

More Facts!

By NOAH D. ALPER

IN his "History of Civilization in England," Henry Thomas Buckle makes some interesting observations on the respective merits of the deductive and inductive methods of propagating thought in the development of civilization. In the deductive method we begin with a general conclusion and then attempt to point out the facts which support it. In the inductive method we first select our facts and then seek to lead to the acceptance of the general conclusions or principles. Buckle says:

"If we take a general view of those countries where science has been cultivated, we shall find that, whenever the deductive method of inquiry has predominated, knowledge, though often increased and accumulated, has never been widely diffused. On the other hand, we shall find that, when the inductive method has predominated, the diffusion of knowledge has always been considerable, or, at all events, has been beyond comparison greater than when deduction was prevalent. . . . If, in any civilized nation, two men, equally gifted, were to propound some new and startling conclusion, and one of these men were to defend his conclusion by reasoning from ideas or general principles, while the other man were to defend his reasoning from particular and visible facts, there can be no doubt that, supposing all other things the same, the latter man would gain most adherents. . . . Facts seem to come home to every one, and are undeniable. Principles are not so obvious, and, being often disputed, they have to those who do not grasp them, an unreal and illusory appearance, which weakens their influence. . . . We find historically that the establishment of the modern inductive philosophy, with its varied and attractive experiments, its material appliances, and its constant appeal to the senses, has been intimately connected with the awakening of the public mind, and coincides with that spirit of inquiry, and with that love of liberty, which have been constantly advancing since the sixteenth century. . . .

"In both cases [induction and deduction] there is no doubt a line of argument essentially ideal; just as, in both cases, there is an assemblage of facts essentially sensuous. No method is pure, or stands entirely by itself. But inasmuch as, in induction, the facts are more prominent than the ideas, while, in deduction, the ideas are more prominent than the facts, it is evident that conclusions arrived at by the former plan, when, as a general rule, obtain a wider assent than conclusions arrived at by the latter plan. Obtaining a wider assent, they will produce more decisive results, and will be more likely to shape the national character and influence the course of national affairs."

Buckle's penetrating observations may be taken as a guide to Georgerists in the dissemination of their principles.

What is the Georgeist objective? It is to free men. Its practical goal is to abolish all forms of special privilege in order that an environment might exist in which the free enterprise system of production and distribution of wealth can operate. More specifically, it is to abolish all forms of securing public revenue save those which collect for the use of the community the publicly created rental value of land.

How are we to bring this about? We must secure favorable interest and decision on the part of a large majority of the people. We cannot hope to be the beneficiary of any dictatorship or of any totalitarian revolution. We must maintain and use the discriminating democratic processes. We must influence thought, difficult as that may be. We must educate in ways that will give understanding.

The advice of Buckle comes in for consideration here. The Georgeist philosophy is adaptable to both the inductive and the deductive methods. But when we use the latter, we find that the statement of strong conclusions leads to antagonism toward them. Further investigation is discouraged, and the prospective convert is in no mood to ask for or receive facts.

But if facts are presented first, people will listen. To many self-styled practical people, a principle, however sound it seems to be, is not a fact. A fact to these observers is a figure, a measurement, an example. Facts promote curiosity, interest, inquiry. Witness our ubiquitous radio quiz programs and pictorial "believe-it-or-not" presentations. Facts, then, must be our starting point.

It was my pleasure and privilege to be associated with Judge Jackson H. Ralston of California during the years 1935-1938 in his gallant effort to secure the adoption of a strong application of Georgeist principles in that State. It is from this experience that I have arrived at what I feel is a pattern of activity which can be followed to bring about the acceptance of our social and economic proposals. This pattern follows the principles of influencing thought presented by Buckle, making use largely of the inductive method, though not, of course, excluding use of the deductive.

The great majority of the people must be made to feel that they will gain materially from the Georgeist proposal and that it is on the whole sound and just. Two propositions relating to our method of securing public revenue must be demonstrated factually so that they will be understood and accepted by the people. The first proposition is that the people, who should hold title to the land values of the nation, today hold little or no title to it. The second is that a tax on the value of land, or a direct levy on the rent, must be paid out of the rent now collected by the present title holder, and that he cannot shift this charge to the people in higher prices or rents and so recover an equal amount for himself.

Of course, during the process of education, the other points in the Georgeist theory must also be demonstrated. People must be made to see that rent is the measure of communal

privileges; that the economic activities of all who labor and spend contribute to the rent fund; that the taxing of land values and the untaxing of labor and industry will benefit all.

How is this objective to be accomplished? First, a study must be made of the land values in the community where the program is to be launched. This is a problem of research, of accumulating the facts in the given geographical area. They involve records, public sales, etc.—facts that are familiar to people.

During the Ralston campaign in California such a study was made. Because of data regularly collected, the problem in that state was not so difficult. Based on 1936 figures compiled by Prof. Alfred S. Niles, of Stanford University, it was found that over 50% of the state's land value was located in only three of the fifty-eight counties. The three counties were Los Angeles (36.02%), San Francisco (11.09%), and Alameda (5.78%). This left the vast remaining area of fifty-five counties with but 47.01% of the land values. In the city of San Francisco it was demonstrated that 3% of the city blocks contained over one-third of the total land value of the city.

