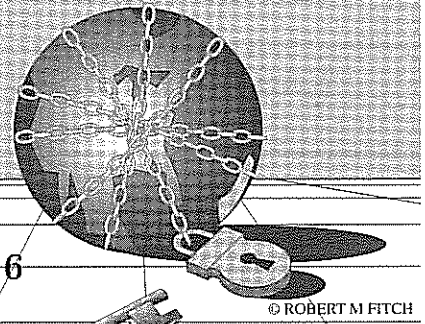


# GROUND SWELL

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## A DIALOGUE ON POLITICAL ECONOMY

By Edward J. Dodson, Cherry Hill, NJ

[The following fictional discussion among respected historical and contemporary figures on some of the basic questions related to our ownership and stewardship of the planet was written by Ed Dodson, and volunteers attending the Aug. 6, 2013 Council of Georgist Organizations reception read the several economists parts. Ed Dodson moderated.]



**MODERATOR:** Welcome to this roundtable discussion on issues important to an understanding of our political economy. Our guests include some well-respected authorities on the subject and spokespersons for certain particular points of view where policies, prescriptions and issues are concerned. We will begin our discussion by asking Henry George about his long quest to reconstruct political economy into an objective, scientific discipline.

**HENRY GEORGE:** Man masters material nature by studying her laws, and in conditions and powers that seemed most forbidding, has already found his richest storehouses and most powerful servants. The domain of law is not confined to physical nature. It just as certainly embraces the mental and moral universe, and social growth and social life have their laws as fixed as those of matter and of motion. Would we make social life healthy and happy, we must discover those laws, and seek our ends in accordance with them.

**MODERATOR:** As a contemporary of Mr. George, perhaps Karl Marx will provide a rather different perspective on the need to bring manmade law into conformance with that of natural law.

**KARL MARX:** I believe that even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs.

**MODERATOR:** Is there, then, a conflict between the apparent lessons of history and what Henry George and Karl Marx

see as natural laws governing the organization of human societies? I recognize Mortimer Adler to respond.

**MORTIMER J. ADLER:** What is new in the world today and distinctive of our time is the conflict between those who think that, where our institutions are defective, the defects can be removed by institutional changes of one sort or another and those who despair of institutional change itself and who turn, in their desperation, to noninstitutional means of reaching the promised land of a better day.

**MODERATOR:** Noninstitutional means. Dr. Adler?

**J. ADLER:** I am referring to revolutionary violence.

**MODERATOR:** Is the violent overthrow of a society's long-standing laws and institutions morally justifiable, given the loss of life that always occurs? I see that Jacob Bronowski would like to comment.

**JACOB BRONOWSKI:** That Jefferson, like Locke, was very serious about the right of revolution is supported by his comment that the tree of liberty needs to be watered by the blood of patriots from time to time.

**MODERATOR:** Mr. Shaw, would you like to join in?

**BERNARD SHAW:** Jefferson's perspective aside, heroic aspirations, devoted services, dauntless bravery, unsparing bloodshed are worse than useless when the combatants understand neither what is wrong nor how to set it right.

**MODERATOR:** Of course, the perspectives held by a Jefferson, who enjoyed a life characterized by a unique combination of privilege, property and individual liberty must differ from those of say, Karl Marx. Is that not correct, Herr Marx?

**KARL MARX:** Such misunderstanding is nearly universal. That bourgeois society in the United States of the mid-nineteenth century was not yet developed far enough to make the class struggle obvious and comprehensible was most strikingly proved by Henry Carey, the only American economist of importance. All he proved was that he took the undeveloped social conditions of the United States to be normal social conditions.

**MODERATOR:** And yet, when Henry George was writing these signs were certainly evident. Does the history of uprisings against those who hold power reveal an explosion of dissent against economic deprivation, against political oppression, or both? I recognize Jacob Bronowski.

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