

Denmark: Land, Politics and Single Tax Sentiment

By LOUIS WASSERMAN

I

DURING THE MONTH of October, 1962, the Gallup Market Analysis Institute of Copenhagen conducted a survey to determine what proportion of the Danish population would support a proposal to tax the full rental value of the land—in other words, would approve the scheme advanced by Henry George to recapture the entire yield of ground rent for public purposes. The results of that survey—quite probably the first to be attempted on a national basis—will be presented below, augmented by such comments as will serve to place the matter in its political context.

If so daring a question were to be put, say, to the American people, the principal finding might well be that of puzzlement—the home of Henry George seems to be the least concerned with the issues he raised.

But it is only fair to expect more of Denmark: that little land has the advantage of being less wealthy, more crowded and of no consequence internationally, hence her people can better afford to take an interest in the problems at hand. The Danes have consequently acquired the reputation of being acutely land-tax-conscious.

The full single tax itself has been traced to a period of Enlightenment during the thirteenth century, and so tenaciously did the land-tax tradition persist that not until some sixty years ago was its revenue surpassed by newer and more versatile sources. Even at present, under a tax system as widely proliferated as elsewhere, the Danes maintain an arsenal of legislation designed, *inter alia*, to curb land speculation, discourage absentee ownership, recapture increased increments, lease rather than sell public holdings, exempt improvements by shifting the tax to land, and so on—all with respectable, if not conspicuous, success. The Danish government, moreover, can claim the credit of being the first to establish a Parliamentary Commission with authority to study the problems which would arise in effecting the transition to a full-land-tax program.¹

¹ The commission, appointed in 1948 at the insistence of the Justice Party, was composed of twenty-four members, including technical advisors as well as representatives of the several Parliamentary parties. It concluded its work in 1954, issuing a final report in which a majority of the members recommended adoption of a full-land-tax program, incorporating the text of a bill to that effect. The Report is published (in Danish only) under the title *Betænkning vedrørende Fuld Grundskyld* (Considerations Relating to Full Land Tax), Betænkning No. 110, October 13, 1954, 306 pp. Authorized by the Finance Minister. The recommended bill, however, died of political inertia.

But the most striking feature of the Danish condition is the presence in the country of a political movement, the *Danmarks Retsforbund* (Justice Party), which is consciously founded on Georgist principles and dedicated to achieving land-value taxation and free trade by Parliamentary means. The party arose from the chrysalis of the Henry George Society (founded much earlier); it launched its first bid for votes in 1924, elected its first candidates two years later, and thenceforth maintained an unbroken representation in Parliament of from two to twelve members until the election of 1960.

The apex of Justice Party success was reached in May, 1957, when it was awarded three ministerial posts in a "triangular" coalition government with the Social Democratic and Radical parties. The administration which followed was fortunate enough to preside over one of the most prosperous periods of recent Danish history. But such are the exigencies of politics that this heady experience was capped by a crushing defeat for Justice Party candidates in the ensuing election, that of November, 1960. The party's aggregate vote was then cut to less than half its previous total, and it was forced to surrender its nine seats in Parliament.²

So decisive a verdict against the land-tax party must surely raise the question: Of what value is an opinion survey on an issue which was recently decided at the polls? The questioner will find an answer in the latter part of this paper, but for the moment it may suffice to say that the land tax itself was not a relevant issue in the 1960 election, having been pushed out of focus by more contentious matters. The consequence was that the Justice Party, though ostensibly bearing the banner of full land taxation, was repudiated at the polls for quite different reasons. Not the least virtue of the Gallup survey is that it helps to illumine the causes of that defeat.

II

THE GALLUP INQUIRY³ was conducted by its corps of interviewers in 170 electoral districts of the country, roughly one-third of which lie in the metropolitan area of Copenhagen. The representative sample consisted

² The Justice Party's total vote in 1960 was 52,230, down 57 per cent from the previous figure of 122,759. An aggregate of 60,000 votes in 1960 would have secured for it four Parliamentary seats under the proportional representation system which obtains in Denmark.

