

A NEW FOUNDATION AND A MAGAZINE - NEWSPAPER SYNDICATE

by

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If any of you have saved copies of the speeches I have delivered at many of these Georgist conferences, you will find one refrain throughout all of them: Use the media more effectively.

'Way back in 1942, after serving as editor of The Georgist journal, LAND AND FREEDOM, I took over the post of Economics Editor of PROGRESS GUIDE, a mass circulation Reader's Digest format magazine, published in Chicago. If we had not run into a snafu with the War Production Board, which closed our magazine for over-use of paper, we might still be in existence, and perhaps a few states of the union might now have land value taxation.

Mason Gaffney, recalling my tenure on LAND AND FREEDOM before I moved to PROGRESS GUIDE, asked me of the possibility of his starting a general Georgist magazine. I told him that it could not survive even with huge foundation funds, because the editorial base was too confining.

Ten years ago, at my request, Percy Williams, the beloved Executive Secretary of the Henry George Foundation, called a special meeting of the Henry George Foundation trustees to discuss the idea of a magazine for the general public. We voted affirmatively for it, but what did we get? The four-page quarterly, EQUAL RIGHTS, another trade journal.

Four years ago at Chatham College this group heard Perry Prentice say this about all of our Georgist trade journals: "All we are doing is talking to ourselves."

So why did five of us Melbourne, Florida, Georgists create MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR LAND ECONOMICS? To get our message before a select body of 30 million people through newspaper-magazine syndication.

No circulation to build, no advertising to solicit, no high priced editors to pay, no worry about the inflation in paper prices, printers' wages, astronomical postage rates.

I am publication-orientated, but I know the fate of one-cause magazines. I have been the subscriber to many of them. And they all fall by the wayside, even with healthy foundation financing.

We deliberately decided the syndication route because the circulation is already there. The publications were deliberately selected for directing our output to those magazines with a particular type of audience: (1) The College Press of 5500 publications -- because these young people are still in a molding process; (2) The Alternative Press, of several hundred publications, because their readers are left of center protestors of the status quo; (3) The Libertarian Press, because their readers are anti-statist; (4) The Black Press, and (5) The Labor Press, because their readers represent basically the blue collar workers; (6) The Environmental Press, because the professional environmentalists can't understand the reasons for urban sprawl; (7) The Religious Press, because one hopes their readers can be inculcated with the ethical aspects of George's message; (8) The Decentralist Press, to help fill the newsholes that are available --- the Decentralist Press already has a commitment to George; (9) We added the Service Clubs, the Lodges,

and the Veteran Press, because they represent good middle class America, many of them searching for answers; (10) And, finally, we included the Newsletters, both the happy ones by Kiplinger and the doomsday ones like Ruff, hoping to make an occasional dent.

Why did we not include the general newspaper? Reason Number 1: The City Desk throws away at least 25% of the copy turned in by its reporters for lack of news space and we couldn't hope to compete with their highly skilled, highly traveled, highly paid syndicated columnists at this stage with their paid researchers; (2) The urban newspaper press looks upon us as a bunch of nuts and the rural press and its readership, at this stage, are afraid of site value taxation.

At the outset we created a four-page prospectus and mailed it with a questionnaire to 460 top level Georgists whose names were garnered for us by Jack Tetley. For those of you who did not receive the prospectus, additional copies are on the literature table. We had hoped to raise at least \$5000 seed money and by mailing the questionnaire to everyone of the 460, we hoped to uncover some writers whom we might not know. We raised half that sum. And we did uncover a few possible writers we didn't know.

The letters of endorsement, the letters of encouragement, the letters of praise that came with the checks really brought a lump to our throat and tears to our eyes. Strethel Walton, Montreal Henry George School Director, along with a \$100 check for the School and \$25 for herself, said, "It has seemed to me that for a long, long time we have been speaking only to ourselves in our various journals. We are delighted to contribute to this organization which is so badly needed."

Karl Falk, President of the Fresno, California, Savings and Loan Association, wrote, "You are on the right track." Mike Lurio said, "I hope you get plenty of support from Georgists." Jack Tetley wrote, "I admire you for the tough job you have undertaken -- not only in raising money for this project, but the operation of the foundation as well." Bob Zwicker, businessman, Westwood, Massachusetts, said, "Media Foundation for Land Economics sounds great. I like it." Len Huckabone sent a check for \$100, then later another for \$25, and said, "I am prepared to send more when needed."

Both Larry Rathbun, forester in New Hampshire, and Hamlet Hilpert, county commissioner in Washington State, were disappointed in the fact that we were not reaching our \$5000 goal of seed money, and with their own money, each sent out about 50 letters around the USA, especially to professional men and bankers.

I particularly value the letter from Richard Noyes, publisher-editor of THE SALEM OBSERVER, because he is a professional journalist, "Your Media Foundation proposal is excellent. It isn't enough that we have something to say. White space in any medium is a valuable commodity. Editors will pay for only those offerings they think will win them readers. That's why you have chosen an editor, and why your long experience in communications is essential. Enclosed is my check."

Back in late summer, 1977, I had studied the output of almost 100 syndicates, whose owners had kindly sent me the product they were selling, their rates and their promotion matter. While most of this syndicated stuff was pretty shallow, we did find some interesting material and we found some column techniques worth our emulating.

