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# The NEW LEAF

"EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FOR NONE"

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## GEORGISTS MEET IN NEW YORK

*"The association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times....it is the riddle which the Sphinx of fate puts to our civilization and which, not to answer, is to be destroyed."*

One year and a century after these words were written by Henry George the enigma remains. Not only has our civilization failed to answer the riddle; but it now has the capability to destroy itself in minutes. The 1980 Joint Georgist Conference, taking place in the city of international business and industry and the home of the United Nations, provides a fitting forum to again speak this warning to the world.

## MIDWESTERN BISHOPS TAKE A STAND

Roman Catholic bishops of 44 dioceses in 12 Midwestern states, after a two-year process that began with a group of concerned South Dakota farmers, have issued a major statement calling on Americans to once again accept the concept that the land is a gift from God.

The statement, "Strangers and Guests: Toward Community in the Heartland," was signed by all 72 Roman Catholic bishops in the 44 dioceses.

"Land ownership is being restructured, agricultural production is becoming more heavily industrialized and concentrated in fewer hands and the earth all too frequently is being subjected to harmful farming, mining and development practices," the statement says.

The 37-page statement, taking its title from a verse in the Old Testament book of Leviticus that says, "The land should not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine and you are only strangers and guests on it,"

came out of some 400 public hearings held in 12 states with nearly 12,000 people participating in the hearings. Using the Leviticus verse, other Biblical material, Roman Catholic social principles and native American and Judeo-Christian traditions, the statement re-emphasizes the land as God's gift.

"We have not always been faithful to those traditions," the statement said.

It seeks to develop principles of stewardship deriving from the insight that the land belongs to God, which include equitable distribution of land, the notion that the land's benefits are for everyone, the idea that land should be conserved and restored and that land-use planning must consider social and environmental impacts.

The statement expressed concern about the concentration of land ownership in the heartland and the increasing domination of agriculture by large corporations.

The 1980 Joint Georgist Conference will be held in the city of New York over Labor Day weekend, August 28 to September 1, at the new headquarters of the Henry George School in midtown Manhattan.

One year after the Centennial Celebration of Progress and Poverty in San Francisco, Georgists from across the United States and Canada will once again come together to confer and celebrate: renewing friendships, sharing information, and fostering enthusiasm to continue the movement begun by Henry George more than 100 years ago.

The Conference Committee, composed of Phil Finklestein, Robert Clancy, and Oscar Johannsen, have developed for participants a balanced program of educational experiences, organizational meetings, and socials.

Registration will be held on the opening day, Thursday, at the new modern headquarters, located at 5 E. 44th Street, at the heart of the busiest section of the city, between Times Square and Grand Central Station. A wine and cheese reception will follow. On Monday evening a boat ride around New York City will provide conferees opportunities to talk, relax, and take in the sights. Sunday evening the Annual Banquet will be held at the ballroom of one of the major midtown hotels located close to headquarters.

A possible topic of discussion during organizational meetings, especially Sunday's Council of Georgist Organizations, will be whether or not to further organize. The fact that Land, Equality and Freedom, the largest national organization of Georgists in the country, has recently voted to suspend operations, should stimulate a serious debate on the merits and difficulties of organizing Georgists.

Panels of Georgists will discuss the questions of inflation, land reform, educational developments, land value taxation, and lastly, "The Critics of Henry George," led by Robert Andelson.

"We are particularly concerned about the severe decline in the number of owner-operated family farms here over the past generation," the statement said. "We urge that modest land holdings, sufficient to support family farms, be encouraged by taxing land progressively at a higher rate according to increases in the size and quality of holdings," it said.

"All people, urban and rural, must recognize that their lifestyles, purchasing habits and expectations contribute directly and indirectly to the concentration of land ownership and the consequent abuse of the land," it said. "We are called by God to change our consumption patterns and to act to effect justice in the land," the bishops said.

David E. Anderson  
(United Press International)

"Justice will be achieved only when those who are not injured feel as indignant as those who are." Solon, 638-557 B.C.



SPARROW — by Paul Simon

Who will love a little Sparrow  
Who's traveled far and cries for rest?  
"Not I," said the oak tree,  
"I won't share my branches with  
no sparrow's nest,  
And my blanket of leaves won't warm  
her cold breast."

Who will love a little Sparrow  
And who will speak a kindly word?  
"Not I," said the swan,  
"The entire idea is utterly absurd,  
I'd be laughed at and scorned if the  
other swans heard."

