

Recommendations for The Georgeist Program

By MORTIMER A. LEISTER

INTRODUCTORY

I think that a questionnaire sent out to known Georgeists at the present time asking for recommendations looking toward the promotion of the movement would undoubtedly return some interesting information. This vital step for the coordination of ideas on this subject is therefore my first recommendation.

It may be assumed that such an investigation might show some scattered opinions that would merit intensive study, but I think that there would be such a tremendous number of responses for just two kinds of recommendations that one would be forced to feel the weight of them:—those which range around the respective merits of the Henry George movement as a political organization, or as an educational promoter.

I feel therefore that we must study these two recommendations of political organization and educational promotion.

THE RECOMMENDATION FOR POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Now, let us see what discussions have produced on the question of political organization of the Henry George ideas. Believers in such organization generally rest on the argument that it is practically necessary to persuade all classes of people that they and their posterity have better prospects for orderly, just and happy living under the principles of the Henry George philosophy, than under any other proposed system now offered to them; that such an effort to be successful has to reach great numbers of people; that great numbers of people are now skeptical as they were never before of the progressivism of the great political parties; that the skeptics could be persuaded to join the Henry George movement if their attention could be obtained for its program; that the best plan for such a mass effort for persuasion is the experimentally tested one of political organization; that, as political organization must eventually be adopted for the promotion of the movement, now is the best time to start it.

There is much in these propositions with which no well-wisher of the Henry George movement would want to disagree. But there are dissenters, and they assert in the main that the experience of mankind as a political animal shows that he is unable to rise above his class interests during times of peace; that the development of political parties capable of influencing the laws and morals of the nation must be understood as a process by which each class interest seeks to retain or obtain as many privileges as its cunning or its force of numbers can make the others yield to it in their

common exploitation of the powers vested in government; that in a political organization there is no room for the Henry George philosophy, which rises above class interests to embrace the welfare of all, with particular emphasis on the just treatment of the unorganized and inarticulate elements of the population who are always too late to prevent their exploitation by the organized class interests that govern the political parties.

Studying the arguments of each side, I find that they differ finally over one point. This is whether a political party could be organized, as an influential body in the affairs of a nation, in times of peace, of people who would not seek to retain or obtain privileges that they could grasp in time.

What can we say on that disputed point? Cynics would not hesitate to answer that people will grasp whatever privileges they can get every time, and they might even slyly point to that axiom of Georgeist philosophy about men seeking to gratify their desires with the least exertion. Of course, not even a cynic would challenge the sincerity of Georgeists to resist such tendencies, but he would assert that unless the Georgeists represented at least a majority influence at the outset of the career of the political organization, they would have no chance at all against the self-seeking groups. The cynic would also say that the Georgeists would be able to maintain effective resistance to such groups only by concentrating power in themselves, for once the gates were let down they would become an insignificant minority and lose all ability to withstand the familiar predatory operations of the others.

Is the cynic right? Well, perhaps not, but nobody at present seems able to contradict him successfully. Even our Georgeist who disfavors political organization dislikes that conclusion, for he does not particularly like the cynic's company. Such company suggests a defeatist attitude, and Georgeists are almost anything but defeatists.

THE RECOMMENDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL PROMOTION

Generally, when Georgeists oppose the organization of political efforts for the promotion of their movement, they are prepared to offer the alternative of an expanded educational effort for the same purpose. They say that their alternative is already an actuality, as their records of school attendance, correspondence students, and lecture functions, very clearly show. They also point to a growth of periodicals which stem from the educational branch of the movement. All this is impressive, and indeed very heartening, to every believer in Georgeism.

