

Canadian Georgists have lost one of their leading lights. John Craig Cringan died on Tuesday, May 19, 1992 at 7:30 PM after suffering a massive heart attack. He was sixty-four years old. Craig had suffered from angina over the years and was in the hospital for a month before his death.

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Craig's children and to Mary, his wife of forty-four years.

Craig served for many years as the Director of the Toronto branch of the School of Economic Science, a Henry George School affiliate in Canada. He was also active in other Georgist organizations, including Henry George Institute, International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, and Council of Georgist Organizations. Craig's family has invited friends to make donations in his memory to the Georgist organization of their choice.

Many of us came to know Craig and Mary by attending Georgist conferences over the years. At one conference Craig presented an intriguing approach to learning economic principles, a computer chessboard game he developed and called *LANDGAME*. The game could be played either with a land value (only) tax, or with a land-and-building tax. The tax used determined the best strategy to follow: to develop or to speculate.

Craig was in many ways an individualist among individualists. His letters and articles reveal an independent mind that valued free inquiry into truth, as these excerpts show.

From a letter to Mark Sullivan, 4-4-91:

...my antipathy for land speculators is exceeded only by my hatred of taxes. I positively detest doing my income tax, comparing it to the sadistic orgies of a certain oriental potentate in old times who would entertain his guests by having one of the slaves commit hari-kari by disemboweling himself in everyone's view. To me the self-assessed income tax amounts to forcing an entire populace

Craig Cringan

to commit a similar indignity to itself.

...I still think that, within any reasonable limits, a shift of taxation from anything else to land values in not going to

reduce land prices and it might even increase them...

The way I see it, any shift of taxes from production to land will cause rents to increase by the exact amount of the tax shift.... taking the brakes off production will produce increased business activity and a fairly constant proportion of the increased wealth will go into rent, producing an actual increase in land values.

In this scenario, the only way that land values would fall would be if the government both takes in increasing proportion of total wealth, and if it spends this wealth in ways which society finds to be of lower value than private expenditures.

From The Three Legs of Privilege, 11-90:

In the nineteenth century, the total taxes collected by all levels of government amounted to less than 20% of the economy. Now they amount to around 46% in the United States and 52% in parts of Canada. Cynics will remark, "Thank goodness we are not getting all the government we pay for."

Some government funds get given out to big companies in 50 million dollar chunks as bribes to relocate their plants in locations selected by political rather than economic considerations. Then there are the enormous "research grants" given to companies whose principal talent is being able to get these grants....

The land-tax solution proposed by Henry George is a technique rather than an economic fundamental. The fundamentals here are that privileges are abhorrent and that the resources of Nature are for everybody, for the people and other creatures, in this and in all future generations. When people learn to accept these fundamental truths, they will be ready for the techniques needed to implement a poverty-free society. The principal one of these techniques is a single tax on land.