Who will take pity in his heart,  
And who will feed a starving sparrow?  
"Not I," said the golden wheat,  
"I would if I could but I cannot I know,  
I need all my grain to prosper and grow."

Who will love a little Sparrow?  
Will no one write her eulogy?  
"I will," said the earth,  
"For all I've created returns unto me,  
From dust were ye made and dust ye shall be."

## THE ETHICAL BASIS OF GEORGISM

by Jack Schwartzman

The basic moral philosophy of Georgism is that justice — the rendering to each person his or her due — underlies the principles of both political science and economics. "This is the universal law. This is the lesson of the centuries. Unless its foundation be laid in justice the social structure cannot stand." (Henry George)

Unlike the prevalent modern view that economics is the "objective" study of facts, without any necessary moralistic correlation, the Georgist contention is that economics is a science, and, like Euclidian mathematics, is based on universal truths of the natural law. One cannot violate the unchanging laws of economics. One may attempt to do so, but only at one's own risk, and subject to the social ills that follow, such as poverty, crime, and war. "If political economy is a science...it must follow the rules of science, and seek in natural law the causes of the phenomena which it investigates." (Henry George)

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that investigates the normative conduct of human beings. It is, of necessity, a discipline that deals with values and standards: what a person ought to do. The Georgist position is clear: each person, since he or she possesses free will, ought to live in accordance with natural law. Each person's "duty" is to abolish injustice. If the existing maldistribution of wealth is not remedied, then humanity will suffer the necessary consequences. Liberty will be replaced by slavery, and civilization by barbarism. "Whence shall come the new barbarians? Go through the squalid quarters of great cities and you may see, even now, their gathering hordes! How shall learning perish? Men will cease to read, and books will kindle fires and be turned into cartridges!" (Henry George)

To abolish poverty and to bridge the gap between affluence and misery, one must return to the universal guidelines of justice. "The law of human progress, what is it but the moral law? Just as social adjustments promote justice, just as they acknowledge the equality of right between man and man, just as they insure to each the perfect liberty which is bounded only by the equal liberty of every other, must civilization advance. Just as they fail this, must advancing civilization come to a halt and recede." (Henry George.)

To be specific: Georgism examines the current scene and finds that the social malady exists because of people's failure to abide by the laws of "natural" distribution of production. To "cure" the economic ills of humanity, Georgism unqualifiedly advocates the removal of the "unnatural" conditions of poverty, conflict, crime, and illiteracy by means of a specific formula based on natural law. Absolute adherence to natural law — that is the true remedy advocated by George.

The Georgist formula is to open the gates to production, thereby allowing every person on God's earth to earn his or her livelihood; to remove the artificial barriers set up by greed and ignorance; and to substitute, instead, free access to nature itself. It is to live morally.

To summarize: Morality is not merely a pious injunction of behavior, or even a rigid commandment of human law: it is the Golden Rule itself! Without adherence to the eternal principles of proper economic distribution; without conformity to the time-honored precepts of justice and natural rights, the Georgist philosophy becomes meaningless and non-existent. "Single tax," "land value taxation," "communal collection of rent" — these are merely methodical phrases; they are but the means to the end itself; and that end is — Justice.

# "What We Stand For"



Speech by Henry George, November 1877

What we aim at is the abolition of poverty. We propose to accomplish this by abolishing injustice, and our particular aim is to abolish that fundamental injustice which deprives so many human creatures of their natural right to the land which the Lord their God has given them. The relation between man and the planet he inhabits is fundamental, and the laws which affect the tenure of land, the relation between man and the land on which all must live, are the most important of all laws. We do not mean to say that there are not many other wrongs to be righted, that there are not many other things to do, but we do say that the fundamental injustice which deprives men of their natural right to the element from which and on which all must live is most important, and is the one with which we ought to begin. Until we do away with that injustice we cannot abolish minor wrongs or make minor improvements that will effect any permanent good. We do not say that this is the only thing to do, but we say this is the first thing to do.

We propose to establish equality between men with relation to the element on which and from which they must live; not by dividing the land up into equal pieces; not by taking land as the formal property of the state and renting it out; not by taking from anybody any land that he now has, but simply so changing our system

of taxation as to abolish all taxes now levied upon labor and the products of labor and take by taxation for public purposes that value which attaches to land by reason of the growth of the community.

