

15 May, 1987

Mr. Graham Hart,
Henry George League,
P.O. Box 93,
WEMBLEY, W.A. 6014.

Dear Mr. Hart,

This letter is in response to a request from Mr. John H. Hall, Secretary of the South Australian Division of the Henry George League, for me to write a Foreword to the booklet you are proposing to publish entitled Australia Can Yet Be Saved.

I hadn't seen the manuscript at the time I agreed to Mr. Hall's request. I have now done so, and will have to indicate the reservations I have on some of the views expressed in your book. So, if a Foreword couched in the terms of the attachment is unacceptable, I will not feel hurt if you choose not to use it.

You will note that I have taken the liberty to draw attention to some of the typographical errors in spelling, as well as to make suggested changes in punctuation. I have not, of course, presumed to edit the manuscript in any way.

My wife and I sometimes visit Perth, and I would like an opportunity of meeting you next time we go West. My last visit was for the purpose of continuing my recording of reminiscential conversations with the Rt. Hon. Sir Paul Hasluck for the Oral History Division of the National Library of Australia. The project has now been completed.

May I conclude by complimenting you upon your initiative in so effectively expounding Georgean philosophy and of wishing you the success you deserve in your venture.

I look forward to receiving a copy of the booklet when it is published. In the meantime, I shall remain,

Yours sincerely,



Clyde R. Cameron

Encl.



FOREWORD

As I read the manuscript of this extraordinary little book, my responses oscillated between enthusiastic approval and dissent.

I read the parts I endorsed with great relish. I tried, without success, to put the book aside as the author challenged my deep commitment to socialism and the trade union movement. But I felt a compulsion to continue because the pleasure more than compensated for the pain.

John Leard is praised; the New Right is criticised. Menzies is condemned for abolishing the Commonwealth land tax, as is John Gorton for destroying the leasehold land tenure of the A.C.T. Fabian Socialism is equated to Communism.

Some trade union leaders are described as "greedy, lawless and drunk with power" but the author goes on to assert that without trade unions, Australian wage levels "would be depressed to the levels which apply in India and South America".

Monopolies are condemned, as are Australian governments for failing to strike down monopolistic exploitation of the general public. The author very effectively attacks the multimillionaire consortiums that have been permitted to capture control of the daily press of Australia. His remedy is radical!

'The subversive power of the media could be broken by the requirement that not more than one per cent of the shareholding of any major newspaper, radio or television station should be owned by any person or consortium having relationship with any other person or group.'

True democrats will applaud the author's support for proportional representation. His chapter, Electoral Reform, gives a brilliant account of how unjust voting systems can be used to circumvent the will of majorities as well as minorities. If this booklet had nothing else to offer, its publication would be fully justified by this chapter alone.

Opponents of Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen will endorse Mr. Hart's exposure of Sir Joh's proposal for a flat 25 per cent income tax which, as he correctly points out, means "higher taxes for the poor people and much lower taxes for the very rich".

Sir Joh, he continues, would lead "Australia into Thatcherism, with 14 per cent of the workforce without a job in accord with policies advocated by the New Right".

Gough Whitlam, the author contends, should thank John Kerr "who in an act of infinite mercy only removed him from office, whereas Charles I of England, was beheaded for the same offence". He is surely joking!

Subject to some other reservations, and what is written above, I have to commend the author for his splendid exposition of the evils of land monopoly. He shows how collection of the socially-created economic rent of land and the collection of royalties on the exploitation of non-renewable mineral resources, and from timber and fishing rights, would eliminate the need for the kind of taxation that presently bears so heavily upon consumers and the wealth producers of our country.

Land rent, he explains, is not a tax. It is merely the collection of the annual value that accrues to a particular piece of land as a consequence of its location, productive capacity and/or its proximity to or relationship with facilities paid for out of the public purse. It means giving to the community all of that which belongs to the community, namely, the community-created rental value of land, and leaving sacred to the individual that which properly belongs to the individual, the full product of his or her labour.

However, in time of a war of national survival, the author would not cavil at using taxation and even the confiscation of property to meet the cost of defence rather than resorting to public borrowing that puts unborn generations in pawn. 'One person's life cannot be measured against another person's property,' argues the author, in true a la Fabian Socialist fashion.

The collection of the economic rent of land cannot be evaded or avoided as is the case with income tax; because neither land, nor its true rental value can be concealed. The land is there for all to see; and, as Ricardo explains,

its special location or productive advantages determines the amount of rent a person is willing to pay to the rest of the community for the right to enjoy the exclusive possession of that piece of earth which belongs to all of God's children.

The author makes a powerful case against the present practice of allowing foreigners to use the advantages of a debased Australian dollar to buy up our real estate for speculative investment. 'If rent had to be paid to its rightful owners, they would sell out and go back home in droves, except the few who were prepared to put the land to use and people to employment,' writes the Author.

With compelling logic, Mr. Hart declares that every person born shares an equal right with all others to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and that it is axiomatic that such rights carry with them the obligation to respect the same rights for all other people.

The author is not an absolute disciple of the principle of laissez-faire. Indeed, he declares that functions which of their very nature are monopolies, or which private enterprise cannot perform efficiently, should be the concern of governments. His faceless Fabians would not take issue with him on that score; except that they would no doubt use a different yardstick for determining the question of what constitutes a monopoly or what determinant would be used to make a judgement on "efficiency".


I keep coming to the defence of the author's betes noires, his Fabian Socialists; because I know that over the decades Georgians have alienated enormous potential support by allowing themselves to be distracted from attacking our real enemies, the land monopolists who misappropriate billions of dollars of the people's rent every year. The evil consequences of that misappropriation is what creates the economic and social conditions that cause the poor, the dispossessed and the underprivileged to turn, in desperation, to Communism.

The April 1987 issue of Progress, the official journal of Tax Reform Australia, contains an excellent article on this subject entitled "Decrying Marxism".

To paraphrase its points:

'We should use our energy explaining the teachings of Henry George rather than gainsaying the word of Marx which is unnecessary and may be counter productive because Marxism appeals to the conscientious and the young, two groups we're trying to reach. We must give up the pleasure of disparaging the Reds. We can always have too many enemies, but never too many friends. A true Georgist will not squash debate, but win it through reason and example!

I have written at greater length than I would normally do in a Foreword; but the credit for that rests with Graham Hart, the author of this very exciting and thought-provoking little book which I commend with confidence to every reader who enjoys the pleasure of being forced to think.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Clyde R. Cameron', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Clyde R. Cameron

Australian Minister for Labour
(1972-1975)