

What we must do to succeed

John Loveless

Why have Georgists around the world failed so miserably to plant the most wonderful message about the good society in the hearts and minds of the people of the world?

Perhaps as few as one person in one hundred thousand has heard our message and maybe only one person in a million supports us. Possessing, as we do, the only key to release from their afflictions the greater part of mankind — we have buried it. Knowing the most precious formula for the creation of the just and prosperous society — we have hidden it in almost secret societies. Seeing the glorious way to a new and beautiful world order — we have blocked it by refusing to create popular organisations, insisting on ridiculous banners and failing to produce simple and exciting introductory publications for the ordinary citizen.

No, it is not our opponents that have prevented us from making known the Georgist political philosophy, it is we ourselves that have failed to noise it abroad. Whenever a new adherent joins the movement and suggests the formation of a popular organisation or a more sensible name they are told by the management: "We are not ready to form a popular organisation," and "It will be too difficult to change the name." **NOT READY!** One hundred and sixteen years after the publication of *Progress and Poverty* we are still not ready to shout the good news

from the rooftops! **TOO DIFFICULT TO CHANGE!** If the constitutions of our Georgist organisations are almost impossible to change then they should be burnt in the fire and something better put in their place.

An organisation which is incapable of change is a *dead* organisation. Please will we wake up and take our message to the people. No, it is not the politicians that we should blame for the mismanagement of our economies — they do it out of ignorance, but we, knowing the beneficent truth, have made it seem ridiculous.

Yes, my friends and fellow Georgists, despite the best efforts of many of our fine and courageous people, when a poor child dies on the streets of some great city, when an old couple are evicted from their home, when a tenant farmer finally sinks exhausted under the burden of his debts it is we who are to blame. We have failed to set up organisations in every country with the specific objective of taking Georgism to the people. While the Liberal Party was still a force in British politics this was excusable in the UK, but we now have no political party to proclaim our policies with energy and conviction in Britain. However, such is the faith I

have in the message we have to proclaim, that I believe this is all we need to do to succeed! We can persist with arid academic debate or we can begin to show the stunning relevance of our ideas to ordinary people.

HOW THEN should we proceed? First, it is necessary for us all to see that Georgism is not just an argument about how governments should raise taxes, but the nucleus of **A NEW WORLD ORDER**. We must recognise the true enormity of what we are about and raise our sights accordingly. Now a new political philosophy *demands* a new name. If Marxism is worthy of a name then Georgism is that much more worthy as its ideas are based on an accurate rather than a flawed analysis of economics.

Then why on earth have Georgists failed for over a hundred years to give their philosophy a name? To me it seems like the *sine qua non* of bringing our message to the public. Without it nothing we do has the power to sustain itself and grow. Our best efforts are like fireworks that dazzle for a moment, but then, having nothing to attach themselves to, they are then immediately forgotten as the darkness returns. Without it we flounder about with the most ridiculous

3 OPEN FORUM

banners which attempt to reduce our vision to nine words or less and encapsulate our philosophy in a phrase! It cannot be done.

Nevertheless the Executive and annual conference of the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade will again debate this summer the name of the IU and no doubt it will emerge with another maddeningly awful title like, "The International Union for All Things Bright and Beautiful." But, give us one word and we will finish the job. What we need is an "International _____ist Movement" and then a "_____ist Manifesto." Let me explain it in another way to show you just how fundamentally important I think it is.

Can you imagine a bicycle manufacturer that omitted the pedals in his design or a car producer that left off the wheels? No. Well that is how misguided the worldwide Georgist movement seems to me at the moment. We want to change the world and we have the necessary message, but in the design of our organisations we have omitted a vital part, we have failed to see that in order for us to succeed the people must be mobilised *before* the politicians. We may bang on the closed doors of the universities and legislatures for another 100 years, but unless we take our message into the market place we will not advance our cause one iota. We have the think tanks. What we must now establish is a popular organisation with a worldwide following, united around one manifesto. If only a few leading Georgists would see this and set about the task with a will I believe we would see an explosion of interest in our ideas in just a few years.

IN THE LAST issue of *Land and Liberty* (Vol.102 No.1173/4) Professor Amitai Etzioni was criticised, but look how much more

effective this one man has been in the space of a few months in popularising his ideas than we have been in fifty years. *The Economist* reported that he "filled a large hall in London at £10 per head" and you will find, for example, Communitarianism accorded high praise in a popular new textbook on social psychology while Georgism gets no mention at all. We are the mugs, not Etzioni, for with a message that could move mountains we have not even managed a molehill!

I therefore ask any Georgist who is willing to join us now to take this vital first step for our movement and help us to answer the following question: "What single word best describes the society that would result from the application of Georgist policies around the world?" You can do this by sending me your views. Then, in subsequent issues of *Land and Liberty* we can explore the advantages and disadvantages of each name, finally fixing on one.

The word we need would obviously describe the society that was able to provide *all citizens* with both maximal individual freedom, optimal social justice and the best possible opportunity for prosperity. It could not be any of the words commonly used to describe any of the existing major political philosophies. It must be a word that finds a ready resonance in the sub-conscious of the hearer. It should be a word that expresses the ideas of synthesis, the common good and a balance between individual liberty and social cohesion. I have no doubt in my mind that the best idea is unity. However, there are several words that might suit our purpose besides the word Unionist. We might consider, for example, Communalism, Unitarianism, Utopianism, Harmonism, Fraternalism, Confederalism etc. Can you think of a good name and support it with convincing arguments? Then why not

return the questionnaire?

Richard Noyes edited a Georgist book entitled *Now the Synthesis*² which describes the Georgist alternative to Capitalism and Socialism, but because there is no word to describe Georgism he had to call it The New Social Contract.

Fred Harrison in *The Corruption of Economics*³ talks of Georgism as "the union between individual liberty and social welfare" but does not sum it up in one word. Mason Gaffney in the same book describes how George, "took two polar philosophies, collectivism and individualism, and synthesised a plan to combine the better features and discard the worst features of each." We need one word to describe this philosophy that can be instantly recognised by millions.

It is time, my friends and fellow Georgists, time for us to complete a job which is long overdue. It is time for us to honour the name of Henry George at last and give him the word for which his ideas have waited so long.

REFERENCES

1. D.G.Myers, *Exploring Social Psychology*, McGraw Hill, 1994.
2. R.Noyes, (Ed.) *Now the Synthesis*, Shephard-Walwyn & Holmes Meier, 1991.
3. M.Gaffney & F.Harrison, *The Corruption of Economics*, Shephard-Walwyn, 1994

DR. JOHN LOVELESS is Chairman of the London-based Centre for Incentive Taxation. He lectured at King's College, London, before taking up his present position as lecturer in civil engineering at Bristol University. He is an adjunct scholar of the Adam Smith Institute, for whom he has written on the subject of urban wasteland. He is a contributing author to *Costing the Earth* (1989).