We do not propose to interfere with the rights of property. On the contrary, we are sticklers for the rights of property. What a man makes by his own exertion, whether of hand or of brain, that we hold to be his against all the world. If a man plows a field and plants a crop, we say that he alone is entitled to reap it. If a man builds a house he ought to have it and all of it; and we say that it is unjust and a violation of the sacred rights of property when our tax gatherers come down and say to a man because he has cultivated his soil, because he has built a house, because he has produced or accumulated wealth, therefore the state demands a certain portion of it from him. We say that such a system is unjust and that not one penny should be taken from a man because he has been industrious and thrifty.

We propose to leave to labor its entire product; we propose to take for the use of the community that value that is produced by no individual, that value which attaches to land, not by reason of what its owner does, but by reason of the growth and improvement of the whole community. We say that that is just, that it will give to the community what belongs to the community and leave entirely to the individual what rightfully belongs to the individual; and being just, we say that it is wise.

We say that it is bad policy to tax men for what they add to the common stock of wealth; that he is a benefactor who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before; that the man who builds a house is doing something not merely for himself, but for the whole community; and that it is stupid to tax men for building houses, or cultivating fields, or erecting factories, or building ships, or doing anything whatever that adds to the common stock of wealth; that the state should encourage industry, not discourage it; that no tax should be laid upon the industry that produces or the thrift that accumulates; that in this great fund that comes from nothing that the individual does lies the proper, the intended means of supplying all public wants. That fund we propose to take by abolishing our present taxes and laying a single tax upon the value of land irrespective of improvements, increasing it as far and as fast as we can until it shall take as nearly as may be the whole value of the land.

Look in whatever direction you choose and see what benefits will spring from this simple change, how much fraud it will prevent, what

temptation to bribery and corruption it will avoid ... Now the enormous advantage of the system of taxation that we propose is that the tax can be certainly assessed, easily collected, and will give no room for much of the fraud that is now carried on, and will not offer the inducement to evasion that now exists.

Land can't run away; it can't be hidden; it lies out of doors; its value can be estimated with more certainty than any other value. And in putting taxes upon that single item we shall get rid of a horde of officials; we shall get rid of all these oaths that people in every direction are now required to take, of all the temptations to perjury that our present laws give, and shall raise our revenue without imposing any restriction upon production or diminishing it in the least. On the contrary, by imposing our taxes in this way we shall prevent that monopolization of natural opportunities which everywhere restricts production, and in this broad and rich country is already producing the tramp and the pauper; that monopolization of natural opportunities that makes us, in the midst of abundance and plenty, think of work as something good in itself; which forces upon us even in the best of times the spectacle of thousands and hundred of thousands of men willing to work, anxious to work, but unable to find the opportunity to work.

There, we hold, is the cause of all labor difficulties; there, we believe, is the cause of poverty. It is not the fault of the Almighty, this horrid, bitter struggle for existence that is the lot of so many thousands today; it is not caused by the niggardliness of the Creator. He has placed here enough, and to spare, for all of us. All we have to do is to prevent monopolization; all we have to do is to secure to each one his natural right.

This simple plan of ours will utterly stop the monopolization of land by making it unprofitable. What is the temptation to the monopolization of land? Commissioner Sparks in his last report paints in very vivid colors the manner in which the public land has been appropriated by speculators and grabbers, by stretching grants, by making false entries, by everywhere getting hold of the land ahead of the settler. Why? In order to profit by the value that will begin to attach to the land as soon as there is a prospect of settlement coming

The moment it is made certain that whenever a value shall attach itself to the land irrespective of the value produced by the labor upon it, such value will be taken for the use of the community, then the temptation to all this land grabbing will be utterly gone; and not merely will the temptation to land grabbing in the

future be destroyed, but all the land that has been grabbed in the past will be released. Once tax the speculator who holds 160 acres of agricultural land vacant as heavily as the farmer who has plowed his land, has cultivated a farm and made improvements; once tax the holder of a valuable building lot as much when it is vacant as a lot of like quality with a splendid house upon it; once make sure that as the value of land increases the tax upon it shall increase likewise, and the monopolizers who all over this land are holding vacant city lots, untitled agricultural lands and unworked mines from the man who would be glad to use them, will be forced to let them go.