³ The full report of the survey is issued under the title *Tolv Procent Ønsker Fuld Grundskyld* (Twelve Per Cent Want Full Land Tax), Ugens Gallup, Artikel nr. 45, November 17, 1962; copyright by Gallup Markedanalyse A/S (Copenhagen). The permission of the Gallup Institute to use its findings is hereby gratefully acknowledged; and to this formal acknowledgment is added the personal appreciation of the writer to Mr. Asger Schultz, director of the Institute, for his patient assistance in translating and interpreting the findings of the survey.

of just under 2,000 men and women, each of whom was identified first as to income level, occupation and political affiliation, then asked to respond to the following three questions:

1. "If a proposal were introduced in this country to take the full value of the land by taxation, would you be for or against this proposal?"

2. "Why are you for (or against) this proposal?" (Asked of all who declared themselves either for or against.)

3. "If such a tax on the full value of land were put into effect, do you think the public should pay compensation to the landowners?" (Asked of all respondents, regardless of previous answers.)

The principal question—whether one would favor or oppose the proposal—produced the following results:

Would favor	12 per cent
Would oppose	17 per cent
Don't know	71 per cent

There is an unexpected element in each of these figures. Twelve per cent of the population is, even in absolute terms, not an inconsiderable number to approve so far-reaching a reform. But when this figure is set alongside no more than 17 per cent who are opposed, we emerge with the conclusion that about two in five of the Danish population are willing to support a program of full-land-value taxation.

Were those who answered affirmatively fully aware of the meaning and implications of the proposal? The likelihood is that they were. The Danish term used in the question was *fuld grundskyld*, translated literally as "full ground tax." To this literal meaning the Georgists have managed to attach, through some seventy years of propaganda, their particular denotation of a tax which would reclaim the full rental yield of land—and it is with this purport that the term has passed into popular usage.

There is more reason for puzzlement in the fact that 71 per cent of those interviewed were too undecided, or perhaps too uninformed, to express a choice. The director of the Gallup Institute could recall no instance of an opinion survey which produced a higher "don't know" ratio than this. The idea of a full land tax is admittedly too novel or too formidable a matter to elicit a snap judgment by the uninitiated. But *fuld grundskyld* has been bruited up and down the land by Justice Party speakers in more than a dozen Parliamentary elections, and just as heartily disparaged on the platform and in print by their opponents. One can only wonder that so many should have remained so impervious for so long to such a contentious issue.

The breakdown of answers to the first question, with respect to income, occupation and political party, provides some suggestive clues to the major areas of support for and opposition to the land tax and, by extension, the Justice Party. The tabulations disclosed the following:

Income (Annual)	For (per cent)	Against (per cent)	Don't Know (per cent)	Total (per cent)
Under 12,000 kroner ⁴	11	11	78	100
12,000-17,999 kr.	13	17	70	100
18,000-25,999 kr.	13	22	65	100
26,000 kr. and over	7	25	68	100

Occupation	For (per cent)	Against (per cent)	Don't Know (per cent)	Total (per cent)
Workers, unskilled	13	7	80	100
Workers, skilled	18	10	72	100
Clerks & office workers	14	14	72	100
Managers & functionaries	11	27	62	100
Farmers	10	30	60	100
Retailers, enterprisers	10	17	73	100
Pensioners	9	14	77	100
Not employed	2	25	73	100

Political Affiliation ⁵	For (per cent)	Against (per cent)	Don't Know (per cent)	Total (per cent)	Seats in Parliament
Socialist People's Party	22	2	76	100	11
Social Democrats	16	11	73	100	76
Radical Liberals	13	26	61	100	11
Venstre	11	32	57	100	38
Conservatives	13	37	50	100	32
Independent Liberals	17	28	55	100	6
Justice Party	91	0	9	100	0

The pattern of response under "income" shows an undisturbed correlation: as income level increases there is a sympathetic increase of the proportion opposed to the full land tax; the Gallup report observes here that a direct correlation has been consistently found between income levels and amount of property possession. Only those earning less than 12,000 kroner a year (approximately \$1,750) show as large a number in favor of the proposal as against it—though this group, it may be noted, constitutes a majority of the total income earners of the country.

