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Land&Libertycommuniqué

the quarterly newsletter of the Henry George Foundation

letter to the editor

Sir,

Fred Harrison's article 'Georgism: a reality check' and John James' letter (L&L1215) both prompted me to suggest that the solution to more effective promotion of georgism might lie in a better marketing approach. The classic marketing advice is: 'sell the benefit'. In this case, find the most appealing thing that land value tax (lvt) could provide, and 'sell' that to the voters. My solution is a citizen's dividend (CD) paid to every member of the population - all ages - funded from lvt. This meets John James' safety-net point. Henry George in fact himself suggested the idea.

Renters, who are generally the poorest among us, would benefit most. Many poor homeowners would also benefit, since their lvt charge would be covered by the CD. Other benefits through lvt such as paying for infrastructure and reducing other taxes should follow on as soon as possible after the start of the CD payments.

A citizen's dividend could be an amazing vote winner. (On the other hand, have you ever come across anyone whose vote was swayed by the setting up of Section 106 agreements with developers, that enable community facilities to be funded?)

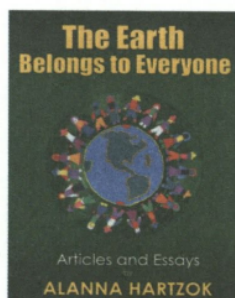
A regular annual or monthly payment to every person, funded by lvt, would fairly transfer community inspired land value gains directly to the pockets of all. It could also start to transform our incredibly complex welfare system, bringing added efficiency savings.

The Citizens Income Trust (www.citizensincometrust.org) is lobbying hard with highly detailed proposals for a CD. But supporters of lvt need to be pressing them from their own angle. A flaw in the CD proposal — if it is paid without imposing lvt — could be that the already well off, finding themselves with extra cash from the CD, would use it to finance property purchases. This would give an added boost to land values, thus weakening the poverty-reducing purpose of a citizen's dividend.

Charles Bazlinton,
Alresford, Hampshire, UK

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