



Tribute to a Noble Thinker

By J. SOLER-CORRALES (translated by J. Anglada-Prior).

ON January 28, 1962, there died in Pamplona the illustrious thinker Mr. Julio Senador-Gomez, one of the most brilliant Spanish Georgeists.

Born at Cervillego de la Cruz (Valladolid) on September 26, 1872 he studied law at Valladolid University, graduating when 23 years old. Thereafter he practised in some of the most modest notary offices in Spain. During this time he came to understand and to share in the sorrows of his fellow countrymen. A love for them and a profound economic and social knowledge led him to write thousands of articles in Spanish and Latin-American journals, many of which were translated into other languages. He also wrote a number of books, all of them filled with constructive ideas. Among his more prominent works are:— *The Free Land* (Valladolid, 1918); *The Song of the Duero* (Madrid, 1919); *The Castilian City* (Barcelona, 1919); *The Rights of Man and those of Hunger* (Valladolid, 1928); *At the Common-People's Service* (Madrid, 1930); and *The Taxation and the Poor* (Valencia, 1931).

Through these books one observes the man imbued with a great love for Spain and devoted to the pursuit of the common good. His style is lucid with frequent use of rhetorical images—qualities especially useful in discussing the social sciences which call so much for human feeling.

An indefatigable fighter against arbitrary tax systems, he attacked governments everywhere because although operating under different political regimes, all made the same economic errors in raising revenue. From his abundant writings we select these paragraphs.

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"Tribute (from the Latin word *tribuo*, I give) is that part of wealth which the vanquished delivers to the victor for permission to continue living and in sign of submission to his sovereignty. Sovereignty is not the exercise of the supreme power for the realisation of justice, as we are led to believe, but the right to demand payment of tributes with justice or without it; and, of course, for the most part without it."

"Sovereignty has never belonged to the Nation, but it belongs to the oligarchic groups which as victors in the ancient tribal fight, or in the modern social fight, have secured by force the right to demand the payment of tributes. These groups are four: the bureaucracy, owners of the State; the aristocracy, owners of the land; the plutocracy, owners of monopolies; and the "octopuscracy", exploiters of the customs tariff. All who do not belong to one or more of these groups are democrats in the strict

sense of the word. We have nothing; and we pay. They have all things; and they collect. This is called in political language "the social order" which all governments try to preserve untouched.

"By a uniform system of taxes, which under other names were the same as those of the most barbarous times, the governments lead the nations to ruin, and furthermore, they do not cease to establish new tributary charges. They claim to have balanced the budget when they succeed in collecting a larger portion of the people's labour, but because what the state wins is lost in reality by the nation, there is no real surplus. The strength and wealth of a country are only increased when each labourer receives for his efforts the largest profit possible, and not when the tentacles of bureaucracy are multiplied, strengthened and extended. This is what happens when one complicates the tax-collecting system, because nine-tenths of bureaucracy is devoted only to collection of tributes. The people, by ignorance and by routine, are accustomed to pay without discussion.

"Under the tributary system, which is crucifying the world, liberty cannot be sustained, nor life travel towards perfection; an unclean fight destroys the highest powers of mind and suffocates the noble feelings of human nature. Every modern tax makes life harder for all but is much more harsh to the poorer man. There are many indirect taxes. If a new tax is invented in any country it is soon copied by the other countries.

"Taxation punishes him who crops two ears of wheat where before grew only one, while some exemptions give a reward to the owner of a vacant plot for the gain he will obtain by withholding it from use — thus preventing the building of houses and raising their cost.

"There is a tax on all we eat, bear or wear; all we like to see, to hear, to touch, to smell, to taste or to know; all that comes from the land or under the ground; all that proceeds from the air or the sea; from abroad or inland. There are taxes on raw materials and the manufactured products; on the produce of labour and those of theft; on learning, skill, thrift, thought and fruitfulness; on the sweetmeat for the child and the medicine for a sick man; on the gown of the judge and the coat of the convict; on all virtues and all vices; on love and welfare; birth and death. There is a tax on asking for help in a court of justice; for making a plan of a house; for healing a wound;

for learning; for playing; for attending the theatre; for tilling the ground; for water to wash in and for the soap to launder a shirt.

