



NewsLetter

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL

December
1975

RANDOM THOUGHTS AT CHRISTMAS

Two of the greatest pieces of Christmas music, Handel's MESSIAH and Bach's CHRISTMAS ORATORIO, both include "pastorales" -- lovely quiet melodies that introduce the story of the shepherds following the star to Bethlehem. Indeed, the peaceful countryside seems a necessary part of the Christmas story. But the cities are represented too, by the Wise Men (scholars) who likely came from cities and who brought gold and riches as their gifts.

Perhaps the Christmas story is telling us that ideally the city and countryside should play more equal roles in human lives. But how sadly untrue this is in 1975, where city dwellers must endure congestion, noise, pollution, wall-to-wall buildings and concrete; while rural people lack social opportunities, movies, concerts, universities, and the variety that a decent-sized population brings.

This problem existed 100 years ago, & Henry George noted it in PROGRESS & POVERTY and SOCIAL PROBLEMS. Surely today, as then, it springs from a totally absurd land ownership situation. Rural land is concentrated in the hands of a few. As wages fall, country folks must flee to cities to seek jobs. City land values rise, making fortunes for city landlords. To complete the circle, many of the city landlords are the very same corporations, banks, insurance companies, energy companies, etc. that are gaining control of land in the country!

Interestingly, a parallel dichotomy exists among those of us who are working in the movement for equal access to land. Too many of us Georgists talk only about how land-value taxation could improve cities; end slums and sprawl, encourage quality buildings, make better use of vacant city lots, etc. We seem to forget our "country cousins"! And too many of our friends in what is generally known as the "land reform" movement talk only about farms, and seem to forget that there is land under cities that needs liberating too! Let's hope we get together in 1976, because the 2 areas are so connected.

Christmas also brings out the dramatic truth of what the movement for economic justice is all about: materialism and spiritualism intertwined.

Some people complain that Christmas is too materialistic. But think: how else can we humans express our happy feelings, save with material things? We are earthly creatures, not ethereal spirits. The tree & ornaments, the gifts & cards, parties & feasts are all legitimate and beautiful expressions of love & celebration.

The "materialistic" complaint, I think, springs from the absolutely justified sense of anger that we don't all share equally in the "good things" of Christmas. The season increases the pain of seeing so many old people in torn & dirty clothes, so many insane wandering the streets, so many ugly slums of buildings in which children must awake Christmas morning. Yet, not far from the tinkling Salvation Army bell, Tiffany's window displays jeweled gifts priced in the thousands of dollars, and elegant women descend from limousines to host sumptuous luncheons at Trader Vic's. Small wonder that Christmas brings more despair, more suicides, than the rest of the year!

Neither does the middle class escape the crunch. Ask almost any working person whether Christmas cost more this year. Think how many extra holiday expenses came from monopolies or quasi-monopolies that the Single Tax would either abolish or place under (citizen-controlled) government ownership: postage rate hikes for mailing cards and packages (the now corrupt and tax-subsidized US Postal Service); phone calls on Christmas Day (ATT); travel (note recent fare increases for many airlines, Amtrak, Greyhound, all supposedly "regulated in the public interest"); gas & oil for auto travel (don't forget the 7 sisters major oil companies); extra gas & power for Xmas lights, extra baking, etc. (the energy companies are giant, profitable monopolies); and even the sugar in those Xmas cookies (remember that year's huge price hikes, pulled off by the almost-monopolistic sugar industry?) To top things off, BankAmericard bought prime time on our (monopolized) TV air waves, and urged working people to go into debt for Christmas!

And so Christmas in 1975 becomes a conglomeration of 2 things at once: a marvelous blend of spiritual & material, of our highest feelings expressed by beautiful creations and words of art. But too, in this lopsided society of slaves, have-littles, and have-more; it becomes the sad season of ironies, the time of contrasts between what is, and what should and could be.

Let us do what we must to have a Christmas soon where no Salvation Army bells tinkle because they are no longer needed; in which everyone can feel the joy & dignity of having an equal chance to get ahead, to save money, to buy presents with cash instead of the promise of future labor, and to live in a society in which it is truly felt that there is peace on earth and good will among men.

FALL TERM FINISHES UP

31 students graduated from the PROGRESS AND POVERTY classes this fall. They are: Shirley Bias, Renato Bisso, Jean Bushing, Louis Bussey, Roland Campos, Jerry Coffer, Hazel Freeman, Bob Hackley, Stephen Harvey, Virginia Helmer, Jerrold Hillesheim, William Jaenicke, Mrs. Tom Johnson, Eva Johnson, Jack Meglen, Paul Merten, Judith Palmer, Robert Palmer, Ron Patterson, Miriam Sarno, Lee Shilman, James Silva, Dee Spieker, Robert Van Neyes, Ernest Whipple, Linda Worrell, and Stephen Morrell. Also from Sacramento: Cecilia Johnson, Eddie Johnson, Fay McVicar and D. Frank Norton.

