

Developing a Dynamic Georgist Movement: A Proposal

by Marion Sapiro

If the Georgist Movement is to become an effective force for social change, Georgists must create a unified, focused and coordinated assembly of the various entities which currently exist — and create an organizational structure which will withstand crushing stress.

Our various organizations came into existence at different times, in response to different conditions. But the founders could not envision the encompassing organizational structure essential to building an effective movement in the twenty-first century.

The required components are these:

1. A Theoretical and Applied Research Organization. We need a cadre of qualified professional economists to assemble the body of evidence and data needed to establish the efficacy and practicality of George's proposals. These professionals must be paid to do this work. We cannot depend on big-hearted volunteer efforts. Presently, applications for research grants are presented to the Schalkenbach Foundation and the Henry George School. Some are funded; but they bear little relationship to one another, few quality control parameters exist, and there is little follow-through to utilize the products. Critical and fundamental data needs are going unanswered. We need accurate data on the total real value of land and natural resources. Without this, we can't build credibility for George's proposals. Various projects of The Center for the Study of Economics, The American Institute of Economic Research, The Schalkenbach Foundation, The Henry George School and even The Lincoln Institute could be integrated here.

2. An Education Organization—The Henry George Schools. In addition to offering courses and symposiums in a traditional manner, we need to make these available through television and the Internet. We need to develop educational products, including games such as *Sim City*, using new communications technology. We need to make our products and services available to educators on every level. Key instructional staff should be professional (not lay) educators, well versed in educational product development and the use of the new media as well as traditional classroom instruction. The services of lay educators and volunteers could certainly be integrated here, but not as the principal operatives.

3. Political/Lobbying/Popular Outreach Organization. The various Georgist groups oriented toward activism could merge their functions and operations and add a legal challenge function, as well. They could

become a democratically governed open membership organization, designed for numerous chapters and thousands of members. Local chapters and affiliate organizations could work on local issues as well as contributing toward the projects of the national organization. The several publications of each of these organizations could be combined into a single top caliber publication.

4. A Publishing Organization. The Schalkenbach Foundation — governed by publication professionals, social science scholars and business/management professionals — would fulfill the publishing requirements of the three primary organizations. It would publish — through the Internet as well as the printing press — material of top quality that could actually generate revenue for the Foundation. It would develop new writers and publications focused on contemporary issues. It would reprint Henry George's works and related classics, using top quality publication standards and processes. It would publish scholarly and popular works and a popular magazine. It would archive and maintain an online database of articles, books, and publications.

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5. A Coordinating body: the Council of Georgist Organizations. This body, composed of management representatives of the major organizations, would coordinate the plans, programs & projects of these organizations, develop a unified strategy to attain the goals of the Georgist Movement, and provide professionally generated support services toward that end, including public relations and fundraising.

I propose further that each of the organizations described above adopt a common root name. Perhaps, if Alanna Hartzok would cede the title she uses for her organization, it could be "Earthrights". The organizations above would then be renamed: The Earthrights Research Association, The Earthrights School of Social Science, The Earthrights Political League and The Earthrights Publishing Foundation. This would communicate our common purpose and mission in an appealing, contemporary and compelling manner.

This "radical" change and restructuring would require that each of our key organizations engage in intensive strategic planning and information exchange starting now, the first year of the new millennium. We can engage in elucidating discussion; we can adapt, adjust, renovate, redesign and build our movement anew. We need to become entrepreneurial builders of a viable society based on principles of justice and equity. We need to develop the vision and courage and will to make this happen. GJ