The income data are confirmed, with but minor discrepancies, by an allied correlation in the occupational pattern. Wage workers, skilled and

⁴ The Danish krone (crown) is exchangeable at 6.9 to the American dollar, thus equal to about 14½ cents. Its relative purchasing power is perhaps 25 per cent higher than this.

⁵ Except for the Justice Party—about which more later—the Danish political parties have been listed for this purpose in conformance with a Left to Right political spectrum. The number of their seats in the present Parliament has been added to show their relative electoral strength. (The present government, in office since November, 1960, consists of a coalition of Social Democrats and Radical Liberals.)

unskilled (including farm laborers), give their support to the proposal almost two to one, while the opposition appears most prominently among the groups of landowning farmers,⁶ industrial executives and business enterprisers. The "not employed" category, it should be explained, refers to those whose financial means make them immune to employment, rather than to those actually seeking employment; Denmark had no appreciable unemployment at the time of the survey. The predominantly unfavorable attitude of the pensioners—who would normally be expected to reflect the sentiment of a low-income group—may be due to their association of the land tax with the Justice Party, for many years a vigorous critic of "welfare state" measures.

As indicated in the table on political affiliations, except for the Justice Party voters themselves, the full-land-tax proposal gets majority support from only the two parties of the political Left, the Socialist People's Party and the Social Democrats. Both of these, as it happens, incorporate provisions in their official programs for the full recapture of land values. But the Social Democrats—largest party in the country—regard the issue as purely collateral to their broader economic and social aims; the party's leaders are willing to tax all forms of profit at steeply progressive rates, but (unlike the Georgists) see no essential difference between unearned income in land and unearned income in business enterprise. The Socialist People's Party, for all its top-heavy support of the land tax, is embraced as an ally by most Georgists with the least possible enthusiasm. The SPP electorate is comprised largely of disenchanted Communists (1956 vintage), disaffected Social Democrats, and anti-militarists from all sectors of Danish life. Nevertheless, despite ostracism by the other Parliamentary blocs, the new party shows an increasing popular support in recent polls.

Of the four other parties, three—the Venstre, Conservative and Independent Liberal—stand firmly opposed to any further taxation of land values; they would "roll back" the present level to at least token extent if it were possible.

But the Radical Liberals are a special case—once the brightest hope of the land-tax movement, they have since become its chief disillusionment.

⁶ The failure of the survey to distinguish between large and small farmers tends to obscure an important difference. Studies have consistently found that opposition to land-tax proposals increases as landholdings become larger (even when the proposal is baited with an offsetting reduction in income tax). But it is a different situation with the smallholding farmers of Denmark, whose investment in land is proportionately less than in their improvements, machinery, livestock, etc. It was the Danish smallholders who gave the original impetus to the Georgist movement, and even today they provide staunch support for the Justice Party in Jutland. Their enthusiasm, however, has declined precisely because tax exemption of their improvements has now been fully achieved.

The Radical Party originated in 1905 and grew rapidly to major status as representative of the Danish smallholders, anti-militarist groups and urban intellectuals. So pervasive was Georgist sentiment among the membership that in 1911 the annual conference of the party adopted by a rousing vote a report proposing to accomplish full-land-value taxation by gradual steps, together with an interim tax to absorb the increment of rising land prices. But the "land problem" soon lost its priority in party councils to the struggle against militarism, and it became a total casualty of World War I as Danish farm prosperity boomed. The resulting frustration among Georgists led directly to the creation of the Justice Party. The land-tax provision remains a part of the Radicals' platform to this day, but there is no will to enforce it. In the triangular government of 1957-60 it was the Radical leaders who, among the three groups, showed the least zeal for land-tax legislation.

