

Integration for Georgists

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I had a moment of what I hope was insight when I thought about Selim Tideman's observation that the Henry George movement is less well known today than it was in 1893. My thought was that the movement had become isolated from the background problems which hatched it, and which basically still pertain. For a revitalization to take place, it must be reestablished in its context.

The factors that block acceptance of Georgist ideas stem from the underlying wrongs in our society. The "return of public property to its natural rightful owner, the whole society," depends on a change in orientation and is part of a complex of problems that are all inter-connected. The solutions, therefore, are also inter-connected. They're predicated on a *people-oriented* economy.

Today, the people exist for industry's sake. The cart is pulling the horse. We are no longer human beings . . . we are consumers. One can almost see some future President solving a depression by making industry so self-sufficient (machines buying what machines produce) that the public can be dispensed with altogether.

We're apparently being conquered by oil companies and bomber manufacturers. (Recently a bomb was accidentally dropped on a South Carolina community. The Military said, in effect: Sorry! There's a chance of radio-

activity but that's the calculated risk we're taking.)

The destructive root of our society—the foundation in sand—is private self-centeredness. We know there is personal property such as one's house, clothing and personal effects. We know there is also social property such as land, street lights, subways, railroads and power plants. No individual can rightfully "own" social property; we're having trouble with the railroads right now . . . they are not making a profit, but why should they be expected to make a profit or do anything beside carrying out their necessary function, which is to transport people and goods? Nobody expects the highways to make a profit. But our society blinds itself to the truth about social property because it has given a green light to private individuals to profit at the general expense.

This license is confused with "individualism" but is actually a hideous distortion as one can see by the conformism it has bred. The individual cannot develop his best talents and potential when he is engaged in a rat race. He can only fight a feeling of helplessness in an atmosphere where a corporation's profits are more sacred than the public health and welfare, where chemical companies are allowed to spray our foods with insecticides, and those adult delinquents, our political leaders, threaten the world "from

a position of strength" and enjoy making a big noise with H-bombs. Peace is hard to achieve when some are allowed to profit from defense.

Our society can be compared to a body whose individual parts are encouraged to be greedy and exploit the needs of every other part of the same body. What's happening is the same as would happen in our own bodies if, for instance, the bloodmaker discovered it could make a cheaper and easier substitute for blood by adding certain synthetic chemicals, and shortly thereafter, the liver experienced a toxic reaction. Let us say that the liver, after much suffering, finally suspected the bloodmaker, ran tests to confirm its suspicion, sent a protest to the brain, and a request for protective legislation.

The bloodmaker is "in business for himself" and he puts up a fight. He sends a lobby that distributes gifts to the brain to influence a decision favorable to himself (he thinks) and puts on a big campaign with "research" from paid laboratories. The brain decides there is no direct connection between the liver's illness and the bloodmaker's toxic chemicals.

Obviously, that body is going to get sicker and obviously the basic values of its system are harmful to itself. When Christ and other far seeing prophets took the God-proven principles by which our own bodies function and applied them to the social structure, they were foretelling an evolutionary fact. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is not an idle platitude; it's a necessity of survival. Today we are forced to reckon with it because our society has reached the point of power and communication development where the harmful effects of its basic tenets are infinitely compounded and spare no one.

In spite of a brainwashing network of television and newspapers, people today sense something fundamentally wrong. The feeling may be largely subconscious but it manifests itself

in such multifarious ways as the fact that we have the highest crime rate in the world and that half our hospital beds are occupied by mental patients. It is manifested in the current surge of interest in archaeology and the "endgames" of past civilizations, also in de-humanized art forms like blank stretches of canvas completely void or with sudden tantrums of color. It shows clearly the hysteria of an advertisement like the one in The New York Times in May, 1957. That message from A. N. Spanel, chairman of the International Latex Corporation, was an attempt to renew confidence in Western civilization and was titled, "This Fatalism is Fatal." It warned that the Aztec empire was destroyed by a "myth," as though a decline of our way of life would be the result of some myth rather than of the serious things that are wrong with it—as though by all of us taking loyalty oaths and having faith the monstrous structure could be kept upright in its foundation of sand. Propaganda of this kind, as earnest as it is misguided, is symptomatic of what it seeks to deny. It's also tax deductible.

How can the Georgist movement make its voice heard in the madness around us? One thing I would suggest, if I may, is a greater awareness of other groups, which though they focus on different facets, are nevertheless working to promote the change of attitudes that will also pave our way. While it is not necessary to accept all the ideas and publications of each group whose goals are in fundamental sympathy, a unification of spirit and an exchange of ideas would help our "islands of sanity," radiate outward at a faster rate.

A degree of integration with basically harmonious groups is not a totally new idea to HGN readers. The Georgist movement, with such a valuable point of view to contribute, need not be static or isolated.