"Not to be able to win his bread without fear of punishment; not to import commodities, or to manufacture, or to sell them; nor to eat; to print; to contract; to defend himself in court; to heal himself; to travel; to protest; to learn; to be married; to die, without paying any money — what is this but the permanent violation of all natural rights? What is it but a despotism more ignominious than ancient slavery? What liberty is there possible for him who has no money?

"Nothing essential has changed in the moral life of man. Not so much as one reparation to justice has been attained in two thousand years. The slave who became bondsman is now a hand-to-mouth wage earner. The problems which frighten contemporary society are the same as those which destroyed ancient Rome: irresponsible tyranny at the top and incorrigible oppression at the bottom; bare subsistence



E. P. MIDDLETON WRITES

Letter from America

THE pressure of land values is everywhere visible, from New York to San Francisco. All the words and phrases with which you are familiar in Britain are banded about in the U.S. press and at public meetings, local government sessions, et al., "Urban Renewal" and "Slum Clearance" being prominent among those in common use. In New York — population 8 million, assessed value of real estate \$22 billion — where a measure (far too small of course) of land values is taken in municipal taxes, there are still great areas of vice-infested slums and "blighted areas," and others developing with the influx of Puerto Rican and other communities. Despite a police force (all armed) of 40,000, it is still possible to read a letter to the *New York Times*, as I did while there, from a near-demented mother afraid to send her child to school in the West Side district. Manhattan Island itself — population 2 million, assessed value \$8 billion is fast becoming a city of troglodytes. Already there can be scarcely a soul left there who knows anything about cultivating a garden, except the experts in the Parks Department. Those who still cling to the dream of a house and garden spend half their days commuting from miles outside the city.

In every city we visited the pressure had operated to cut the size of home allotments to the barest minimum — no minimum standards appear to be laid down by the local authorities — so that it is rare (except in such salubrious suburbs as Beverley Hills in Hollywood, or the outer areas of Philadelphia, Washington and Chicago,

and lack of housing; political and social influence of the rich; demoralisation and subordination of the electoral body; oscillation of nations between republic and monarchy without the rooting of either one of them in the popular conscience.

"Tributary confiscation of the products of labour brings about general uneasiness, disgust, sadness. There is insurrection of the oppressed; requisition of produce; prohibition of exports; the fixing of prices; persecution of the producer of food, but not of the appropriators of land where food is produced. There must be distribution of State help because labour is denied access to land; frauds at the expense of general penury; the paralysing of useful activities for fear of fines, and depreciation of wages and of the currency by falsification of coinage.

"There is as much misery in industrial circles as in rural areas and this situation will remain as long as the ownership of natural resources by a minority condemns the remainder to utter dependence and persistent poverty."

for example), to see a house with more than a few feet between it and its neighbours, plus a few feet of lawn in front and enough room at the back to park the inevitable car. I have a clipping before me from the *Los Angeles Times*, of September 3, on the subject of "Resistance to Urban Renewal" in Los Angeles which begins with these words: "It may take years and millions of words before the first trace of blight vanishes from an urban renewal project area" and goes on to discuss the plight of those owners and tenants who object to the term "blighted" being applied to their district and who fight any redevelopment scheme. No one raises the query "Why?" "What causes this blight?" The weight of opinion is on the side of the developers. "Tear down" is the most active phrase in American building and planning circles, and the evidence is everywhere of the besetting interest in keeping profit ratios in line with the ever-rising land values. "I see the centre of the city dying" says one of the people interviewed by the writer, "and I realise that this redevelopment project is the only way to keep it from going completely under." On the other hand, California is the "boom state" of the U.S. with population streaming in from all over the continent at a five-figure rate every month. There's no danger to Californian land values or to the fortunes being made from them.

Two things of importance and encouragement to Georgeists occurred during my visit; one was the publicity given to the Henry George School's conference in Pittsburgh on that city's "Graded Tax Plan" by the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* — streamer headlines and a four-column picture of delegates. The other was the publication of the main argument of the *House & Home* supplement on land prices, etc., in *Reader's Digest* for July 1962 — and reprinted as a leaflet by them.