We come now to a tabulation of the reasons given by the respondents for either their approval or disapproval of the full land tax. This is what the interviewers found:

	Those who favored full land tax (per cent)
Would stop land speculation	48
Would mean less taxes	3
Other reasons	4
Don't know	<u>45</u>
Total	100
	Those who opposed full land tax (per cent)
Enough taxes now, don't want more	13
Too expensive	5
Some freedom ought to be left for us	14
Opposed to the Justice Party proposal	3
Such a tax would not be fair	16
Other reasons	10
Don't know	<u>39</u>
Total	100

It is surely a singular finding that almost half of those who declared in favor of the proposal were unable to provide some reason for their approval. Quite possibly certain respondents may have been unwilling, rather than unable, to do so. If, to take a hypothetical case, one's chief motivation were a desire to "soak the landlords" or simply to shift the tax burden from oneself to another, a "don't know" answer could serve as surrogate for the real reason. Other than this, the desire to "stop land speculation" is the almost uniform reason given for approving the full

land tax. Despite more than the usual bulk of legislation designed to discourage speculation, land costs in Denmark have risen steadily during the last decade, in the provinces and on the farms as well as in urban areas. There is, moreover, a serious housing shortage in the country, which is palpably aggravated by the high prices demanded for construction sites. At the opening of the winter session of Parliament in October, 1962 (the month in which the survey was being conducted), spokesmen of all the parties joined in statements of concern over the latest manifestations of this perennial phenomenon.

But it is surely among those who declared against the full land tax that the reasons given are keenly instructive—and to an informed Georgist, no doubt highly frustrating. As indicated in the table, 13 per cent of the total protested that they were being taxed heavily enough already and didn't want more. Yet it is precisely the chief economic argument of land taxers that land revenues would be used to reduce or abolish other forms of taxation which now bear upon productivity.⁷ To the extent that this answer indicates misapprehension regarding the land-tax proposal, the fault may rest with the failure of Danish Georgists to present this redemptive aspect of their program with sufficient emphasis and clarity. But it may also be that another cause—that of disillusionment—contributed to this reaction. In 1958, when the land-tax rate of the municipalities was raised by 14 kroner per thousand of assessed valuation, the municipal councils were enabled simultaneously to reduce their local income tax rates by some 5 to 10 per cent "across the board." The promise of the land taxers was thus kept. But this took no account of the rising costs of government, and it was not long before the need for new taxes to finance new public ventures served to wipe out even the memory of the income tax reduction. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the complaint "enough taxes now" were uttered by some who had learned that a substitute tax could just as well become an added tax.

The "too expensive" objection, though submitted by only a scattering of respondents, seems to have no such discernible basis. The entire machinery of property assessment and taxation, refined and stabilized by successive enactments, is already at hand in Denmark. Land sites, as dis-

⁷ To a Georgist, it will be quite evident that the person who framed the principal question of the survey was not a Georgist. An alternative phrasing which would have accorded with the actual proposal made by Henry George, and that promoted by the Justice Party as well, might have been something like this: "If it were proposed to introduce a tax to take the full rental value of the land, while at the same time proportionately reducing or eliminating other existing forms of taxation, would you be for or against this proposal?" Such a phrasing would probably have produced a higher proportion of favorable responses; it would no doubt have lessened the numbers of those who assumed that this was to be simply an additional tax.

tinguished from their improvements, have been separately assessed since at least 1922 and in all cases must bear a higher tax rate than the buildings upon them. The law now requires a general assessment every fourth year by local valuation boards of all properties within their jurisdiction, separately for land and for buildings, together with annual revaluations when occasioned by physical or legal changes. In view of all this, the answer "too expensive" (to administer) can be attributed simply to a lack of information. Alternatively, it is of course the contention of Georgists that if the full land tax were effectuated large public savings would result from the elimination of other tax-gathering agencies.

The most engaging of the objections raised is that offered by 14 per cent of the respondents under the caption "Some freedom ought to be left for us." The statements as given varied somewhat in their phrasing, and perhaps only a reading of the interviewers' reports could reveal the individual attitudes expressed. But even the director of the Gallup Institute, upon whom it devolved to collate the replies for tabulation, confessed that his reading left him still mildly perplexed. The one mood which seemed to be common, however, was that of an accrued resentment against the State for its excessive encroachments upon the domain of private affairs. This is indeed a lively datum of Danish politics, as evidenced by the resistance offered to any new intrusion of government. But it remains unclear how this attitude was related to the imposition of a full land tax—as distinguished, say, from a partial land tax or some other kind of taxation. It may be that the "freedom" in this case referred to the traditional right of landowners to profit from an increase in land values through exercise of their foresight; or perhaps some respondents feared that the proposal envisaged the State's "taking over" of the land, to be followed by bureaucratic control of its use. But these are only surmises. The fact of significance is that, for almost one in four among those who offered a reason for their opposition, the matter was somehow bound up with a defense of the shrinking realm of private liberty. The very obscurity of the sentiment renders it almost immune to inference.

