

The People



"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

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AC T I O N N O W!

Educational, Political, Methods and Financing, Internal and External, Publications, Western Hemisphere Headquarters.

These are the principal scheduled topics for discussion and action at the forthcoming Henry George Groups Consultation to be held at Chatham College, Pittsburgh, Pa. June 14 - 16th.

What is meant by Education, so far as the Henry George movement is concerned? Does it mean formal Adult Study Groups? Courses or inclusion of Henry George philosophy and economic presentation in public and other schools? Literature, Television, Radio and Publications?

What is meant by Political Action? Does it mean formation of a new political party or convincing one of the two major parties, or one of the minor parties they should embrace and legislate our program? Where has political action been taken? With what results? Should political action be devoted to MANDATORY, rather than permissive legislation? Much as liberty is opposed to compulsion, is not the present land tenure system and property taxation compulsory? Might it therefore, in view of experience, be better to aim for future effort directed toward mandatory Site Value Taxation?

What is meant by using the methods of other organizations for publicity, education, political action, financing?

Should there be two publications, one to keep informed and assist all those promoting Henry George program and one for outsiders? A media for the public, including officials, particularly those in the field of land use and taxation? This to be a means for carefully explaining our philosophy and means of bringing about a better land tenure system - to make converts?

Ought there be a Western Hemisphere Headquarters to provide cooperation to all organizations and individuals promoting the Henry George philosophy in the U.S.A., Canada, Mexico, Central and South America? If so, should a new organization be formed or might the Henry George Foundation of America be expanded to serve this purpose?

All interested persons are cordially invited to attend this Consultation. The entire cost is \$30. including room and meals. Anyone desiring to attend is requested to reserve, without definite commitment as soon as possible. Write to Jack Tetley, Coordinator, 580 Alden St., Woodbridge, N.J. 07095.

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THE OIL RENT

Oscar B. Johannsen

Nobody seems to have noticed that the high handed actions of the oil sheiks are similar to those of a powerful landowner seeking to corner the market for the particular commodity produced on his land.

It is recognized, of course, that the embargo on oil to the United States and the Netherlands is merely part of the strategy of driving up the price of oil. Israel is merely the excuse to cover up the real motive, which is simply to get more money.

Now, most of the wealth which the sheiks are receiving for the oil presents economic rent. Since there are relatively few people in the Arab Countries, we have a situation similar to that in any country where a few landowners control the land. Just as the few landowners are puzzled as to what to do with the huge amounts of economic rent they receive, for instance, the Rockefeller's, so the sheiks are in the same quandary. They could spread it around among the inhabitants of their countries, and to a degree they do, but only to a degree.

Lord Acton's dictum that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely applies only too vividly in the case of the sheiks. Some of them as the head of the Libyan government find themselves with so much power due to their control of the oil that they seem to have lost touch with reality. But not all.

Some are well aware that their position could easily become vulnerable. With so few people sitting on top of this tremendously necessary commodity, they recognize that if they are not sensible, those needing the commodity will not hesitate to use guns to get the oil. And in the U.S., we have had commentators actually urge the U.S. to invade a country as Libya to get the oil.

The "gunboat" diplomach amounts to a crude recognition that the oil does not belong to the sheiks or the people living there anymore than the natural resources of the U.S. belong to us. Actually, the resources of the earth belong to all people. It is because this is true that whenever someone deliberately withholds some natural resource, sooner or later, someone arises who urges force to obtain it.

But force is not what is wanted. Instead, let us reason. What is needed, since most of the oil revenue which the sheiks receive constitutes rent, is that they distribute it among the people in their ~~land~~ ^{land} on a prt vsplys nasis. At the same time, however, they should permit anyone who wishes to emigrate to their lands to do so.

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If they do this, the tremendous sums they receive will be distributed fairly and equitably. It would mean the building up of their countries for since the per capita share of the rent would be high, many would wish to go to those lands to get it. As more entered, the per capita share would drop until there was no advantage in emigrating to those lands.

Those lands would have millions of people instead of the relative few there now. Those millions could not help but develop a great civilization there reviving memories of the great Eastern civilizations of antiquity.

One would be naive if one expected that anything like the above would be put into effect. Not only do the sheiks and their people suffer from lack of understanding of the economics involved, but so do the people of the rest of the world. Few question that the oil belongs to the sheiks and their people, just as few question the right of private property in land in the western world. So, it is apparent that the Middle East will be a tinder box for years to come. There is simply too much oil there with too few people.