Also, there were 16 graduates from various advanced courses: R. M. Bathgate, Warren Burel, Otto Grimm, Lewis Hobbs, Gerald Johnson, Ben Mallia, Eric Mitchell, La Moore, Alice Politi, Lloyd Politi, James Robinson, Bob Roelofsen, Mrs. Jess Rogers, Sidney Scott, Kay Stratton, and Jim Watson.

Congratulations to all these students, and we hope you return for more classes in 1976!

As part of our curriculum work, we sent letters to all fall P&P students who did not complete the course, asking them why. So far 28 have responded. 24 dropped for personal reasons unrelated to the course. We hope the new policy of charging a minimal fee for the courses will encourage future students to stick with it and recoup their investment!

ANNUAL BANQUET WAS A BIAST!

Somewhere around 80 people gathered at the Delancey St. Restaurant to celebrate our work this past year. The banquet was preceded by an afternoon panel on land reform, which evoked a good audience discussion.

The big sounds of the D. St. Band got lots of people dancing, and we had to beg them to sit down and eat! Clay Berling didn't let his recent rather serious auto accident prevent him from being our fine M.C., and we appreciated his witty presence. Delancey St. Director Mimi Sylbert had to fly to New York on an emergency, but in her place Mr. Bill Tolliver gave a wonderfully informal but relevant talk.

Graduates, including several from Delancey Street classes, received their diplomas amid general applause.

To climax the ceremonies, Mason Medal Jury Chairman Robert Scrofani made this year's journalism awards to Peter Barnes for his 2 issues of People & Land, and to Examiner columnist Guy Wright for his several articles on financing BART by a land value tax. Although there is normally only 1 cash award (\$500), Mrs. Mason, for this year only, added an award of \$250 for Mr. Wright, because she so greatly admires his work.

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a box of color film. Also a cheese knife. Please come and claim. Happy 1976!

Cathy Covell, Editor

Then an exciting raffle was held by Ann Reeves and Maggi Walker, which brought in an extra \$35.50.

Finally, Clay presented the School's annual prize to the member who has made the most outstanding contribution to our work the past year. This year the Board of Directors' vote resulted in a tie, and the 2 (deserving) recipients were Terry Agnew and Mike Trigg.

Our sincere thanks to all who helped make this event such a success.

TERRY AGNEW SPEAKS TO MENSA & OTHERS

Thanks to a tip from New York friend Dorothy Sara, we contacted the local MENSA chapter, and arranged a speaking date for Terry in early November.

(MENSA is a group of people that have passed a difficult IQ test). Terry fielded some good questions after his talk, and both he and MENSA seemed to enjoy the experience.

On December 6 Terry travelled to South San Francisco, where the Lieutenant Governor's Conference on Unemployment was happening at the Airport Hilton. He distributed lots of literature and spoke personally with, among others, Lt. Gov. Mervyn Dymally and Sen. John Tunney.

BACK AT THE SAN FRANCISCO HILTON

On November 13, Larry Schmitz, Joe Husar and Cathy Covell joined a peaceful demonstration sponsored by the Tenants Action group outside the annual convention of the National Association of Realtors. We handed out literature to both the Tenants Action people and the realtors, and engaged in some good discussions.

S.F. BRANCH PLANS EQ SEMINAR

It will be an all-day seminar entitled "The Economics of Abundance" on Saturday, January 10 at the Dawn Horse Book Store on Folk Street in San Francisco. We are paying \$50 to use this lovely auditorium, and plan to work like crazy to get 100 people there! Watch for our ad in the Dec. 23 Bay Guardian. We're especially anxious to have some economics students and professors attend this one. Admission will be \$5. Hope you'll come, too.

OTHER SEMINARS PLANNED, TOO

Terry has set up 2 more for the coming months: "Economic Justice" at the S.F. Jewish Community Center, Sunday, Feb. 1, 1-5 PM - \$2

"The Wealth Machine" at THEETA seminars, Tuesday, Feb. 17, 6-10 PM \$15

YEAR-END ODDS 'N ENDS

We've collected some things at the office, to whom they belong we know not: A Kodak Instamatic Camera, with film still in it(it's at picture #7); also

Editor's note: Continuation of responses to Cathy Covell's April 1975 editorial: "Land Speculation by Georgists?" More to come.

On the one hand we all want to be rich as soon as possible. Speculation in land has sometimes been a way to accomplish this end.

On the other hand we would like to have a just society based on public collection of ground rent.

Contradictory goals are they not? To the extent that public collection of the rent succeeds in becoming a political issue, to that extent it would tend to dampen the increase in the speculative price of land. Let alone being fully implemented where it would wipe out land prices.

Therefore it is not surprising for those espousing these mutually exclusive goals to unconsciously develop psychological mechanisms that allow them to avoid inner conflict. One rationalization is to project implementation of public collection of ground rent into the distant future, if ever, - Certainly not in our life time!

As a consequence of this dichotomy there has been throughout the Georgist movement a watering down, a dilution, veillation, equivocation, and fostering of narrow schemes. By soft pedaling the Georgist message, those speculators within the movement deceived themselves into believing land prices would rise forever. Holding to the belief that Government policies could nullify natural economic laws and stave off the consequence of speculation in land, depression, they did and still do, minimize the gravity of the economic crisis.