But there are Georgeists who say that while they will always be willing to give all the aid in their power for the development of the education program required for the promotion of the movement, they feel that, like everything else, it also has definite limitations of usefulness, and that it is

unwise to rely on it solely. Others criticize the shortcomings of the educational effort for its failure to provide adequate library facilities or guidance of any kind for needed research work. Still others confess their disappointment at the little understanding of the Georgeist principles that both classroom and mail students show after completing the prescribed study courses given by the Henry George School of Social Science. Nevertheless, I feel that none of these criticisms are harmful; weighed together, they measure the good and bad features, and try to mark out the road of experimentation to be followed for the improvement of the educational program of the movement as a whole.

It is to be noted that Georgeists do not differ about the need of an educational effort. What they divide upon is the idea that a continuation of the teaching of the principles of Henry George is the only way to bring about the success of the movement.

THE PROBLEM OF PROMOTING THE MOVEMENT

It seems clear to me that the problem of promoting the Georgeist movement successfully cannot be solved by either the political or educational concepts that the followers of the movement now hold.

How then may a solution to the problem be developed? I submit that the first step henceforth should be to let a free play of our consciousness analyze the problem.

Let us see what that may do. First of all we will make an honest statement of the situation, by saying that the Georgeist movement needs the opportunity of experimentation of its theory that the social collection of economic rent and its expenditure for social benefits would free capital and labor in industry and insure the existence of a freedom-loving, cooperative commonwealth capable of advancing all the potentialities of civilized development.

What we ask for the promotion of the movement should thus stand in close relationship with the creation of the opportunity to install the experiment. Most Georgeists feel that the success of the movement is assured once their theory begins to operate. No Georgeist doubts the outcome of the experiment if it is made properly. He wants assurance that the Georgeist principles are to be functionalized, not apotheosized, and given that assurance, he would gladly welcome the suggestions for methods and procedures that would represent the practical development of his principles.

We return therefore to the proposition that, if the promotion of the Georgeist movement is not in doubt once the experiment gets under way, then the best plan to adopt now is that which has the greatest probability of arousing a popular interest favorable toward making the experiment. It is inconceivable that anything less than a general demand for the Georgeist experiment could lead to its peaceful adoption, for this experiment raises many fundamental questions

of social adjustment that privileged groups and ignorant people generally have rarely permitted to be made peacefully. Let it be understood that Georgeists do not desire a revolution by violence, but that they do contemplate as a great necessity a revolution by laws representing the popular will in operation, and that they do not shrink from such a verdict made by a populace informed on the objectives and principles of the Henry George Movement.

—Let us now analyze what could produce such a general demand. But first, what is a general demand of the people? It is generally, I think, an expression of preference between two uncompromising different opinions on a subject which contains contradictions to such an extent as to cause a condition of general confusion and threatening anarchy. It usually takes the mode of expression that is offered to register the election. And it is not only in political conventions that elections are made. Public-spirited citizens are never discouraged from writing letters to newspapers or to politicians, or of expressing their opinions to friends and to whomsoever they find willing to listen. If the issue involves fundamental concepts, the activities of these public-minded people may suddenly be rewarded; an important center of authority, a man or an organization held in high respect throughout the country, may discover vehicular potentialities in that issue more than in any other available at the time. The people thus made acquainted with the issue then measure its good and bad features, and eventually make their decisions understood in the matter. If the issue goes so deep as to cause divisions in towns and villages as well as in states and great cities, then the test may not occur on that issue directly for a long time until other issues involving the loyalties of the particular locality against another set of loyalties elsewhere become settled.

Now, it is clear to me that the issue presented by the Georgeist theory goes deep, very deep indeed. And those men or organizations who seek an issue of the best vehicular potentialities for their purposes, are, like most of us, imbued with the desire of achieving their ends in a not too distant future.