Among the remaining reasons given, 3 per cent expressed their disapproval of the land tax by a pointed reference to the Justice Party itself; 10 per cent of the statements were too personalized or particular to assemble under congruent headings; and again, 39 per cent of those who opposed the land tax were either unable or unwilling to provide a reason for their stand.

The answer which recurred most frequently (16 per cent), that "such a tax would not be fair" (or "just"), touches at least inferentially upon

the final question of the survey—that which deals with the payment of compensation—and has accordingly been left until now. It is no small irony that the land-tax proposal upon which the Justice Party hopes to erect a just society (its cherished *Retsstat*) should itself be characterized as “unjust.” What could this sentiment have entailed? It is probable that we have here, first, the predictable opposition of landowning respondents to a scheme which would not only expropriate their present investment in land but would at the same time intercept such future increments as past experience had given them the right to anticipate. But the frequency of this answer strongly suggests the presence of another, a more disinterested, view. That view is that such a tax, by singling out a particular class and a particular kind of property for confiscatory treatment, would thereby violate the accepted canons of justice and fair play. Georgists will, of course, counter this argument on historical, ethical and economic grounds, but they must reckon with the fact that it is a principled and elemental reaction to their proposal. (It is undeniable that in Denmark, as elsewhere, there is a special mystique attached to landownership, which is not vouchsafed to other forms of wealth, and from this there emanates a sensitiveness to land taxation which is not touched so acutely by any other kind of impost. It is a phenomenon for social psychiatry, rather than social science, to explore.)

The final question of the Gallup interviewers was put to all respondents, no matter what earlier positions they held. It asked simply whether, if a full-land-tax proposal were enacted, compensation should be paid to landowners for the capital loss they would sustain. The replies were as follows:

Yes	19 per cent
No	13 per cent
Don't know	68 per cent

Among those who expressed a conviction on this question, we find, perhaps surprisingly, that two out of five declared themselves opposed to the payment of compensation. This happens to be the same ratio, it will be recalled, as that which appeared *in favor* of the full land tax in question number one. Is there, perchance, a significant relationship between the two—that is, did those who supported the land tax follow up by rejecting the idea of compensation, while inversely, those who opposed the proposal would at least insist on compensation if it should be enacted? Regrettably, no tabulation was made to seek correlations between the two answers. We are able to postulate a linkage between tax-approval and

compensation-denial (and vice versa) only to the extent that the respondents did in fact exhibit this probable consistency in their attitudes.

In his comment on the above results, the Gallup editor observes, "In the proposals which have so far been advanced concerning the full land tax in Denmark, it has always been assumed that a compensation was to be paid to the landowners at the time of the actual legislation." Unfortunately this observation (as the figures themselves suggest) is too expansive to take account of the actual situation. Without doubt some sectors of the public have taken the payment of compensation for granted—and certainly they have had grounds for this both in the assurances of Justice Party leaders and in the specific draft of a compensation scheme proposed by the Parliamentary Commission on Full Land Taxation in its 1954 Report (referred to earlier).⁸

But the question is by no means settled even among Danish Georgists. The official position of the Henry George Society—which is the same as that taken by George himself—is that no justification exists for public reimbursement of landowners.⁹ When the Parliamentary Commission proposal was under discussion, its compensation features were completely disavowed by spokesmen of the society, evidently on behalf of a large preponderance of the membership. But at the same time the Parliamentary leaders of the Justice Party announced their full support of the measure, contending, when challenged by other Georgists, that enactment of the full-land-tax program would be politically impossible without the compensation provision.

