

Progress

Public finance from annual site values

Proportional representation for elections

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AN OPINION: WHAT IS OUR MESSAGE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY?

Behind the problems of social life lies the problem of individual life. — Henry George

Imagine all the people sharing all the world. — John Lennon

What is our message? How do we get it across? The principles underlying Henry George's message have not changed: Abolish all taxation save that upon land values. But . . . conditions in the world have changed. Did not Albert Einstein say that the introduction of the atom bomb changed everything except our way of thinking?

Wealth is still produced by labour exerting itself upon land using some wealth as capital . . . that has not changed. But . . . scientists now know that land, the earth, is much more like an organism, of which we are a part. The Gaia-hypothesis holds that Earth is much more than "raw materials" and "natural resources" to be exploited by humanity. It is ancient wisdom that the modern industrial world forgot: Earth is our mother, and fellow species our brothers and sisters. Seems to me our message must address this paradigm shift if we are to survive into the 21st century: the shift towards being interconnected, instead of being over and against, all that lives.

For centuries our "way of thinking" told us we had a mandate from The Man Upstairs (created by men in their own image) to increase, multiply, fill, and subdue the earth — and to smite other tribes, cultures, peoples and species that got in our way. Now we wait as more and more nations, some of whom imagine a similar mandate from their "Man Upstairs", join (get?) the nuclear club.

Having once disposed of nature, the earth, as something "other" to be conquered and exploited, it is but a short step to regard fellow human beings as "other" — also to be conquered and exploited. This "way of thinking" holds that Man (i.e., the white males of the human species) was given dominion over the earth and all therein; and that among Man, as within nature, only the strongest survive. Human history is a record of the consequences of this disastrous misperception: the caste system, the burning of witches and heretics, the slaughter of native peoples in the Americas and Africa, genocide against the Jews, atom bombs exploded in hundreds of "tests" to prove something to someone, the mindless destruction of animal and plant species, the glorification of male/male violence, the drive to make "other people" "just like us" — or dead, the riot police sent in to evict squatters from public parks and empty buildings.

Hey! What about the Single Tax? Yes, indeed! And is not the Single Tax the practice of justice? Is not justice the idea that no one should profit at the expense of an "other"? George's *Progress and Poverty* showed how co-operation benefits human survival just as Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* showed how this is also true for the other species in nature. "Social Darwinism" was shown to be a "way of thinking" that justified the established order.

A synthesis of George's Single Tax

and what is called 'deep ecology' offers a way out for our brutalized world, demonstrating how freedom, justice and compassion are not incompatible, but in fact depend upon each other. Georgists understand that freedom requires equal access to the use of the earth. Ecologists understand that survival of humanity depends upon giving room for other species to survive as well. In the past, western culture has regarded concern for other species as a luxury. Now we know, as our tribal ancestors knew: We are, with all other beings, both the weavers and the web of life, and what we do to the web we do to ourselves. Deep ecology, like Taoism, Buddhism, and Native American traditions, holds that we are not self-existent entities but that we are with all things living in a dynamic interdependence or "interbeing".

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It is time to restore harmony and balance to the human community; and, further, to restore balance to the ecological community upon which we depend for our welfare. Does not the Single Tax prevent the cancer-like expansion of suburbia into the wilderness, in its flight from the rotten urban core? Restore the core to health, and the wilderness will thrive.

If we are saying, with George, we must make land common property, then we not only have a responsibility to socialize the rent of "domesticated" land for the benefit of the human community, but also to hold in trust the wild lands for the benefit of the larger community of all beings, all species, human and non-human. If we can extend our Single Tax message to embrace a Single Earth message, we may find the key to how we can get our message across — because we will be responding to the crisis of our time.

Even now, as the politics of the much-vaunted/much-dreaded "one world" becomes reality; as the "free market" triumphs on the frontiers of Eastern Europe while it rots in the urban and rural heartland of America . . . we can become the goddess of liberty who lifts her lamp again to lead the world toward a new vision: A transformed and sustainable world political economy that "liberates production from taxation, the earth from monopoly, and humanity from poverty" — a "Geocracy" that offers justice to humanity, compassion to our mother earth and all her offspring, and freedom to create not only material abundance, but . . . a new way of thinking about "self" that is not defined or imagined as at the expense of the "other".

Mark A. Sullivan,
U.S. "Henry George Newsletter",
June-Aug. 1990.