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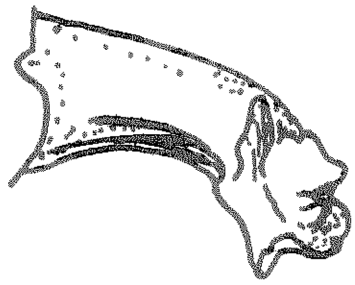
The Gargoyle



"A throat, mouthpiece, spout." Opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and not necessarily endorsed by the Henry George School.

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL of NEW JERSEY Issue #135 D E C E M B E R 196[illegible].

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

TO ALL OUR READERS

THE OX AND THE MULE

A farmer had an ox and a mule that he hitched together to a plow. One night after several days of continuos plowing, the ox said to the mule "We have been working pretty hard; let's play sick tomorrow and lie here in the stalls all day."

"You can if you want to," replied the mule, "but I believe I'll go to work."

So the next morning when the farmer came out the ox played sick; the farmer bedded him down with clean straw, gave him a bucket of oats and left him for the day as he went forth to plow with the mule alone.

All that day the ox lay in his stall ate his feed and chewed his cud. That night when the mule came in, the ox asked how they got along with the plowing.

"Well," said the mule, "It was pretty hard and we didn't get much done".

"Did the old man say anything about me?"

"No," answered the mule.

"Well then," went on the ox "I believe I'll play sick again tomorrow it was so nice to lie here all day and rest."

"That's up to you" replied the mule "I'm going out to plow."

So the next day the ox played off again, and lay all day, nodding and chewing his cud.

When the mule came in at night, the ox asked how they got along without him.

"About the same as yesterday," replied the mule coldly.

"Did the old man have anything to say about me?" again inquired the ox,

"No," said the mule, "not to me, but he did have a long talk with the butcher on the way home."

FARMERS' ALMANAC 1,70

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF NEW JERSEY
149 South Harrison Street
East Orange, New Jersey 07018

THE AMAZING TAX ASSESSOR

Carole E. Wolff, Ph.D. and Judson R. Landis, Ph.D. both associate professors of Sociology at Sacramento State College contributed a most interesting article to the October 1969 issue of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIOLOGY, entitled - "Dr. Irene Hickman and Tax Reform in Sacramento County, Calif."

The story is: when Dr. Hickman (an osteopathic physician) appealed an assessment on her property, the judge stated; "If homeowners don't like the way they are being assessed they can elect a new assessor." Dr. Hickman ran for the office in 1966. She was elected.

When she took over her duties, the appraisers were required to study how to appraise. (those in her office.) Selected tracts of land were re-appraised and their new values recorded on the records. "Opponents accused her of 'Robin Hood' tactics, upping the assessments on the rich in order to balance lowering appraisals on over 300,000 homes....As they saw it she was out to get land speculators and large land owners."

"About a month after taking office the new assessor gave the opposition their issue....she mentioned she would be assessing property at 100% of market value....

"To Dr. Hickman the issue was simple and straight forward. She had taken an oath to uphold the law and the law required assessment of property at 100% of market value."

The article in THE JOURNAL relates a number of personal characteristics of this most unusual lady. She was subjected to many harrassments and there were two seperate committees formed for her recall from office. One was organized by a disgruntled employee in her office. This attempt was not well organized or financed and failed to obtain the number of signatures required.

The other group called "Citizens Committee for Assessors Recall" was guided by wealthy land owners, politicians and "interested citizens." They set up petition stations in shopping centers, circulated them door to door and paid petition carriers. Over 55,000 signatures were obtained - enough to force a recall election.

Three candidates filed petitions to be listed on the ballot, one "was manager of a large land investment and development firm." Dr. Hickman attempted to run herself as a write-in candidate, reasoning, "30,000 might vote to keep her, 30,001 might vote for recall. Thus she might get 30,000 votes and lose, and yet one of her opponents might get 20,000 votes (2/3 of those against her) and win. She might not be liked by most but still better liked than any other candidate."

It was believed her write-in was not legal and disallowed. Her $440. filing fee was returned to her. One of the opponents, because of many duplicate signatures on the petition was ruled out. Dr. Hickman began to check the 55,000 signatures on the recall petition. "After going thru about half, she found in excess of 2,000 invalid signatures - duplicates and forgeries (she called in a handwriting expert). She asked for the election to be delayed. She was turned down. The courts felt that since much money had already been spent preparing for the election, it should be held as scheduled, and claims of fraud could be filed after the election took place.

