

Equal Rights

Volume VI, Number I

"Equal Rights for All, Not Special Privilege for Some"

Autumn, 1974

Jamaica Extends Land Value Tax

Jamaica had operated for many years with a property tax based on the value of land plus improvements. But in 1956 legislation was enacted providing for a general valuation on the unimproved value of the land alone. In 1959 revised land values became available and were used for the land tax in seven parishes of the eleven, mainly rural areas. The other four parishes were the town ones, and the valuation of these was suspended, probably because of opposition from owners of urban properties.

The sequel to this is that the rest of Jamaica is now being brought under the land value tax system. For the first time in history one valuation system is to apply for all. It is the Site Value System with valuation only on the actual land, not including the value of any improvements. Assessments in the parishes of Kingston, St. Andreas, St. James and Hanover will be revised by April of 1974 on the "unimproved value" like the rest of Jamaica. Henceforth, all land throughout the entire country will be valued under the Site Value System.

Progress in Montana

At the recent conference in Pittsburgh, Russel Conklin, former Mayor of Great Falls, Montana, told of an opportunity that has just opened in Montana. This state has adopted a new constitution that provides for uniform assessments throughout the state. It also provides for local option for land value taxation if and when the state legislature gives its sanction, thus offering a unique opportunity for Georgists. The new provision in the constitution that permits differentiation in tax levies for different kinds of property (improvements, for example) has not yet been implemented by the legislature, and local taxing units have not yet attempted to apply the new system, but some early action is anticipated.

HENRY GEORGE FOUNDATION PLANS TO REVITALIZE GEORGIST MOVEMENT

Acting in response to the general sentiment so strongly expressed at the Pittsburgh Conference at Chatham College in June, the Board of Trustees of the Henry George Foundation, at its annual business meeting on September 4, has unanimously resolved to undertake a program of action designed to revitalize the national Georgist movement, and to immediately seek to enlist the strong financial support that is so urgently needed for the success of such an ambitious project.

Ever since its origin in 1926, when the first Henry George Congress assembled at the birthplace of Henry George in Philadelphia, the Foundation has been dedicated to a broad national program embracing all types of activity, both educational and political. But in more recent years, with the appearance of other strong national Georgist agencies devoted exclusively to purely educational work the Henry George Foundation has concentrated its efforts on the promotion of political action campaigns, giving special attention to the campaign in Pennsylvania where a notable victory was quickly won by the enactment by the State Legislature in 1951 of the optional graded tax act.

With the launching in 1969 of EQUAL RIGHTS as its official organ the Foundation expanded its operations and undertook to encourage and stimulate Georgist political efforts on a nation-wide scale with the cooperation of activists in a number of states and local communities. Now the Henry George Foundation offers to serve as a national clearing house and coordinating center for all Georgist associations and individuals who may wish to utilize its services, without distinction as between those specializing in education or in political activities.

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES AND ADVISORS

At the annual meeting held on September 4, 1974, seven trustees were elected for the ensuing three-year term. The new trustees chosen were John T. Tideman of New Jersey, Robert Clancy of New York, and Dr. William J. Filante of California. Present trustees re-elected were William W. Newcomb of Florida, Mitchell S. Lurio of Massachusetts, and Dr. Raymond L. Richman and Percy R. Williams of Pennsylvania.

Other trustees now serving unexpired terms are: Dr. Harry Gunnison Brown, Dr. James L. Busey, Dr. Steven Cord, Robert J. Grier II, Lancaster M. Greene, Mrs. Marian S. Hahn, Julian P. Hickok, Howard W. L'Hommedieu, William E. Schoyer (President), Dr. Paul H. Schweitzer, Carl D. Smith, William E. Walker, John C. Weaver, and Rev. W. Wylie Young.