Of course, no reasonable person might expect any easy job for such a problem. After all, for several generations now, many sincere and capable men and women have come or been born into the Georgeist movement, and their utmost has been only to hand the torch of light to us.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVANCING GEORGEISM

As we have said before, Georgeists are not defeatists. They are alert and even anxious. They feel that our present civilization is greater than any past one, for they appreciate the concept that translates material civilization into specialization of labor, and converts provincialism into urbanity, at a speed that the modern tempo of communicating information requires. They feel that progress cannot be halted

permanently by war; but that it is threatened only when substantial parts of the population have their wages reduced to the subsistence level, for at such times there is but little desire for discoveries and inventions to replace labor power. They feel that their program alone is a consistent plan for maintaining progress. But they are at a complete loss for a plan that could bring the light of Georgeism to the people in our life-time.

I think that such a plan might be evolved after a little more study of the situation.

Firstly, we must be willing to cooperate with other movements that contemplate only partial objectives which are comparable with Georgeism. I think that such cooperation should be extended to trade unions that are free of racketeering influences and that are free of practices which obstruct production. I conceive that we could easily cooperate with trade associations that are free of monopolistic influences and that are combating propaganda adverse to the profit system of a free economy. I imagine that it would be relatively easy for us to cooperate with consumers' cooperative organizations that are free of socialistic influences. I cannot attempt to limit here the types of organizations with which we might easily cooperate, but in general I should be ready to advocate cooperation for all types of organization which aim at increasing production and the returns to capital and labor made possible from such increases of production.

Secondly, we must search out the practices that operate to the economic detriment of the people as a whole, and display them in their strong and weak points, so that the problem they represent may be seen in its entirety.

Thirdly, we must construct a position of authority for Georgeism in public relations. To construct such a position soundly, we should conscientiously study each selected problem on its merits, and not on its significance to some obscure point of Georgeist principle. To maintain such a position soundly, we would avoid involvement with exaggerated claims of fanatics, be they Georgeists or not.

The combination of these three methods may not comprise a complete plan, but they would, I think, bring many beams of light to a great many people. With the backing of present Georgeists, it might conceivably be attempted. And it is even conceivable that they could enjoy the reward of their efforts in their own lifetime, for it lies well within the limits of probability of success. Light to the people is never lost.

"IF a man is not a socialist by the time he is twenty, there is something the matter with his heart. If he is still a socialist by thirty, there is something the matter with his head."—Heard at the Henry George Congress.

The Keystone of Our Efforts

By DAVID C. HYDER

WE who embrace the philosophy of Henry George believe that it is conducive to the highest ends of humanity. We believe in the purposiveness of the Universe, and feel that all things in it, as phenomena, are united and brought into harmonious relationship, through Natural Law. In this belief is the basis of our Hope for the success of our efforts.

We carefully study the economics and the philosophy of Henry George, and prepare ourselves to deliver the great message to others. Behind and within our teaching efforts is the element of Hope. There is absolutely no objective criterion for the determination of our future success or failure. Some, looking ahead, will see a gloomy abyss; others, roseate triumph. Neither of them can know.

Minute by minute, economic, political and emotional tension is growing all over the world. While the blind, raging, impulses of man are reducing nations to ruins how many are there who see nothing but futility in the efforts of those who are striving to bring a brighter, freer, more ideal world into existence?

In the face of the terrible world events of today, to what can we turn as our guiding star? *Hope*.

There is in mankind an irresistible belief that Happiness is the attainable purpose of life. Without this belief, and the Hope of achieving it, mankind would have vanished from the face of the earth long ago. This Hope, then, is the keystone of our efforts.

The People

By TOMMASO CAMPANELLA

(1568-1639)

Translated by John Addington Symonds

THE people is a beast of muddy brain
That knows not its own strength, and therefore stands
Loaded with wood and stone; the powerless hands
Of a mere child guide it with bit and rein;
One kick would be enough to break the chain,
But the beast fears, and what the child demands
It does; nor its own terror understands,
Confused and stupefied by bugbears vain.
Most wonderful! With its own hand it ties
And gags itself—gives itself death and war
For pence doled out by kings from its own store.
Its own are all things between earth and heaven;
But this it knows not; and if one arise
To tell this truth, it kills him unforgiven.