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THE SEMANTICS AND THE STRATEGY

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Are there significant ideological rifts between those who consider themselves followers of Henry George? I see these "rifts" as merely semantic and/or strategic.

"Single Taxers" believe all other taxes can be replaced in due course. Others, who may agree or have doubts merely consider the term counter-productive, inviting futile arguments and even ridicule from those opposed to it and those ignorant of Georgism. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating anyhow, so why provoke or speculate to our detriment?

Similarly, "rent" and its corollary, "abolish all taxation," provoke misunderstanding and ridicule respectively. Many Georgists now prefer "land value tax" or LVT because it is self-explanatory of the same Georgist proposal. Others, with hair-splitting logic maintain that land rent is not a tax. Whilst they have a case, academically, others see it as counter-productive.

As for education, regrettably it has failed for a century. The public are no more interested in theory of rent, rental fund, etc., than in the theory of any other tax or of its funding. They assume the money will be there, if they ever think of it at all except when they have to consciously pay it. I have never heard of any government mounting a public education campaign about the theory of any other tax before they levy it, so why should we continue, unsuccessfully?

Political action, demonstrating how indirect taxes are designed to and must be passed on in prices to consumers, thereby creating poverty, fewer sales and hence lower production and unemployment, starts from points of genuine public interest and may well prove successful, offering the alternative LVT which cannot be passed on or avoided, with 80% to 90% payable by the wealthiest 5%, none by the poorest, with production and employment encouraged, not penalised as before. (Ref. Senator Helm's statistics to Congress, 1960 FAO land census, 1979 U.K. Royal Commission on Wealth, etc.)

This sounds more like what people want to know than the dry theory we have been offering and they have been rejecting for a century.

However, none of this changes in the slightest the simple (ideological, if you like) aim of all Georgists/Single Taxers/Whatever, to collect public revenue from land values rather than from penalising production and consumption.