To assist in strengthening the national organization, a National Advisory Commission was constituted and the following prominent Georgists have agreed to serve in this capacity: Perry Prentice, Noah D. Alper, Dr. Robert V. Andelson, Thomas L. Brazell, Russel Conklin, Gaston Haxo, Fred W. Hecker, Rhoda Hellman, Wilbur H. Johnson, John M. Kelly, John Lawrence Monroe, Marvin Morris, Floyd L. Morrow, Mrs. Mina Olson, Lawrance W. Rathbun, Mrs. Edith Siebenmann, Richard Stout, George T. Tideman, William B. Truehart, Abe D. Waldauer, Louis I. Weitzman, Woodrow W. Williams, and Robert H. Zwicker.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE PLANNED FOR 1975

Plans are already under way for another national conference under the auspices of the Henry George Foundation. On the initiative of Jack Tetley, who served so ably as coordinator and director of the inspiring conference held in Pittsburgh last June, the situation is being carefully canvassed. The time and place chosen will be announced at an early date.

In this manner, the Henry George Foundation which was the original sponsor of the annual national conference idea, and which held many successful conferences

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Editorials

On Putting Some Movement Into The Movement

The last issue of EQUAL RIGHTS reported the resolution of the Chatham Consultation of June 15, 1974. The Chatham Resolution, readers will recall, urged the Henry George Foundation to undertake certain steps designed to inject new vigor and effectiveness into the movement.

It is gratifying that the Board of Trustees of the Foundation not only offered its support for this resolution immediately after its passage, but that on September 4 it implemented this objective by passing a resolution of its own, which specifically promises to accomplish the purposes of the Chatham Resolution.

As is pointed out in the Trustees' statement of September 4, and was also made clear in the Chatham Resolution itself, solution of the problem of financial support is crucial to achievement of the purposes of the Resolution of June 15. This is particularly true of the proposal of the Resolution that the Foundation support a national pressure group to promote Georgist policies at all political levels.

Nevertheless, with help of Georgists, some steps can be taken at once to put at least a part of the Chatham Resolution into effect. I refer to the very important provision which urged the Henry George Foundation of America to "serve as a clearing house and voluntary coordinating center for all those Georgist individuals and associations that can be induced to utilize its services. . . ."

If some action is to be put into this "movement," nothing is more essential than that there be one clearing-house and voluntary coordinating center. Very few Georgists know the names, let alone the addresses, of more than a handful of people who think the same way they do. Very few know about all the organizations and individual efforts of numerous single taxers all over the country and world.

Much the same is true of publications. Each includes single-tax articles and editorials, and offers some news about activ-

ities within its own organization — such as the Henry George schools, the Schalkenbach Foundation, the Henry George Institute, the Henry George Foundation of America, Land Equality and Freedom, the International Union for LVT, and so on.

What is needed is a central office where Georgists can obtain the names and addresses of other single taxers, and which will publish news, not just about activities in one part of the movement, but about Georgist events everywhere.

Beginning right now, the Henry George Foundation is prepared to undertake these clearing-house functions. The first thing the Foundation needs to fulfill this task, is for individual Georgists who have not already done so to send their names and addresses to the Pittsburgh office, so that the present file can be made more adequate for the furtherance of contacts among all Georgists. Secondly, our executive secretary and able editor of EQUAL RIGHTS, Mr. Percy Williams, invites news about Georgist activities from all organizations, both here and abroad. Copies of all Georgist publications should come into the office of the Foundation, so that news can be summarized in EQUAL RIGHTS. Individuals should send in news about events otherwise unknown to the Foundation.

With this sort of help from supporters of the philosophy of Henry George, it should be possible to create the kind of coordination that is achieved by every other effective group, but that has thus far escaped the grasp of the Georgist movement.

— JAMES L. BUSEY

Vacation Enclave Resort Proposed

While the emphasis in Henry George circles has in the immediate past been on education and political action, there is a small group that believes in the enclave or colony idea. Not all of these are 100% Single Taxers. A few believe that the very wealthy in property and income should pay taxes on these. Those with more than enough for a comfortable living.

It is suggested that a community partly embodying the principle of no taxes on improvements be established as a vacation enclave resort in the heart of the poorest section of the Appalachian mountains where land value is lowest. It might include a solar or wind power plant, a small factory and year-around greenhouses. A few hundred dollars have been pledged. Moneys involved could be on both a donation and an investment basis. If you are interested, please communicate with EQUAL RIGHTS.