Whatever the excuses may be, when war erupts there you can be sure that the real reason will be to get control of that oil.

Until people recognize that the economic rent of land, whether it is oil or anything else, belongs to all the people and not some few who happen to be considered to be the "owners" of the land, economic distortions will arise which will culminate in social and other disorders.

The world we inhabit is predicated on the principles of justice. Unjust conditions cannot be maintained, and in their correction terrible calamities affect the world.

SENSE AND NONSENSE

Brezhnev, the Soviet Communist Party leader, in a secret speech before the Communist Party's central committee, disclosed the fact that the soviets have lost millions of tons of grain from what was claimed to have been a record harvest of 222.5 million tons last year. The loss was caused by inadequate storage and transport facilities.

Bundles of grain were left to rot in the open exposed to the weather. Apparently the planners forgot to build enough storage bins, so now they are going to put on a crash program to build them. But it doesn't matter what they do, they will forget something or other and will only wake up to the mistake when the grain or whatever crop is winds up rotting in the fields.

SALT OF THE EARTH

They think now that possibly only about 165 million tons of grain was actually usable last year, which may explain why the Soviets bought so much grain from us.

Reports had been rife that the Soviets were going to eliminate the private plots of collective farmers. But Brezhnev's talk made no mention of that fact. I guess they may be foolish but they're not that dumb. If they did that, it wouldn't be long before there would be famine in the cities.

Why is it that the U.S. fears Soviet Russia? If it can't feed its own people without coming to capitalistic U.S.A., how would it be a serious threat to us?

The Japanese are beginning to appreciate the land values in the U.S. Increasingly they are purchasing real estate. They've acquired several major hotels, including Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills, golf courses, apartment buildings and expensive homes. To the Japanese, land costs here are "peanuts". In downtown Los Angeles land sells at \$50 a square foot. In downtown Tokyo, comparable real estate sells at \$900 a square foot.

This gives you an indication of the fact that bad as the land problem is here in the U.S., it is ten times as bad in a country as Japan. Is it any wonder there are so many militant socialists and communists in Japan? Sooner or later something will erupt in the land of the rising sun.

Now that the war in Vietnam is presumably over, as might be expected, the land reform which was instituted to get the loyalty of the peasants to the South Vietnam government is being eroded.

The land reform was financed largely by America in 1970 to woo the peasants from allegiance to the Vietcong. In 3 1/2 years 2.5 million acres were transferred to farmers, relieving them of rents which went as high as one-third of their crop.

Former landowners allied with corrupt officials are trying to steal back the land. They use all kinds of tricks. Apparently land cannot be given to the peasants if it is urban land, so former landlords claim their land comes under the urbanization law, and thus never should have been distributed.

No doubt, after a few years, things will be back as they were before, so once again the communists will be making a great appeal to the peasants. Will America then go to Vietnam to maintain the landlords stranglehold of the land?

* * * * *

50 years ago - 1924, 100 billion marks (German) would not buy a loaf of bread. So why worry about \$1. a loaf for bread in 1974?

You can tell you're middle aged when all the phone numbers in your little black book are for doctors.

TV is a tube which it is mighty hard to squeeze anything good out of.

If you are going around in circles, probably you're cutting too many corners.

During the depression, Will Rogers was criticized for using the word ain't. He said: "Maybe ain't ain't so correct, but I notice a lot of folks who ain't using ain't--ain't eating."

A friend of mine was a very patriotic landlord. He foresaw the energy crisis four years ago and he's been cutting down on the heat ever since.

Now that we have electric toothbrushes some people still see their dentist twice a year, but they see their electrician three times a week.

Be smart. If your wife wants to learn how to drive, don't stand in her way.

Whenever I hear a politician talking about revenue sharing, I always wonder whose revenue he's talking about sharing.

BRIEF COMMENTS ON THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL ACTION

The problem of political action to promote the Georgist cause is a very difficult one. Many years of experience have proven that there is no quick and easy road to victory.

In a democracy, any political action is subject to the consent of the majority of the citizens. But the minority is often right and must fight to win popular support. Effective political propaganda will tend to popularize a cause.

An immediate concern should be to enlist support for an intensive effort to obtain legislation favorable to the program.

