If there is, as Henry George claimed, a Law of Least Effort (Adam Smith based his concept of capitalism on that same assumption) then a basic premise of socialism – that men will work whether they are paid in proportion to their efforts or not - is contrary to Natural Law.

The problem of Georgists, is not merely to convince people of the merits of land-value taxation. The problem is much greater than this. It is to convince people that the abandonment of Natural Law in our institutions of higher education has been an incredible blunder. At this point loyal Georgists may throw up their hands in despair because if we have been unable to convince people of the merits of land-value taxation, how are we going to overcome current intellectual trends in all of the behavioral sciences?

Strangely enough, I believe that this better understanding of the problem is cause for hope not despair.

Is it possible that there is another reason for the failure of various efforts to implement Georgist theory? Is it possible that Georgists have overemphasized the importance of reaching the public and underemphasized the importance of reaching thought leaders? Have Georgists studied the history of the acceptance and implementation of new ideas?

John M. Keynes, the British economist, provided an excellent demonstration of selling ideas at the top. Keynes' influence on President Franklin Roosevelt radically changed the direction of U.S. economic policy. Today following the example of the United States, Keynesian theory is influencing the entire Western world. Keynes was fully aware of the power of ideas stating, "The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood." Many economists are still not sure into which category Keynes' ideas fit.

The history of Confucianism is another excellent example of how ideas gain power. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) had some excellent and badly needed ideas for social reform. But he was unable to sell his ideas to those in power. Approximately 200 years later the distinguished scholar, Mencius, managed to convince Chinese leaders that the Confucian philosophy was practical. With support at the very top Confucianism spread rapidly and dramatically throughout China.

Christianity struggled desperately for years. It achieved real success and rapid acceptance when it was endorsed by the Emperor Constantine I.

Readers may protest that these examples are not really relevant because they occurred in highly authoritarian regimes. Perhaps a better example is provided by the famous Austrian psychiatrist, Sigmund Freud. His ideas about human nature were radically different from those prevalent when he published his first major work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. Although his ideas were attacked violently at the time, within 20 years they had gained widespread acceptance among *professionals*, especially in the United States. "Anyone who reached adulthood prior to 1950," says Hobart Mowrer, former president of the American Psychological Association, "knows how pervasively Freudian theory and practice dominated not only the specific field of psychotherapy, but also education, jurisprudence, religion, child rearing, art, literature, and social philosophy."

Georgists would do well to ask themselves what was the secret of Freud's success? The answer is, it seems to me, that he spent little time talking to the "masses." He spent his time writing and speaking to the "experts" – to his fellow professionals and to leading intellectuals. He relied on them to take the message to the masses and more importantly, to take the message to high places. Prior to World War II there were only about 4,000 psychiatrists in the United States. After the War, especially during the Kennedy years, the Federal Government trained and hired psychiatrists and a substantial number, probably more than half of them, work for the government.

The implication for Georgists is that our efforts should be devoted to winning converts among professionals and intellectuals and also with those with political power. This can be done by producing professional quality books, films and teaching materials for use at various levels in our educational system.

Rightly or wrongly, it is my conviction that efforts to communicate the advantages of land-value taxation will be most successful when related to the broader philosophical base of Natural Law and the American Ethic.

[Excerpted from a paper presented at the 1974 Henry George School Conference at Goleta, California. Frank Goble is president of the Thomas Jefferson Research Center.]