— Gilbert Cope
West Chester, Pa. 19380

Inflation — Depression — America Needs Us Now!

The nation's economy is spinning out of control today faster than in the great depression, according to United Steel Workers President I. W. Abel. Asked if the nation is headed toward another depression similar to the 1930's, he responded that all indications certainly look that way. He called on government and business leaders to assume a responsible role in stemming soaring inflation. The seriousness of the whole economic situation is now recognized on every hand as indicated in the daily and weekly press and the testimony of numerous economic authorities.

During years of economic growth and apparent prosperity, some have questioned whether there is any real need for the basic reform that Georgists have to offer. The average economics student, immersed in the economic precepts of John Maynard Keynes, is indifferent to the straight-forward economic principles of Henry George. Keynesianism holds that the free and open market place cannot regulate the economy; the government must control it. Now it is clear that Keynesian economics has failed the test of time and has resulted in disastrous inflation that is now inflicting itself throughout the United States and most of the other great industrial nations.

Henry George discovered the true remedy for social and economic evils, that it is much greater than a mere fiscal reform. He proclaimed that "we must break down all monopolies and destroy all special privilege."

Our editorial policy is dedicated to "equal rights for all, not special privilege for some." Henry George urged that we should "destroy land monopoly and then industry must become the cooperation of equals." It is the primary duty of Georgists to combat land monopoly and speculation by means of the land value tax. But we should at the same time exert every influence we can to curbing other dangerous monopolies and defending free enterprise. Land value taxation and free enterprise are the two means essential for the attainment of equal rights in the economy. Let us proclaim our ultimate goal: "Land and Liberty."

— PERCY R. WILLIAMS

All the country needs is a new and sincere thought in politics, coherent, distinctly and boldly uttered by men who are sure of their ground. The power of men like Henry George seems to me to mean that; and why should not men have sane purposes and avail themselves of the thirst and enthusiasm for better, higher, more hopeful purposes in politics than either of the moribund parties can give.

— Woodrow Wilson.

The Single Tax Versus Property Tax Reform

Henry George was not the founder of a property tax reform club, nor did he write any books or make any speeches on that particular topic. George wrote and spoke about something he eventually decided to call the Single Tax—the abolition of all taxes on labor, commerce and industry, and the public collection of the full annual rent of land by means of a single tax on land values. (This is not a tax on land sales.) He also said that natural monopolies such as railroads and utility companies, which require special rights-of-way across land, should be taken over and operated by the public.

George's objective was to emancipate labor and establish social justice by implementing the principle of *Equal rights for all and special privileges to none*.

The Single Tax is a powerful idea readily grasped by ordinary people once they have the opportunity to fully consider it.

There are three major disadvantages in emphasizing property tax reform. First is the danger that Georgist arguments for reforming the property tax may be misconstrued by the populace and misrepresented by the landlords to be arguments for abolishing the property tax. Be aware that a powerful landed interest is constantly working to dismantle the property tax system. It would be the most tragic of ironies if Georgist criticism of the property tax were to be used by those who seek to annihilate the taxation of land values. Even as presently constituted and administered, the property tax embodies a significant component part of land value taxation, and is therefore the best tax we now have.

Secondly, unless the taxes on land are increased by substantially more than the reduction of taxes on improvements, it is likely that land values will increase and the landlords will be beneficiaries of the reform.

Thirdly, the obscure and un compelling labyrinth of property tax reform will never revitalize the once-glorious movement founded by Henry George. The latent strength of the movement will manifest itself again when Georgists present the case for the Single Tax in the fullness of its beauty and justice.

—Richard Pensack, *The Analyst*
San Francisco, July, 1974

In his book "Progress and Poverty," Henry George gave the world the only sound and permanent solution of our economic problems.

—Herbert Bigelow, Congressman, 1934,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Manifesto Issued by Eleventh Annual Congress

Cincinnati, Ohio, Nov. 12-14, 1936

The members of the Henry George Foundation of America wish to announce to the public their views on some basic questions now confronting the whole world.

