

Singletaxers Still Try ---Even After 81 Years

BY LOUIS COOK

Free Press Staff Writer

Remember Singletax? (One word).

If you do you're likely to be rather elderly or else have a good memory for passing references in high school and college text books.

But there is a little band yet who believe after 81 years that Henry George was right and the answer to all economic problems is Singletax.

The Singletaxers will meet here Wednesday at the Pick-Fort Shelby to lay out their patient course for yet one more year. About 100 are expected to attend the annual conference of the Henry George School of Social Science, including a respectable number of judges, professors, attorneys and economists.

The Singletaxers have persevered steadily while the Silver Standard people, the Technocrats and the Townsendites have waxed and waned.

HENRY GEORGE died in 1897, and most of the credo of Singletax was contained in a book called "Progress and Poverty," which he wrote in 1879.

George's principal idea was that all taxes should be based on land value, regardless of what was placed on the land. No income tax. No cigaret tax. No gasoline tax . . . well, there wasn't any gasoline in those days.

Singletax is more than an economic theory. It is a philosophy, too, and many of the things he said have captured the imagination of some quite sharp people. Albert Einstein. John Dewey. Helen Keller. Franklin R. Roosevelt.

Things like: "Let no man imagine that he has no influence. Whoever he may be, and wherever he may be placed, the man who thinks becomes a light and a power."

Singletax is still prosperous enough from donations from its dedicated adherents to maintain a full-time representative in Detroit.

ROBERT D. BENTON, a former Ohio power plant engineer, works for the dawn of a new age in an office in the Ford Building, Suite 920. The Georgians maintain a

teaching schedule during the winter in five Detroit-area locations: libraries, the YMCA, the Birmingham Community House.

Benton is in favor of spreading Singletax through education, although in some areas Singletax is still in politics, but not as much as during the Singletax enthusiasm of pre-World War I.

Benton is proud, however, of State Representatives James Clarkson, of Pontiac, a Henry George fan who fought the state income tax on Georgian grounds and who keeps introducing bills to separate prop-

erty taxation from taxation of buildings and equipment on the property.

The Singletax idea is that taxes on improvements keep people from making improvements.

BENTON SAYS that slums would cease to exist if slum landlords were free to improve their properties without having their taxes raised.

He says there would be no empty stores if store owners could doll them up without having their assessments increased.

Under Singletaxism owners of property which didn't pro-

duce enough to pay the taxes would have their land taken over by the state and eventually find a way into the hands of people who could pay the taxes.

Singletaxers regard all land as the property of the counties, anyhow, for the use of which the occupiers pay rent in the form of taxes.

Beyond this the Singletaxers are pure capitalists, and are rather proud that the Socialists have always refused to have anything to do with them. "It's the way of freedom," says Benton.