

HENRY GEORGE NEWS

"What constitutes the rightful basis of property? What is it that enables a man to justly say of a thing, 'It is mine'? From what springs the sentiment which acknowledges his exclusive right as against all the world? Is it not primarily, the right of a man to himself, to the use of his own powers, to the enjoyment of the fruits of his own exertions?"

Published by the Henry George School of Social Science

January, 1979

ALVORD AND HARRIET

by Will Thorne

Ever hear of Henry George ?

Harriet D.M. Wendell has and that's why the 65-year-old Santa Monica apartment owner is paying \$592.64 more in property taxes than she was billed for.

Mrs. Wendell, who could have saved \$796 under Proposition 13, is a follower of the economic principles of George, a 19th-century economist who believed land — and only land — should be taxed.

As such, she is anti-Prop. 13, the only property-owning taxpayer known to have made public such views since the tax-limiting state constitutional amendment romped to electoral victory June 6.

"I am paying more property tax than I have been billed because Prop. 13 has not allowed enough revenue for police and fire protection," she wrote to the Los Angeles County Tax Collector H.B. Alvord when mailing in her tax bill.

She also cited the need for more money for "public libraries, care of the mentally ill, smaller classes in public schools" and added she believes Prop. 13 "increases the dangerous inflation of land prices and helps land speculators."

Mrs. Wendell's letter proved to be something of a puzzler for

Alvord, who is not used to receiving \$592 overpayments — not, anyway, by the payer's intent.

"Normally, we would send something like this back and ask for another check for the correct amount," he said.

But after thinking it over a while, Alvord decided to write Mrs. Wendell a letter to be positive she hadn't made a mistake or changed her mind. He also decided to refer the matter to the Board of Supervisors.

"The intent is certainly there to give the county a gift, or so it would appear," he said. "I don't think I have the power to (accept or) reject a gift to the county."

Alvord said he would also check with the Board of Supervisors to see if any of its members has a specific project on which he would like to see the money used. If not, it would go into the county's general fund.

Mrs. Wendell decided to make the gift to the county after reading George's theories on economics.

"You've never heard of Henry George!?" she exclaimed. "He was a great economist and the 100th anniversary of his great book, 'Progress and Poverty' is coming up this year."

As she explained in her letter to Alvord, she said George's main principle was single taxation of a single possession — land.

"Taxing buildings discourages

Harriet Wendell not only reached these pages from the Santa Monica Outlook ; she also was featured on the front page of the Los Angeles Herald-examiner, was interviewed for NBC News and was called by a Washington DC radio show.

the construction of housing, which increases rents and unemployment," she wrote. "Not taxing land enough causes inflated land prices, one of the major causes of inflation."

"When I owned this lot and had two little old houses on it, I was assessed a low tax. But when I built a fine apartment house on my lot, my taxes went way up."

"It looks as if the government does not want me to supply the community with more excellent housing, because when we build good buildings, they raise our taxes."

Mrs. Wendell, who owns and manages four units on Harvard Street, said she belongs to a statewide organization of the followers of Henry George, which is called LEAF (Land Equality And Freedom). It is headquartered in San Diego.

She first got interested about five years ago when the group held one of its Henry George School classes at the YMCA in Santa Monica. She attended, she liked it, she joined.

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**Will Thorne is a Staff Writer
with the Santa Monica Outlook.**

The target is happiness!

Aristotle, the noted Macedonian philosopher, said "...happiness, above all else, we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else." In other words, in the last analysis, all of us seek to be happy.

Yet, what makes one person happy, may make another miserable. Our differing ideas as to what will give us the greatest pleasure means each of us must have the maximum possible degree of freedom to pursue our individual goals.

But the necessity for freedom rests on other equally important criteria. Each individual possesses unique talents. Just as no two individuals' fingerprints are the same, neither is the complex of abilities of any two people the same. To develop one's capacities, one must have the freedom to perfect them. He who has a broken leg, or is in jail, has his freedom of action so restricted that he cannot hope to be as happy as if he were not confronted with such impediments.

While it can never be proved, it appears that you tend to be happiest when you use those talents which you consider to be your best. If your artistic abilities are such as to make your heart bound with delight at the thought of an artistic career — but poverty forces you to become a bookkeeper — your life may be contented, but it is not likely to be filled with happiness.

To Georgists, it may seem that an abstraction, such as happiness, while interesting, is not particularly germane to the problems of society — especially the problem of involuntary poverty. But, after all, is not the eradication of such poverty merely a means to attain that end of all ends — happiness?

And is not the essence of Georgist philosophy the implementation of freedom so the individual can be happy?

And to be truly free, one must have not only those freedoms which all of us generally assume are basic — freedoms of speech, press and assembly — but economic freedom. Without liberty to make a decent living, history sadly proves that most people willingly give up their basic freedoms to some dictator who promises them the "crust of bread" they need.

While not generally perceived by most people, fundamental economic freedom implies that freedom of access to the land exists on equal terms for all. George proved that, in effect, this means the land must be divided on a just basis among the equal claimants to it. In a civilized society, this is accomplished by having the economic rent collected by the community.

Because the productivity of land varies, the rent from place to place is different. Those with the

by OSCAR JOHANNSSEN

greatest abilities are able to pay the highest rent, so they will obtain the best land. Land represents opportunity, and superior opportunities require top notch talents for maximum performance. In employing their capacities to such exacting challenges, those gifted people capable of handling them will probably be happiest. But their efforts will also make others happy. When Beverly Sills sings, those unable even to hum a tune, cannot help but be thrilled.

And those graced with lesser abilities cannot afford the higher rents. This limits them to opportunities commensurate with their capacity. As they will be applying their energies in areas within their competence, they may well be as happy, or even happier, than those with superior ability, for they will not be frustrated trying to do what for them is impossible. A bush league player would suffer agonies of frustration in the big leagues.

So, although George's professed aim was the eradication of involuntary poverty, he builded better than probably he realized. He gave us a philosophy which, when implemented, would not only abolish destitution, but also provide the freedom necessary for each individual to develop those talents which would make him happiest.

What goal is greater than this?

ODDS 'N ENDS

You've noticed we didn't publish in December. The HGN is now published every month except December and August. We have lot's of space for you to fill, so let's have your news as soon as you make it. The HGN is our 'house' publication, where we can let our hair down and talk. Send us your clippings, letters, and articles so we can enjoy them too! Write: **The Editor Henry George News Box 655 Tujunga CA 91042. #**

The **Federal** Bureaucracy has swollen by only a third since 1950 (to almost 3 million). BUT, the number of people who are paid by the feds has gone up to somewhere between three and four million. Health, Education & Welfare, bless it's great big heart, is a good example. It struggles to spend it's billions on good deeds with only some 144,000 regulars. However, the 'irregulars' — paid through other organizations — total

980,000. So, when the muster roll is called for HEW, more than 1 million chiefs will rise.

Chiefs? Of course, for while Washington salaries are savagely tied to Carter's guidelines (?) the chiefs outnumber the Indians. There are now more GS -18s (salary \$47,500) than GS - 1s (salary \$6,561). **#**

Don't worry about what you do. Just think how it looks to others. An AP dispatch reported that the Kenyan government had 'placed heavy new restrictions on imports and clamped down on overseas travel'. Businessmen in Kenya 'were worried' because they thought the new policy would 'harm Kenya's image as a liberal trading country'. Now we know what Hitler's trouble was: his image was bad! **#**