1. We believe in democracy, in contradistinction to communism, fascism and dictatorship under any form of government.

2. We believe in capitalism under conditions of freedom. We are opposed to all forms of private monopoly.

3. We believe that unemployment will cease when men have access to land suitable for use.

4. We believe that untaxing buildings and an increased tax on urban land will cure the slum evil.

5. We believe in voluntary cooperation by people living under conditions of individual freedom.

6. We believe that the sales tax is a most pernicious form of taxation because it falls especially on the poor.

7. We believe that business men should favor the Single Tax because it would increase the purchasing power of their customers; that tenant farmers should favor it because agricultural land owners will then not hold more land than they can use profitably, and thus tenant farmers will be able to obtain land at a low price; that all artisans should favor it because it will make jobs and increase wages.

8. In general, we believe that the application of the Single Tax promotes the maximum happiness, efficiency and exaltation of the individual; and is the only way by which liberty may be preserved and by which idleness may be averted.

WHAT CAUSES INFLATION?

Inflation is augmented by many things such as union demands for higher wages, increased welfare payments and government inefficiencies, which increase the supply of money without increasing the supply of goods in the market. The underlying or primary cause of inflation is the ever-increasing price of land, increasing the cost of all industry applied to the land. Land held out of use denies opportunities for profitable employment and increases the cost of welfare.

The remedy is to tax all land according to its true value through equitable assessments. All good land would be put to good use and thus provide ample funds for public needs, including schools, police and fire protection, and reduction of other taxes whether on buildings, wages or sales.

—Julian P. Hickok.

I regard Henry George as one of the greatest thinkers and leaders of his day.

—Josephus Daniels,
Member of President Wilson's Cabinet.

Welfarism

The quality of a civilization depends not on technology but on the character of the people; and it is poverty, in the widest sense, which most deeply affects the character of the mass of the people. During the inter-war period the search for the cause of poverty was neglected. Beginning gradually but rising in tempo by the end of World War II, welfarism was accepted as the answer.

Welfarism has immense political advantages. It is the best cover-up for basic injustices and it has a built-in defense against criticism. The critic is liable to be denounced by kindly but thoughtless people as callous to human suffering. And in the atmosphere produced by welfarism the rulers are enabled to deal with every difficulty, not by attending to the cause, but by means of taxes, compulsions and restrictions; by subsidies and privileges granted to pressure groups and other sections whose support may be required. And all this is at the expense of everybody's natural right to the value of what he produces. People no longer resist compulsion; they sink into willing servitude of mind and body.

Yet the principle of welfarism is perhaps the crudest ever applied in modern times, although it is the same as that used in the days of "bread and circuses." In a simple society where it would be obvious, such a method could be applied only by naked force.

Nevertheless human nature cannot with impunity be permanently thwarted. There is growing evidence of a feeling that the mere accumulation of material things does not bring happiness. Perhaps this might eventually induce people to investigate social problems by a method now unorthodox: by the method used in science.

This was the method used by Henry George who foresaw so well that if the ultimate cause of poverty were not removed, civilization might decay. It is a relief to turn to George's clear, direct and simple expression of a great truth which could be put into practice without violence.

—Frank Dupuis, in *Land and Liberty*
June, 1973

THE TYRANNY OF UNIONISM

The methods by which a trade union can alone act, are necessarily destructive; its organization is necessarily tyrannical. A strike, which is the only recourse by which a trade union can enforce its demands, is a destructive contest.

—Henry George

All that is needed to remedy the evils of our time is to do justice and give freedom.

—Henry George

Land Value Taxation As An Inflation Remedy

Land value taxation deals with a very vital part of our economy — its linkage with nature. Hence, its impact would be significantly felt in all parts of the economy.

It would have a significant impact, for example, on inflation:

1. By vivifying the construction industry, which employs so many people, it would reduce the need to inflate the economy to avoid unemployment.

2. Sales, excise and property taxes now figure in the price of products. L.V.T., however, would reduce this component of price, thus combating inflation.

3. By controlling the price of land, and eventually reducing it to near zero, it would constrain the rate of inflation.

4. When banks loan out money to businessmen for their capital investment, this represents an increase in the money supply and in itself this is inflationary. But this inflationary effect is offset by the increased production of the capital investment. The net inflationary effect is thus minimal or short-run.