One syndicated column, in particular, got our attention: A question-and-answer column produced by two Florida lawyers. There is an idea for one of our columnists.

On April 19, we mailed to each of the 17 people who had filled in the writer-questionnaire a four-page set of Guidelines. The main thrust of the Guidelines was this:

We don't want 600 word columns on land value taxation. We do want an analysis of the economy and of the body politic from the viewpoint of the land economist.

We knew that this four-page set of Guidelines would tell us several things we wanted to know:

(1) Would the writers direct their columns to the publications they had checked on the questionnaires, college kids, left of center, right of center, anti-statist, environmental, labor, black, etc.

(2) Would the writers go to their libraries and study the directories we told them to study so as to locate the publications to which they said they wanted to direct their writings?

(3) Would the writers spend a few dollars buying sample copies of the magazines? Or the smaller directories we suggested they buy?

(4) Would those who signed on as writers stick to the basic rule: sending an analysis of the economy?

In my second letter to the aspiring columnists I put this paragraph in: I quote it:

"Harlan Trott, retired Christian Science Monitor writer, who had written many articles for his paper on land value taxation, quoted a sage comment made to him by Sydney Evans, also a journalist: 'A continuous series of articles on land value taxation would drive

both the editors and the readers up the wall.' End of Sydney Evans' quote. I agree 100% with Evans. I have said repeatedly in the Prospectus and in the Instruction letters to the prospective columnists, that the columnists' writings must be an analysis of the economy and the body politic from the land economist's viewpoint, not land value tax articles."

Some of those who signed on admitted later they were not sufficiently interested to follow the rules. Some never followed through, admitting to themselves they thought we were going to be a free writer's agency for them, not a syndicate. Some of them sent columns that did not come within the rules, but patiently rewrote their material to fulfill the rules. And some of them -- those who were already professional writers -- usually followed the rules.

Now we expected this attrition. We felt that if we got five or six people from the 17 who filled out the questionnaires, we could make a start.

So, where do we stand now?

We have five to eight writers we believe we can depend upon at this time who will follow the rules, write knowledgeably in an analytical sense, and produce regularly, so that the empty newsholes waiting for their columns every month will be filled.

We have one retired newsman and two moonlighting newsmen in the Melbourne area who will serve as editors at \$15 per column until the syndicate becomes strong enough financially to hire a full-time editor -- on a salary.

Temporarily, the Sales Department will be headed up by another moonlighter with extensive experience in newspapers, radio and TV,

both at the promotional level and in management departments. He is employed in the Melbourne area by the huge Harris Electronics Company.

We sent a letter to the Chief Executive Officers of the five major Georgist foundations, seeking grants singly or jointly from them of \$36,000 for the first year, which would give us a pilot plant operation with a goal of 500 newspaper-magazine sales the first 12 months. Five hundred publications on a monthly basis would give us for one 12 months period 6000 exposures of land economics. Five hundred publications 52 weeks of the year would give us 26,000 exposures of land economics in one year.

For the second year, we asked the foundations to supply \$50,000 in grants with our goals being 4000 publications. Multiply 4000 publications by 12 months, and there would be 48,000 monthly exposures of land economics. Or if the publications were weeklies, those 4000 publications would bring 208,000 exposures of land economics in a 12 months period.

Can you name any project in the entire United States, where \$36,000 spent by Georgist foundations has brought that kind of exposure to land economics; or where the expenditure of \$50,000 in the following year has brought 48,000 exposures on a monthly basis, or 208,000 exposures to land economics on a weekly basis?

While we will make dry runs of the columns being submitted from the seed money collected, we will under no circumstances put the sales department into operation until we receive foundation grants.

There are 30 million people reading the publications to which our syndicate wants to sell its columns and editorial cartoons. We believe that what we have set out to do is long overdue and equal in

importance to any projects these organizations are now funding. Our foundation charter makes us a public foundation so that both private foundations and public foundations can make grants to us within the rules of the 1969 Patman Tax Reform Act. Also, our foundation, while now domiciled in Florida, permits the re-location of the foundation anywhere in the United States and its offspring "Authors and Artists" syndicate, if such a re-location is more appropriate.

My associates on the Executive Committee for Land Economics are: Rev. Joseph Tisch, a priest of the Liberal Catholic Church, and head of the Human Services Department of the City of Melbourne, is our Vice President. Mrs. Mary Knoke, long-time civic leader, active in the League of Women Voters and in the top echelon of the Universalist-Unitarian Church, is our Secretary. Maynard M. Mitchell, head of several small electronic companies, is our Treasurer. And William Neale is our Attorney.

I had hoped that Rev. Tisch and Mr. Mitchell could be here this weekend, but Rev. Tisch had to attend a Catholic Conference and Mr. Mitchell had a recent death in the family. Mr. Mitchell was working on the slide project we had hoped to show today.

I deliberately selected the above Melbourne area Georgists because they are under age 50. Old enough to bring maturity. and young enough to carry on and let me ease off. But also young enough to bring vim, spirit and innovativeness.

My God, how badly we need innovativeness in the Georgist movement!