In the weeks prior to election, Dr. Hickman made speeches, ran ads in newspapers and used billboards. On these appeared four "sinster shadowy figures with the question, 'Who's Behind Irene's Recall? and underneath the answer - 'The Big Land Lords.'

Came election - nearly 60% of the voters opposed recall. Dr. Hickman received a greater percentage of the vote than when she was first elected. She lost 45 out of 323 precints -the former all in the affluent areas of the city. She ran strongest in the lower and middle class areas with ratios as high as 4 to 1. Dr. Hickman then reported - business will go on as usual in the assessor's office. She announced also that it would be only right for the recall committee rather than the county to pay the cost of the election, some $50,000.

"Property appraising is where medicine was at the turn of the century," commented assistant County Executive Hal White. Methods of determining the value of property lack standardization; assessors staffs are generally small, poorly equipped and poorly trained; and the political pressures on the $22,000 a year elective office are considerable. It's neither a secret nor a surprise that manipulation of assessments occurs often to the benefit of large landholders and business", state Wolff and Landis in the article, which concludes: "At any rate, even her critics agree that Dr. Hickman is an honest woman, doing to the best of her ability (which is considerable) what she sincerely believes in. And that, after all, merely reflects her philosophy of living; 'If a man has wisdom and does not share it with his fellows; or if he has great wealth and keeps it all unto himself, he is likely to be reborn a woman.' (Dr. Hickman believes in re-incarnation!)

THE ERA OF THE GAMBLER

It is slowly becoming a conviction to an increasing number of people that we are now entering what might be termed the era of the gambler. Such virtues as thrift and hard work are viewed increasingly with more or less indifference, if not scorn, particularly by the young. This is puzzling to many of the older generation for it is so contrary to the values which they have cherished and on which they were reared.

But the sad fact is that it really should not be surprising for this is the typical behavior of people living in a nation where inflation has become a way of life. With the government having constantly increased what is mistakenly termed the money-supply (i.e., its non-interest bearing circulating debts) with the result that prices constantly rise, there seems little point to save. Why save a dollar today when it will buy less tomorrow? Instead borrow a dollar today and pay it back tomorrow in a dollar of less purchasing power. To paraphrase Polonius, "Always a borrower be, never a lender." Such seems to be the motto of the day.

And, of course, if thrift is foolish, it is not too much of a jump to consider that hard work is equally foolish. Why wear yourself out to day? You only live once. Enjoy yourself on borrowed money. Gamble on the drop in purchasing power, gamble, that you will win a lottery prize, gamble, gamble, gamble.

And all this gambling is aided and abetted by government. More states as New Jersey, are setting up lotteries as the "painless" way to raise taxes, and the people are exhorted to take a chance and win a fortune. Is it any wonder, then, that the volume of business in the stock market is so great that the brokerage houses almost break down trying to meet the demand. Almost everyone's gambling and feels that they should.

And it cannot be gainsaid that in the present environment the gambler has something on his side. If it does not pay to put money in a savings account for one's old age, as inflation may make it practically worthless when one retires, then either spend it today or gamble so as to have at least something if one is lucky. So gamble in real estate, in the stock market, in gold, in antiques, in anything substantial, but don't gamble on the purchasing power of money remaining constant.

But it is a sad truism that few of us can gamble and win. Just as only a handful ever can possibly win in a lottery, so only a relatively small group will be able to gamble successfully whether it be in the stock market, in real estate or in any other venture. The mass of the people will lose, and what they lose the small, lucky few gamblers will win.

So, the individual who asks for nothing but the opportunity to work and stand on his own feet is truly perplexed. He appreciates that we are living in the era of the gambler, yet he knows that if he gambles, he will most likely lose, and yet if he does nothing, he is gambling that the era of sound money and sound economics will ensue. And he does not seriously believe that such is likely to happen.

There is unfortunately no answer. Each individual must approach his own situation with as much intelligence as possible, trying to keep abreast of the changing economic and social conditions and adjusting as best he can. The alert individual has, at least, one thing in his favor. He is aware of the era in which he is living and is not fooled by the bland assertions of sundry politicians and bureaucrats that things are getting under control.