But when banks loan out money to cover *land purchases*, then new money is created but there is no new production to offset it! No new land will be produced — the supply is fixed.

With an increase in money and no resulting increase in the production of goods and services, inflation necessarily follows.

When we consider that U.S. land values today are \$800-100 million, *conservatively estimated*, and that most of this is mortgaged, we see that a substantial amount of bank deposit money has been created to cover mortgages on land with a tremendous inflationary pressure.

The cure? Land value taxation, obviously. — Steven Cord

NATIONAL CONFERENCE PLANNED

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over a period of 18 years, will resume a policy which has proven effective in promoting active cooperation through open forum discussion, reports and exchange of experiences in the various fields of action.

Meanwhile the Finance Committee headed by William W. Newcomb, a newly-elected Vice President of the Foundation, is earnestly exploring ways and means of solving the pressing financial problem resulting from the long neglect of adequate support for Georgist political action. Your advice and assistance will be welcomed.

What's Wrong With The Civil Rights Movement?

The civil rights movement has become a sanctuary for every kind of civil rights hustler. It is these hustlers who are promoting the racial polarization that is occurring, and they are doing more harm than good. The failure of black leaders to explore the possibilities of Property Tax Reform as an orderly process of resolving the racial issue unemployment, high or adequate living wage must be publicized.

I am opposed to the "quota system" because it is a benefit to only a handful of people, notably the individual with the biggest mouth. I am opposed to open occupancy because it enables the individual with money to run away from his less fortunate brother and disengage him from helping the unfortunate who lacks money.

I am opposed to "integration by law" because I am also opposed to "segregation by law." I am opposed to "low income or subsidized housing" because it perpetuates a poverty life-style through complacency: would not "high income wages" permit those, who desired it, to rent or build a home of their own choice?

The "Property Tax Reform" will provide high income wages to enable people to get the housing they desire! Property Tax Reform will meet the approval of every race, color, creed or nationality, if they understand it.

The big question is: Why has the Black intellectual failed to explore this possibility? These are the questions I am raising.

— Wilbur Johnson
Silver Springs, Maryland

Let's Have News of Action

In five years since its founding, EQUAL RIGHTS has published some 75 items concerning action or significant endorsements for increasing land value taxation and reducing building penalties — by federal, state and local government units and officials, by major commercial and civic organizations, and by magazines and newspapers. So far as possible, someone representing each of these sources has been placed on our mailing list and we hope will read this message, based on the resolution of the Henry George Groups Conference held in Pittsburgh this summer, proposing to make the Henry George Foundation a clearing house and coordinating center for positive action.

Amplified news gathering concerning such efforts and achievements is the obvious first necessity in our movement, enabling all workers in the field to know they are not such isolated minorities as they may fear, and to exchange details about forms of legislation and strategy.

Have there been further developments along the lines of your previously reported steps? Have there been setbacks which it might be well to discuss with those facing similar obstacles? *Write!*

The widespread revolt against indiscriminating "property taxes," and the universal bafflement over inflation and unemployment create rare opportunities for those of us who see the need to put all land into well-planned, competitive use, without barriers to constructive enterprise.

— John C. Weaver

Optional Housing Tax Exemptions Proposed

David O'Loughlin, Pittsburgh's Housing Coordinator, has announced the introduction of a bill co-sponsored by five State Representatives (H.R. 2650) which would give every county, city, borough, township or school district in Pennsylvania the option of exempting all new or improved dwelling units in "deteriorating areas," up to any chosen maximum, and with the choice of three years' total exemption on the new construction, or five or ten years gradually decreasing exemption. Deteriorating areas would be designated by the local taxing body after hearings.

More Subscribers Needed

We extend a hearty welcome to new friends who have responded to our appeal for support, as well as to many former contributors who have renewed.

But to continue and to expand our work, we need more subscribers and a more adequate budget. If you like our new quarterly, EQUAL RIGHTS, we urge you to join our Georgist fellowship so that we may take advantage of increasing interest in our cause. If you have not yet enrolled, please send your contribution now to Henry George Foundation, 336 Fourth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222.