 'European union' that they are still trying to build it by using the discredited bureaucratic methods of the centralised mega-state).

LOOKING at our search for a name for the international union of Georgists, we see if we look carefully at (a) the existing name of the international union, and (b) the list of 73 names suggested by the IU respondents in the recent survey, that the idea of unity is the recurrent theme in virtually every title suggested. We are unionists if we are anything, and this is the idea which, I believe, most Georgists are groping for when they suggest a title.

In the long list of suggested titles, the word international or world occurs 38 times; the word union or universal occurs 27 times; the word community, society, common, balance or equity and the ideas of royalties or rental collection for the community occur in virtually all of the titles; the words association, league, party or organisation etc are used 13 times.

Day by day the world is becoming more unified culturally. Western dress and the English language are becoming the norm as all forms of communication become easier. Mankind everywhere is in quest of unity on a planetary scale. Georgism would provide that unity in the all important economic and political dimensions.

And in politics, the word unity is one of the most commonly used words. Politicians everywhere claim that they are pursuing policies that will unite people.

DISADVANTAGES

THE majority of Georgists, who probably lean more towards capitalism than socialism, associate the word unionism with trade unionism. But trade unionism, even though it was based on ignorant and therefore imperfect ideas, was initially just and later phenomenally successful. It should be seen by Georgists and all people as a first attempt by earlier generations to satisfy this deep and ever present desire for social unity and justice.

What we are now offering to mankind is stirred by the same aspirations for justice and unity, but it is far superior to mere trade unionism. It is a vision of the ultimate or universal unity of mankind, imperfectly perceived by earlier no less noble and courageous individuals.

Unfortunately, the word unionist is associated (in Britain) with one of the partisan parties of Northern Ireland. However, this unionism is not really associated with a particular political philosophy beyond the maintenance of the union with the rest of the UK. Viewed on a global scale Northern Ireland is minute.

CONCLUSION

INDEPENDENCE for the individual, equality and a genuine unity are the three principal aspirations enshrined

in the constitution of the French republic in the words: *Egalité, Fraternité* and *Liberté*. But these words are merely facets of the idea of unity. Equality under the law unifies; individual freedom is the prerequisite of any unity between individuals and brotherhood is an expression of the universal unity of all people in virtue of their common human nature. Unity and unionism is therefore the deepest and most important aspiration that we have. Georgism would bring about economic and political unity. Therefore, I propose, Georgists should adopt the name unionist. Georgists are, in truth, all members of the "International Unionist Movement" whether we recognise it or not!



A SCOTTISH VIEW

Shirley-Anne Hardy, from Pitlochry, Scotland, fears that the word "union" would not serve the Georgist purpose in Scotland. She writes:

"As a Scot, any term denoting 'unionism' would be difficult of reception north of the border, where there is a growing swell of public opinion against the continuing union of Scotland with England — with which such a term would unfortunately readily find itself confounded."

Mrs. Hardy has proposed the term "Geonomists International" to denote the Georgist movement. She explains:

"This term states the principle of our reform, since it describes those who would live in accord with the law of the earth. Its link with the word Gaia reflects well our age of planetary consciousness. For the same reason, it would attract the interest of the Greens — the front-line carers and activists of our time. It, worthily embraces the first three letters of Henry George's name. And being of classical Greek derivation, it will not need translating into any other language."