

Clyde Cameron



"It is better to pay a small amount of land tax (rent) on your block of land than to pay a large amount in income tax and indirect taxation."

Clyde Cameron AM, former Labor MP

Born at Murray Bridge in South Australia in 1913 and raised by a hard working father and a well-read mother in the South Australian outback, Hon Clyde Cameron grew up in a household of books, mostly belonging to his mother, Adelaide. In his biography of Clyde Cameron, "A Life on the Left", Bill Guy writes that she was the most powerful influence on his life, inspiring his interest in politics and teaching him that political thought must be backed by action. Clyde Cameron wrote of his mother: "...the writer who came nearest to her own inclinations was Henry George . . . Every mealtime she used to talk with us about the state of society explaining that it did not have to be the way it was...It was her influence that caused me to become the secretary of the Henry George League in Gawler". (Connell, Confessions of Clyde Cameron pp 5-6)

He left school at age 14 and became a fruit picker but at 15 years entered the shearing shed and became a member and organiser of the Australian Workers' Union. Also at age 15, he became a life-long advocate of Henry George's land theories, which also influenced his policies as Federal Minister for Labor in the Whitlam Government from 1972-1974, Minister for Labour and Immigration (1974-75), and Minister for Science and Consumer Affairs (1975).

Clyde has had a long and distinguished career with the Australian Labor Party, serving in the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party Shadow Cabinet from 1953-72. In 1976 he was the Parliamentary Delegate to the UN General Assembly. He was MHR for Hindmarsh in South Australia from 1949 to 1980, and since his retirement from Federal Parliament Clyde has been active in documenting Australian political history by creating a library, which is held in the National Library in Canberra and State Libraries. He has been writing letters, filing, binding, and fighting to produce the Collected Letters: Sent and Received since retiring from parliamentary life in 1984.

At 89 years, he remains a great storyteller and is astute in the details of events. He uses his humour and debating skills to confound his opponents and create inspiration, mirth and appreciation in his friends. He has also remained responsive and inspirational to people who are interested and committed to an equitable and sustainable political economy. Other issues have also stayed within his critical sight. He comments regularly on multi-national tax evasion, openness of government and business, as well as the role of large banks. He was awarded the Order of Australia in 1982.

A famous letter from Clyde Cameron regarding land revenue was to Hon Frank Crean when he was the Treasurer. Mr Cameron had already developed a healthy dislike for Treasury in 1973 over wage policy, because Treasury wanted the Labor Government to continue with the same hard line against wage rises as the previous Liberal-Country Party Government:

"The reintroduction of a Federal tax upon unimproved land for non-rural properties in excess of 100 thousand dollars unimproved land value, and a special tax upon any taxpayer owning more than his place of residence and one vacant block. As well as yielding several hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, this tax would have the even greater advantage of easing pressure on resources caused by the rapacity of land speculators. It would reduce land values by taxing vacant building allotments and would be much more equitable than seeking to reduce demand inflation by such measures as, say, indirect taxation upon consumer goods and household appliances. Rising land prices have a greater inroad into the incomes of the ordinary wage earner than any other single factor. It not only directly affects the wage earner who is seeking to build a new home, but it directly affects the price of homes already built... You will recall that when the Menzies Government abolished the Federal Land Tax, the Labor Opposition then stated, quite categorically, that a Labor Government would reintroduce the tax..."

Check more of Clyde Cameron's outstanding work on [our website via his tag](#).

References:

Papers of Clyde Robert Cameron, Nat. Library of Australia

[Australian Trade Union Archives](#)



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