Our immediate concern should be to enlist support for an intensive effort to obtain legislation favorable to our cause. Such legislation may be federal, state or municipal. But it is the consensus that the local approach is best suited for the advancement of land value taxation because the taxation of land values is now and long has been in actual operation through the local real property tax in every state of the Union.

No attempt should be made to form new political party because experience has proven that the established political parties can be influenced in various ways by means of open primaries and political competition in elections.

Through the years many Georgists have been elected to public office as members of Congress, Governors, Mayors, and state legislators. Others have utilized candidacies to spread propaganda, when not successful in elections.

Various campaigns have been conducted by the direct legislation method where issues can be presented to voters through the initiative and referendum. This applies particularly to constitutional amendments when proposed changes are submitted to a decision by popular vote. California is the most conspicuous example where single taxers have repeatedly conducted statewide campaigns.

Permissive legislation is an important factor wherever mandatory legislation is prohibited by existing state laws or constitutional provisions. Obviously mandatory legislation is preferable because optional legislation has no effect other than to provide an opportunity for local action.

Pennsylvania affords a concrete example. The two second class cities of Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh and Scranton, enjoy the benefits of the Graded Tax plan because of Mandatory state legislation enacted in 1913.

The state constitution and laws providing for classification of cities sanctioned this law. Mandatory legislation for third class cities would have also been legally possible, but not politically possible without agreement on the part of at least a majority of the 50 third class cities. Under the local option act of 1959, any third class city is free to adopt a graded tax plan of its own choice by legislative action of its city council at any time.

National issues also concern Georgists. Henry George launched a vigorous campaign for Free Trade in his time, and Single Taxers have continued to exert efforts for tariff reform and have elected members of Congress who made that a principal issue. Georgists can join with other groups to support equal rights and to oppose monopoly or special privilege.

Concentration of political campaigning is desirable and perhaps necessary because of the limitations of manpower and money, as well as moral support. If an adequate local demonstration can be achieved, it will give a great impetus to the national movement.

PERCY R. WILLIAMS

FOR LAND'S SAKE

Jack Tetley

The Henry George Schools have done a JOB. At a time when the Georgist philosophy was waning, they came upon the scene and revived it. From the schools have come many leaders and persons who have carried on. A number of the Henry George Schools, unfortunately have folded.

As we are now at a point where more intensive effort must be forth-coming, both

in the direction of education and in other avenues, such as political, and as I have so often expressed my opinion, there ought to be a truly National Headquarters, or perhaps, I should say, Western Hemisphere Headquarters. This would embrace the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Central and South America. Of course there is not much in the way of organization in countries south of the border at present, but there ought to be.

The International Union for Land Value taxation and Free Trade, in many respects may be considered World Headquarters, and perhaps it also may expand to embrace that function.

I do not think any new organization is needed for the Western Hemisphere Headquarters, the Henry George Foundation of America is an established and respected organization with both educational and political provisions which can, and I believe ought to be expanded.

For many years after its formation in 1932, the Henry George School of Social Science, expanded with extensions and affiliated schools. In a sense it served as "headquarters". This informal organization did go along fairly well, but it always seemed to me there should be a Headquarters with representation of all groups separate and distinct from the New York Henry George School.

After the change in administration at the New York School, when a number of extensions and affiliated schools were "dropped", I felt there ought to be some central point of contact and encouragement for the dropped schools and took it upon myself to call a Consultation. As it turned out some of the N.Y. City and affiliated schools joined with us and while no formal organization resulted there were subsequent consultations of this informal group.

It seems that we are now at the point of resolving this situation.

The Henry George Foundation of America, was chartered as a non-profit corporation the purpose as stated: "The support of an educational undertaking in the establishment of an institute for the stimulation of interest in the study of the science of political economy and, particularly for the promulgation and application of the principles of Political Economy, that is to say, the economic philosophy of Henry George as set forth in the books entitled "Progress and Poverty", "The Science of Political Economy" and his other works.

Here is a ready-made Western Hemisphere Headquarters for the Henry George movement.

This is one of the items on the Agenda for the Consultation at Chatham College in June 1974. If you cannot be present to express your opinion, why not write your views? Send them to me and I assure you they will be presented at the Consultation of the Henry George Groups at Pittsburgh.

Please send them to: John T. Tetley
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