Life goes on, no matter what. So he tries to get as much out of it, in as honorable a way as he can. And one of the best ways to make it an enjoyable experience despite the absurd economic woes of the day is to follow as best as one can, the example of the gentleman Carpenter who lived almost 2000 years ago in a small country in the East. The life of the Prince of Peace must have been a wonderful one despite the grinding poverty and terrible persecution he suffered for he was trying to tell all who would listen how best to live in peace and harmony with one another. What better inspiration is there for one's own life?

Oscar B. Johannsen

SENSE & NONSENSE

It is interesting to note how monopolists gradually try to entrench themselves in their privilege. One of the most valuable privileges is a license to operate a television station. The airwaves are public domain--land--but a particular frequency can only be used by one station at a time, the government, thru the Federal Communications Commission, allocates the frequencies.

A license is good for three years and costs nothing. Those who presently hold them argue that they have made so great an investment that not to renew a license would be disastrous, so, in effect, up to now they have had a perpetual license.

However, as the quality of the programs has deteriorated, there have been increasing arguments that automatic renewal should cease. After all, the licensees are well aware that the license is for only three years and should adjust their business accordingly. Besides, if a present holder loses a license, he can probably sell his equipment to the winner, so may not even suffer any loss whatever. But, in any event, the fact that an investment has been made is no excuse for constantly renewing it.

Well, what has been the result? An obvious one. The present licensees are trying to have a bill passed by Congress to protect them from renewal competition. While this bill may not get far now due to the Administration's antipathy to the television networks, as it feels they have been biased against it, nonetheless it is indicative of how monopolies tend to expand their control.

Of course, it is absurd to give licenses for nothing. They should be rented out each year, or possibly for three years to the highest bidders. Not only would the government receive a high revenue, but it would not need indulge in any attempt at controlling broadcasts. If a station wished to sell its programs via pay-TV, it could without anyone's permission. If it wished to render free programs, depending on advertising revenue it could, and, it could editorialize to its heart's content just as a newspaper does. Today it does not, for despite its entrenched position, it still knows it must have its license renewed, and that tends to make its editorializing bland and uninspiring.

Only when licenses are rented out, will the full potential of the radio and television be realized for only then will the broadcasters be truly free to sell their wares to the public.

Why land is not used to its maximum potential:

Charlottesville, Va. advertisement: Prime Location, panoramic view, 20 acres, Price: $112,500. Taxes $326.72

21 acres and home in Whitehall, Va., price $33,000. taxes: $364.20

In Rhodesia, its army and police evicted the Tangwena tribe from their ancestral home. The Tangwenas were living in an area designated white under the Land Apportionment Act, which means that black Africans can live there only as servants.

On July 22, 1969 the High Appellate Division of the High Court in Salisbury unanimously upheld the argument of the tribe that they were entitled to stay there. But the government ignored the court and issued an eviction order. The 50 square mile ancestral lands are used by no one, but they now belong to the Garesi ranch. The manager of the ranch wanted them moved and dismissed their appeal that they and their ancestors had lived there as of no account.

This ruthless treatment of these black Africans is reminiscent of the cruel treatment which the white man gave to the Indians here in America.

Why is it that where land is concerned, the so-called "civilized" man is so much less "civilized" than aborigines?

SALT OF THE EARTH

At this time of the year, it might be well to keep in mind that when Uncle Sam plays Santa Claus, it's the taxpayer who holds the bag.

The difference between a politician and a statesman is simple; The politician thinks of the next election; the statesman of the next generation.

Some people have tact; others tell the truth.

Daffynitions:

Business economy: A reduction in some other employee's salary.

Faithful: Descriptive of a mother-in-law -- She never leaves him no matter what he does.

Executive ability: The faculty of earning your livlihood by the work of other people.

Husband: A man of few words.

Lame Duck: A politician whose goose has been cooked.

Thirty years old: The age of a woman who is forty.

Son: Dad why don't they ever give any showers for the groom?

Father: Because there'll be plenty of storms for him after the bride reigns.

Woman politician: What is home without a mother?

Man in back row: Your baby!

ARE YOU FREE
in the afternoon

on the second Tuesday of the month? If so why not attend the Afternoon Discussion Group which meets at school headquarters 1:30 to 3:30?

Any who can attend are most welcome.

Topics include anything and everything of interest and those who come out leave feeling they have learned just a bit or maybe a lot. How about joining the group January 13th 1970?

H A P P Y   N E W   Y E A R