

AGAINST "NEO-GEORGISM"

By STEPHEN MARTIN (Fordingbridge, Hants., England)

As I understand it, Henry George proposed that the economic rent of land be collected by means of taxation. Since then his followers have been known as Single Taxers. Prof. Robert V. Andelson has proposed "Neo-Georgism" (in his book, The Critics of Henry George, at a Georgist Conference in New York, and in an article in Land and Liberty), since "taxation" is unpopular. This is illogical.

Neo-Georgism would advocate "a general levy approximating objective equality, possibly a nongraduated percentage of incomes." Is this not the income tax? Indeed, like so many people today, Prof. Andelson seems imbued with state paternalism and concludes that "it is doubtful that legitimate public functions could today be wholly met from rent." This is a negation of the concept and vision of Henry George as set forth in Progress and Poverty and his other works.

State social security including education and health are a futile attempt to solve the problem of poverty. My concept of a Single Tax society is one in which poverty, human misery and war are extinct. Prof. Andelson will probably tell me, as did Milton Friedman, that "Henry George had a valid point that the tax on unimproved land values is the least harmful of taxes but you Single Taxers carry a good point too far!"

(Prof. Andelson writes: "Each academic quarter I conclude my course in Ethics and Society with a special three-hour lecture in which I present 'the gospel of George.' For the first time, I incorporated Edmund Vance Cooke's 'Uncivilized.' It made a big hit with the students and helped to get the message across in a lively and memorable way." Thus Robert Andelson's "Neo-Georgism" does not preclude his getting across the message in this vivid way. The poem "Uncivilized" satirizes via monkey-talk the notion that the gifts of nature may be monopolized by some to the exclusion of others. It was reproduced in GJ No. 22. - Ed.)