See how the system would operate here in New York. Our vast population is crowded together, yet one-half the area of this city is not built upon! Why? Not because there is not need for more houses; not because there are not plenty of sites for houses; but because the building sites are held by men who will not or cannot use them themselves, and will not allow those who want to use them to have access to them unless they first pay an enormous price. The simple effect of the change in taxation which we propose would be to compel these men either to build upon those lots themselves or to sell them to somebody else who would. The moment the men who are holding land without using it shall be compelled to use it or give it up there will be an abundance of land for all who want to use it. I don't mean to say that under those circumstances every man would go and build himself a house, or that all of those unemployed men throughout the country would take up farms and open mines; but this I do say, that enough could and would make use of these natural opportunities (i.e., land) for employment to relieve the glut in the labor market; taking themselves out of the fierce competition for wages of an employer, they would not only employ themselves, but in doing so -- in producing wealth of some kind -- they would be creating a demand for the labor of others in producing. In that way it would be possible that any man willing to work should be able to find abundant opportunity to work; and the setting of this vast force of unemployed men at productive labor would create a demand for commodities that would give new vigor to every branch of business.

These, in very brief outline, are the doctrines for which we stand.

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Members,

We need to say what we stand for. Power is more and more concentrated in the hands of a few landowners, corporate chairmen, and government officials who need to hear what we have to say. For in spite of their good will and good intentions to do the best for the world they are more and more allowing their own perspectives and special interests to undermine the common good. They need to see what they are doing and they need to hear what to do about it.

We need to communicate with those in power. The history of Mankind's coming together into ever larger associations is the history of Mankind's expanding concept of the common good; the growing awareness of the interdependency of all creatures. Those to whom we have entrusted the power to serve the common good — be they officials of government, leaders of our churches and businesses, or stewards of our land — need to be continually reminded that their power is rooted, not in their own interests, but in the interests of others.

In order to communicate with those in power we need to prepare ourselves: reading, writing, speaking; observing what is going on around us and seeing what is destructive; observing ourselves and separating our ego from the truth; observing our listeners, to see how best to reach them. Whether speaking with a family member or a friend; whether giving a talk to a church group or the chamber of commerce; we need to prepare ourselves so that we don't turn them away from us or against us, but will turn them toward the common good.

Lastly, we need courage.

Sincerely,  
Tony Meis

### LETTERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Most people, regardless of their position or stature, take their mail seriously. They are generally open to the written word and not apt to become so defensive as when discussing ideas face to face. They are not so threatened because an immediate response is not expected of them; there is time to think it over, and not respond at all if they so choose.

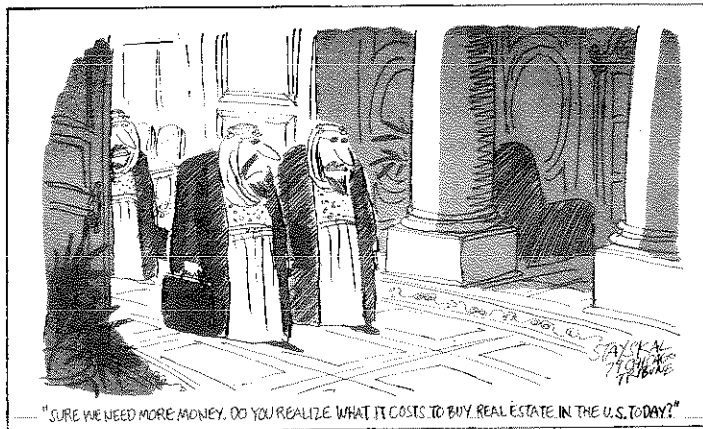
Writing letters is a skill Georgists should develop. It is easy to do, most inexpensive, very effective, allows the receiver complete freedom to accept or reject, and allows the sender all the time needed to do a good piece of work. And it does take a lot of work to write a good letter; like any other skill, it takes practice.

The opportunities for writing letters is almost unlimited. There are a number of environmental, political, and educational organizations with whom we need to share ideas; senators and congressmen should hear from us frequently, as well as the President and his cabinet; leaders in the various professions and arts, especially those who talk about social justice, would like to hear an idea that would improve life for everybody; Landowners and corporate chairmen, especially, need to have explained the law of rent, its relation to other social and economic laws, and its role in relation to free enterprise in the true and therefore best sense of that phrase.

"If you cannot write down your idea, clearly and completely, on the back of my calling card, please do not bother me; you do not understand the idea yourself!" So goes an anonymous quote that makes an excellent point: Be brief.