Perhaps no incident could point up more eloquently the separate realms in which a Georgist "movement" and a Georgist political party are committed to function: while both are dedicated to the same result, only the former (its prospects being singularly remote) can afford the luxury of uncompromised principles; the latter, having entered the lists of Parliamentary struggle, is by the rules of the game required to negotiate and

⁸ The proposal outlined in the Report provided for a lump-sum reimbursement to landowners equal to three-quarters of the determinate capital loss incurred, the value of the land to be based upon its last assessment prior to effectuation of the law. Payment would be made either in cash or in 4 per cent interest-bearing state bonds, a period of sixty years being allowed for full amortization of the program. It was additionally stipulated that, until the compensation sum was actually received by the owner, his land-tax payment was to be reduced each year by an amount equal to 3 per cent of the value of his land as fixed by the assessment noted above.

⁹ An unverified account has it that a leading member of the early Danish movement sought out George while he was in London and persuaded him that some form of compensation to landowners was justified in the particular historical circumstances attendant upon land use and ownership in Denmark. But no published record is available to substantiate the claim.

to barter for its aims and, when occasion demands, to put principle aside and accept the politically exigent, lest its ultimate goals recede endlessly.

The compensation issue at this stage is enjoying a period of salutary neglect. But among land-tax advocates who still favor some kind of settlement the tendency now is to regard the matter in a more contemporary form—no longer as a plan for outright reimbursement of land-owners, but instead as an arrangement of fiscal and administrative measures which would afford general tax relief, grant equity allowances for hardship cases, provide attractive incentives for new construction, and the like.

III

FROM THE MEDLEY of findings produced by the Gallup survey, at least two deserve more extended comment. The first concerns the extraordinarily high proportion of "don't know" answers, which we may take as reflecting either a lack of knowledge or a lack of conviction. How are we to account for this among a people as reputedly sensitive to land-tax problems as the Danes? If it could be found by some happy chance that sentiment favorable to the land tax was correlated with the best-educated or the most widely informed among the population . . . But no; the indications are, if anything, otherwise. The Danish results simply conform to the pattern of indifference (as distinguished from opposition) which seems to attend the land-tax issue almost everywhere. At least for that part of the great "don't know" electorate which admitted a lack of acquaintance with the proposal, the explanation is almost stereotyped: land-value taxation has neither the glamour nor the urgency of other political issues; it is too complex for ordinary tastes, it does not lend itself to titillating headlines, and it is not the kind of problem that newspapers choose for "background articles" to edify their readers, besides (the fleeting thought finds a reason), since the whole thing is an age-old problem and not an immediate crisis, it can be put aside until later; then too, why bother with something that promises either too little or too much: if it's to be only a substitution of one tax for another, why get excited, but if the land tax is supposed to solve all problems, that isn't to be taken seriously. These and other factors are immediately at hand to preclude any further acquaintance with the subject.

Danish Georgists are not unaware of the remedies for such inertia. But despite a few endowment funds and the normal complement of wealthy patrons, the financial resources of the movement are too meager to undertake a sustained grass-roots program to propagate its ideas. The Justice Party publishes a weekly newspaper and a monthly leaflet, and the

Henry George Society a somewhat esoteric bi-monthly magazine, but the subscription list in each case is no more than 5,000. Accordingly, land-tax propaganda reaches the general public for the most part only in the form of speeches and broadsides issued during the heat of election campaigns or as occasional news tidbits. The Justice Party especially bemoans the fact that alone among the political parties it lacks a daily newspaper to explain its policies and to respond to attacks.

Yet the more the "don't know" problem is explained, the more formidable it becomes. The virtues of land-value taxation may conceivably be many, but they are by no means self-evident. At least some degree of indoctrination into Georgist principles is clearly indicated before conviction can set in, and this is far from being a casual process. The learner must first cast off some old assumptions to make place for new ones; he is required to reexamine his ethical precepts, to embrace a currently unfashionable brand of economics, to abandon his favorite scapegoat (whether capital or labor), perhaps even to forsake present increments for a vision of future good. It is altogether a demanding prescription, ideally calling for the combined ingredients of teacher, leisure and classroom. So long as this prescription remains unfulfilled in Denmark, it is hard to see how the uncommitted seven-tenths of the population is going to become involved.