By a breakdown of the distribution of land values in this manner it can be shown where the land value is to be found. By studies of ownership of titles it can be shown what percentage of the property holders and what percentage of the total population control and enjoy the vast bulk of the rental income of the land.

This is a matter of statistical effort and study which any Georgeist group that hopes for any sort of success in a political way must be prepared to make. Such facts as these the people can grasp. Further, they are facts which cannot be denied or argued by the land-title holders or their agents or agencies.

Our second proposition must also be demonstrated—the proposition that a tax on land values cannot be shifted, and that the net effect of the Georgeist proposal is to make land holders pay fairly and equally to the community for the privilege of holding land. Unless the idea of the non-shiftability of our method of raising public revenue is accepted by the majority of the people, we cannot hope to secure favorable action on our proposals.

There is another important point to be remembered in the planning of an educational program—that is, its "timing." We lost the 1938 Ralston campaign in California, not because the methods used were unsound, but simply because we did not have the time or the funds to reach the people with our information. If any group of Georgeists feel they are prepared or will one day be prepared for a political campaign, they must first and above all plan a long-range campaign of basic factual education. In far too many cases (perhaps in all cases, so far) the campaign method has never had a chance to succeed, because the correct sort of preliminary barrage of facts

had not been laid down, and hence the ground was not prepared for political action.

Although Georgeist campaigns have in the past failed, they have left us a precious heritage—that is, anticipation of the probable line of attack on us by the opposition. Chief among the arguments used against the Georgeist proposal is that it will hurt the small home owner and raise rents, and that it will ruin the farmer. Preparation against such arguments should be undertaken by dissemination of facts on the case, before any political action is undertaken.

A campaign should not begin with a draft of an amendment or legislative enactment. Such an action will not only interfere with the preliminary educational program, but will draw the fire of the opposition on the nature of the measure. It will place us at a disadvantage in the ensuing fight. The legislative draft, which is only able to incorporate principles, is about the last thing to be done.

After the work of research, which is the first requirement in a Georgeist campaign, must come the work of publicizing these facts. All the attributes of the good salesman and advertising man, the radio quiz artist and the educators need to be brought into play to present the figures and facts to the people.

During our California campaign, we held a meeting before the Pomona Grange, consisting of the Grange organizations of Shasta and Trinity Counties. The type of facts we presented profoundly affected those attending the meeting. The farmers of Trinity County were asked how much land value there was in their county. None of them knew. Then we presented the facts: The 1937 figures of the Controller's Report of California showed that there was \$2,728,715 in land value in that county. Along with this figure we gave the figures for the land value of block 329 in the City of San Francisco. This small, triangular block of 1.54 acres had a land value of \$2,766,020—more than all of Trinity County. The farmers of Shasta County were also asked about the land value in their county. They, too, did not know. The 1937 report gave Shasta County a land value of \$12,166,890. It was shown that three large blocks between Third and Sixth Streets in San Francisco, some 17 acres, had a value of over \$13,000,000—nearly a million more than all of Shasta County.

Another presentation designed to attract attention might be in the form of weekly releases of the accumulated facts. In California we distributed such releases. One read: "Less than one acre of land under the Russ Building (in San Francisco) rents for \$120,000 a year. This is paid to the title holder for 99 years. It would take 120 men, working eight hours a day, making \$1,000 a year, to produce wages or salaries equal to the wealth taken by the title holders to this land each year. Here is a measure of the value of privilege and the value of wages." All the channels of publicity can be used in distributing the facts.

If this policy were carried on continuously for a period of time without any concrete political proposal, it is of course to

be expected that the enemies of the "to be proposed" measure would in time suspect the situation. But in the face of indisputable facts, they would be at a disadvantage as compared to their position if a legislative amendment were first drafted.

Sooner or later, in the course of the educational campaign, the question of the non-shiftability of the land value tax will have to be faced. Several types of arguments can be used. It might be started on a quiz basis, a series of questions, such as the following: If the community increased the tax on the value of a vacant lot, could the owner shift the tax or would he have to pay it himself? To whom could he shift it? If the supply of vacant lots for sale or rent increased, due to a tax on land value, would their price go up or down? If a man is getting all the land rent he can for the use of a certain piece of land, could he collect more if the taxes on his rent were increased? If he could increase his rent, would he wait for the tax in order to do so? If a tax on land values can be shifted, why do landowners oppose it so strongly?

A carefully prepared campaign, planned to run over a period of several years, could become more specific as the time came to launch a definite proposal and the actual campaign. Until some definite proposal was made, the opposition would be at a great disadvantage. If they attacked in advance of a definite proposal, it would have to be over fundamental principles, the facts being indisputable. Of course, Georgesits would welcome such an attack. If it did not come, the Georgeists should even provoke it. The best thing that can happen to our cause is to have our principles brought out into the open, discussed, argued, made into an issue. We can then be sure that we are making real advances.