Below are parts of a letter in which the authors attempted to present as succinctly as possible the basic ideas of land economics, their roots in the natural law, and their application to social justice.

(continued on page 4)



## LEAF MAY BECOME POLITICAL

The recent plebiscite held by the Board of Directors of Land, Equality and Freedom (LEAF), produced a wide response from the membership, including 73 expressions of support for the action recommended by the Board at its quarterly meeting held April 19 in the LEAF offices at 2202 Morley St., and 19 expressions of disapproval of the Board's action.

Of the 73 persons who supported the decision to suspend operations of LEAF indefinitely, many of those expressed an interest in continuing the work of LEAF with volunteers only. Most of the disagreement was with the second decision by the Board to discontinue the publication of

The NEW LEAF which is currently being edited and published by Tony Meis in North Carolina.

To pursue the problem of what to do about continuing LEAF on a local level, Floyd Morrow, Board Chairman has called a meeting of all local members of LEAF and other Georgists who live within the vicinity of San Diego. Morrow hopes to pursue the idea of continuing LEAF as a local organization and possibly converting it to a political action group which would work locally to further Georgist causes. To do that, LEAF would have to give up its tax-exempt status — an idea that Morrow will present to the local membership at the July meeting.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

There is a big difference between might and right. A state, a government or group armed to the teeth may have the might to sell or give away land, but they do not have the right to do so.

Land is a gift from God to all, regardless of race or creed, and to the future generations. How can any of us living get permission of those yet to come to sell or give away their rights to be on this earth?

Our ancestors gave or sold our rights to be here under the threat of force. Must we who are free permit the same to

happen to our descendants?

The State of Arizona is planning to sell some land. . . . As you have read, it does not have the right to do so. It has the right to rent it out for limited periods.

By renting out the land the state will be collecting that rent for all of us and making some taxes unnecessary. Most important, it will be protecting the rights of our children and grandchildren to be on this planet.

Let's stop that sale.

Robert Sage  
Sun City, Arizona



# American Revolution

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and institute new government..."



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It is a simple truth that the land and its resources come from nature, not mankind, and are for the use and enjoyment of all people. We believe that the most natural and peaceful way for the people to share the land is not through confiscation and redistribution, since this would be unfair to the next generations, but by way of a "land-value tax." We will try to explain what we mean.

There are three consequences to our tax system that are presently working against a sound economy:

- 1) The present system gives incentive to the practice of land speculation by placing low taxes on unused and unimproved land, thus keeping needed land out of use;
- 2) The present system discourages making improvements on land by placing high taxes on such improvements;
- 3) The present system penalizes labor with income tax, thus keeping workers from the full fruits of their labor.

It seems to us, that the tax system is backwards and needs to be turned around:

- 1) Discourage land speculation by increasing the taxes on the value of land itself; that is, by a "land-value tax";

- 2) Encourage improvements by lowering the taxes on such improvements;
- 3) Reward labor by lowering taxes on income.

The basis for these changes in the tax system is this: The community causes the value of land to rise by its growth and needs. In other words, as the community grows and needs land for space and activities, the value of the land rises in proportion to these needs. Therefore the community, not the land speculator, has the right to collect this value by way of a tax. It is this tax, based on a value placed by the community, which should first be collected to pay for government services. Taxes based on an individual's productivity should be assessed only after a land-value tax, and only if it is needed by the community.

These three changes in our tax system would have far-reaching benefits to our economy. Since land speculation would no longer be profitable, more land would be on the market for use. This would mean more land available at prices people could afford, since the high prices of land has been due to its being held out of use. More available land means more people able to work for themselves, producing more goods needed by the community. More goods being produced for the community means lower prices and higher employment. And while this more productive use of land is going on nearer the community, more land farther out can remain in its natural state for all to enjoy.

There are other consequences to these changes that are even more important to the health of our society; The more people have access to the land and its resources, the more people are free. In fact, equal opportunity to the land is the most basic right and the foundation of all other rights in our constitution. Without it all other rights lose their full significance; without it the people remain in a state of dependency and need. On the other hand, people who do have access to the land are free to either work for themselves or work for another; they are free to make a living that will both be a valuable contribution to the community as well as provide for their material and spiritual needs; they are free to enjoy the full fruits of their labor. This is social justice.

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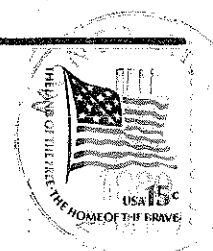
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