Finally, it seems appropriate to reflect upon the survey results as they bear upon the electoral prospects of the Justice Party. Since the land tax is the very keystone of the party's program, a 12 per cent "yes" vote, even when countered by 17 per cent "no," might be taken as a moral victory; indeed, if the figures were to be transmuted into relative electoral strength they would boost the Justice Party into first rank. But this is to assume a simple equation between land-tax sentiment and Justice Party votes—an equation, needless to say, which is wholly untenable. Even the best electoral showing produced by the party, its 8.2 per cent share of the total in 1950, still left it in minor standing; in other elections that share has fluctuated between 2 and 5.3 per cent.

The equation is untenable for three principal reasons. The first and most obvious is that the role of other political parties cannot be ignored. The second is that the land-tax issue is in no sense a decisive one in Danish politics. The third is that no party, in the face of myriad public needs, could or would limit its program to a single issue.

It is to the third of these points that we must turn to explore the ambivalent role of the Justice Party in Danish politics. Faithful to the Georgist tradition, the party has written its platform to achieve three broad aims: enactment of the full land tax, complete freedom of trade,

and security of individual rights against the State. Taken separately, each of these has a wholesome appeal; but it is when each is translated into timely campaign issues and all three then combined into a single program that the result becomes an ideological chaos intelligible only to Georgists.

The full-land-tax objective must, in any conventional view, be adjudged a radical economic innovation: it threatens to rupture the whole system of established property relations; it seeks to outlaw the most time-honored means of acquiring wealth; it proposes to expropriate a respectable social class; and its enactment would sanction a massive interposition of State power. So, at least, it appears to those who label it "agrarian socialism." It should come as no surprise, then, that on this issue the Justice Party is positioned decisively Left of center on the political spectrum, in close association with the socialist parties. This judgment (which is, incidentally, not at all to the liking of the Georgists) is amply confirmed by the findings of the present survey, which disclose that a majority sentiment favoring the land tax is to be found only among the lowest income and occupational groups and among their political correlates, the Social Democratic and Socialist People's parties;¹⁰ inversely, the strongest opposition stems from the higher occupational and propertied groups and from their conservative political blocs.

It is quite a different story when we come to consider the remaining objectives of the Justice Party, those of free trade and individual rights. Here the party program is couched in language nostalgically reminiscent of nineteenth-century liberalism, but now associated only with the politics of the far Right: *laissez-faire* enterprise, unhampered trade, minimum government, reduced taxes, resistance to welfare legislation, and an almost literal do-it-yourself individualism. Since it is these issues and their derivatives (rather than land taxation) which are the stuff of most current political struggles, the Justice Party has come to be identified with the most vigorous opposition to all "socialistic and "Statist" policies. If the party has impressed any predominant image upon Danish voters, it is this—that it stands as the champion of economic individualism against every invasion of the State. It is a compliment to the party's consistency in this role that observers place it on the far Right of the political spectrum.¹¹

¹⁰ The same conclusion is derived from an earlier Gallup inquiry conducted just after the Parliamentary elections of 1950, which found that among the Justice Party electorate "two-thirds of the voters belong to the lowest income groups." (Article No. 26, dated September 16, 1950.) It should be noted that these were actual votes, not just potential support for the land tax. Early in 1950 the Justice Party Parliamentary bloc voted against an emergency strike-breaking act sponsored by the Social Democrats, and thereby benefited from the ballots of many workers who deserted the Social Democratic Party in that year's election.

¹¹ This extravagant posture is much less a consequence of Henry George's teaching than of two indigenous Danish factors. There was, first, the impressment of a highly

An analysis of the Justice Party program thus indicates that it suffers from a serious case of ideological schizophrenia. It confronts the electorate with so incongruous a coupling of Leftist and Rightist proposals that the prospective voter must be willing to accept one form of socialization in order to combat every other form; if the prospect is confusing, he can only choose to place his hopes elsewhere. Admittedly, most Georgists are immune to this ambivalence—for them the land tax, free trade and individualism are inseparable elements of the good society (though even here they must come to recognize that certain priorities and tactics are involved). But the ordinary working-class voter—to take a prime example—has no such mediating vision: he may feel an affinity for the full land tax, but he can hardly support a party which campaigns against the very legislation he accepts as the guarantee of his economic security.