The chances to Garner windfalls in land speculation are gone. No sense to try and recoup losses. The best investment we can make is to put our resources to work in building a just society.

Integrity and seriousness of purpose will be rewarded by the faster spread of the Georgist principles. Widespread cynicism, crass materialism, heartless hedonism have left a void waiting to be filled by principles and believers that explain the rottenous and corruption and promise something better.

Joe Husar

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If some of our opinions have discouraged any land-speculators from donating a portion of their gains to Henry George School, we apologize, and explain how they can give us money in the future.

Send cash. Send it secretly if you want to. We'll accept that cash, say bad things about land speculation, and good things about men. We don't condemn men. We condemn unwise tax laws. And if we say something that offends some benevolent land-speculator, he has a recourse. He can hold back the money. We wouldn't want the money, anyway, if he tried to dominate our thinking. We like what we believe and understand. Our ideas aren't for sale or trade. But we will give them away.

We think some of these ideas are pretty good, and remain astounded that more business-men don't discover them. For instance, we think a man ought to be able to keep everything he earns. Everything. We don't just believe this as an article of faith. We understand how necessary this is for capital formation, free enterprise and just good old American getting-in-and-going. If a man does the work, his earnings should be inviolate to any form of taxation. Same thing with his capital investment. All the interest on the capital he worked for should be his. Every last penny of it. We understand this too, better than most of our friends. Because we know the capital is not plucked from even the most outrageously second bush. It has to be worked for in advance. And our ideas will protect these precious accumulations.

Business-men don't believe that capital is harvested from bushes, either. They absolutely know that capital does not dangle from shrubbery. But they do know that capital can be taxed into oblivion; yet they shy away from the wisdom of a land tax. They get skittish even though they know capital can be dissolved by taxation, but the most greedy tax-gatherer can't make the land disappear.

It isn't absolutely foolproof, but a good way to get rich with neighbors doing all the work is to speculate in land. Still, we are pleasantly surprised to find that some of the people who have succeeded in land speculation are impressed with our

philosophy. Perhaps the good sense that led them to these easy pickings helped them to see that land speculation is never a desirable enterprise from society's viewpoint. But we will not reject these people or their profits if they want to help Henry George School.

Eidon Cochran

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Dear Cathy: I have read the April Newsletter of the School, and I note with interest your opinion that the School ought not to accept support from those who have an interest in land speculation. I also note that you ask for the views of others on this question.

I must most respectfully disagree with your opinion, and my disagreement with it in no way indicates my support for the institution of the private ownership of land and the private collection of rent or my moral approval of those policies.

We live in a World where the governments have made certain rules and the law imposes a duty on all of us to abide by these rules. One of the rules now made is that private individuals may collect the rent from land and the accumulated rent and use this for their own purposes. And as you and I are well aware, a large part of the production of working men falls onto the individuals who are so fortunate as to be the recipients of ground rent.

To state that these people are immoral, and that we ought not to allow them to sit on the Boards of Directors is poor logic, inexpedient and foolish. Many conscientious and capable people who understand basic economics and understand the justice of the proposition that ground rent belongs to all of the people have been placed by chance as the recipients of ground rent, and we should certainly make use of any money they are willing to give to the School to help abolish the institution of the private collection of rent. We should welcome their sincere support and participation.

As a lawyer, I am accustomed to playing by the rules of the game - regardless of whether or not I agree with these rules. The same situation applies here. We are of the opinion that the rules ought to be changed, that is, that the rule which allows individuals to collect ground rent is an unjust rule and ought to be changed and we shall work for its change but, in the meantime, we abide by the rules and, if any individual is able to profit by the collection of ground rent, then better him do it and give some of the proceeds to support our good work than someone who would give the proceeds to the property owners protective association.

I attempted to get a class in Progress and Poverty going in Peace River (Canada). I have had four classes of ten or twelve students each in previous years, but I was unable to get enough students this year. I will try again next year and hope to be able to get a class organized.

Keep up the good work. There are so few of us that none of us can lose the faith.

D. W. Freeland

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Dear Cathy: The most dedicated Georgist I ever knew was the late Sid Evans. He was also a millionaire land-speculator, who often remarked: "If one has to live under a corrupt system, it's better to be a beneficiary than a victim of it." Sid lived in a converted street-car, wore clothes that looked as if they came out of a rag-bag, and gave or willed practically everything he owned to the movement.

If your notion that it is corrupt and hypocritical to accept help from land speculators had been the prevailing view when Sid made his gifts and bequests, the San Diego School would have long ago disappeared, the Schalkenbach Foundation would never have produced any films, and there would be no B.E.E. to subsidize efforts such as L.E.A.F. I hope you reconsider your position.

Robert V. Andelson

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Dear Comrades ... "If ever my life settles in the Bay Area, as I sometimes consider, I'd surely like to join your effort there. Cheers for the stand on speculative support of non-speculative work. It's a tricky problem.

Mildred Loomis