The moment of truth descended upon the Justice Party when in 1957 it agreed to enter the governing coalition with the Social Democrats and Radicals. The party had fought the campaign of that year on so vigorous a platform of anti-Statism that the land-tax issue seemed almost irrelevant. The election had produced 122,759 votes for Justice Party candidates, but of this total no more than 30,000 to 40,000 could be counted land-tax advocates;¹² the bulk of the rest had responded in the main to the Rightist promises of the party program. Defections by this latter group (and by some Georgists as well) began immediately after the startling announcement that the Justice Party had accepted partnership with the same Social Democrats they had so fulsomely criticized during the campaign.

It was no consolation to these voters that Dr. Viggo Starcke, chairman of the Justice Party, could triumphantly hail the formation of "the first land-tax Government in history." The event did not sustain even that claim. During the three and a half years of their tenure, the Parliamentary leaders of the party were faced with a Hobson's choice on almost every issue of the government's domestic program; by the end of that period they had been forced to renounce the greater part of their resistance to

personalized individualism and anti-collectivism upon the formative Georgist movement by three of its early philosophers, Severin Christensen, Cristen Lambek and Axel Dam. The second factor was generated by the opportunity offered in 1945 to take political advantage of the popular irritation with wartime controls: the Justice Party seized the occasion, mounted attacks against every form of State control, intervention and subsidy—thereby winning for itself prominence and electoral success; but in the process the party was inevitably driven into exaggeration and overemphasis of this aspect of its program. The voters acquired during these years (1945–57) were often uninterested in, if not actually opposed to, the land-tax issue; when the Justice Party failed to make good on its anti-Statist promises during the governing period of 1957–60, most of this group transferred its allegiance elsewhere.

¹² An estimate based upon the writer's analysis of the Justice Party vote in the seven Parliamentary elections, 1945–60.

State intervention in economic affairs—and, in the process, to bring upon themselves the merciless castigations of the opposition.

The full land tax was never made a part of the government's program; a compromise measure, which would have represented a marked advance in ground rental leasings of public lands, was too long postponed for enactment; the only accomplishments in this field were actually improvements upon already existing land legislation. In an opinion survey following the election of 1960, some two-thirds of the voters who had abandoned the Justice Party gave as their reasons that it "broke its 1957 promises" and that it "entered the Government."¹³

Whether for reasons of principle or of politics, the latest indications are that the leadership of the Justice Party has begun to moderate its anti-State hostility and to become more "social" in its outlook. Some members have stated frankly that party policy was never so opposed to social legislation as its campaign oratory implied; and that in any event a merely negative attitude toward actual public needs was hardly consistent with Georgist principles. There is a slight but growing demand that, once the dust of controversy has settled, the entire platform of the Justice Party (virtually unaltered since its promulgation in 1925) should be rewritten in the light of new conditions. It must be added that all such revisionist views as the above meet stubborn resistance from party conservatives and "pure line" Georgists, who grimly remind their comrades of the electoral disaster which followed the period of collaboration with the Social Democrats.

New elections are not due in Denmark until late next year, but there is a probability that they will be called earlier. If the Justice Party expects to return to Parliament, it will have to decide soon which electorate it prefers to represent. The Gallup Survey of land-tax sentiment has conveniently identified one of them.¹⁴

¹³ Gallup Markedanalyse A/S, Ugens Gallup Art. nr. 4, February 4, 1961, "Why Did the Voters Shift?"

¹⁴ The findings of the present survey have been discussed throughout as if they could be accepted as dependably valid. It goes without saying that such validity cannot be assumed for any opinion poll based upon representative sampling—and to that extent the results presented here must be viewed as no better than approximations of the probable situation. The Gallup Institute of Copenhagen enjoys a somewhat lesser confidence in its accuracy than do the leading American polling organizations. Its market analyses, however, are well regarded; its monthly political samplings are carefully scanned by party leaders, and its election forecasts have consistently come within the range of 2 to 3 per cent of admissible error. The survey reports of the Institute are published in ten Danish newspapers, but the franchise for the Copenhagen (and therefore nationwide) coverage is reserved for *Berlingske Tidende*, largest of the dailies.

San Francisco State College