

HENRY WHO? — the poverty of progress

by R. Dean Meridith

My initial thoughts were to deal with the question, "Is there life after ten lessons of P & P?"; and, then they shifted to questions of communications and identity.

I've asked a number of people if they know who Henry George was, and the answer which always comes to mind, comes from a woman who said, "No; but I once knew a George Henry!"

In just a few months, Jimmy who? has partially cleared up his identity problem, and has propelled himself into a candidate for the presidency of the United States.

After forty-four years (or, ninety-seven years, if you like) it is still, "Henry who?"; and, if people know of Henry George at all, it's, "Oh yeh, he was the single-taxer!"

We have no self-proclaimed Georgist as a candidate for the presidency; we have few, if any, self-proclaimed Georgists in the Congress or Senate or, other higher positions in government; we have few, if any, self-proclaimed Georgists in top positions of state, county, city and local government; we have no representative to the United Nations; we've been no match for the Keynesian and Marxist educators and philosophers; we have few self-proclaimed Georgists in our youngest generation, working with their peers or, asking for social change from old generations in power; we are virtually unknown to all forms of the communication media; and, we have failed to develop a cadre of leadership and organizations with nation-wide credibility and impact.

Why have the ideas of Henry George had so little influence? Frank Goble, President, Thomas Jefferson Research Center, suggests at least two reasons: a) Georgists have not fully understood his ideas, and b) they have not sufficiently understood the process required to translate ideas into action.

Goble contends, rightfully so, that George was not merely an economist, but also a social philosopher; and, that to understand his ideas about economics, that it is essential to understand his underlying philosophical premise . . . Natural law.

Henry George did not spend time explaining or defending the concept of Natural Law, because the premise had been advanced by some of the greatest minds in history, and was the basis for our Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

At the turn of the century, the scientific method gradually replaced

natural law; and, Darwinian Materialism has prevailed, as the basis for Marxism, Fabian Socialism, Freudianism and, the ever-present behaviorism.

"The problem for Georgists", says Goble, "is not merely to convince people of the merits of land-value taxation. The problem is much greater than this. It is to convince people that the abandonment of natural law in our institutions of higher education has been an incredible blunder. And, Goble quotes Walter Lippmann: "The prevailing education is destined, if it continues, to destroy Western civilization and is, in fact, destroying it."

The poverty of our progress is quite evident. There are Georgists who can ask (and have), "How can you talk of our progress, or be critical of our progress? You've been a Georgist for such a short time." Given the present state of the Georgist movement (if it can truly be called a movement), if I had devoted fifteen or twenty or, amazingly enough, thirty years of my life to the movement, I think I would be enormously embarrassed and dissatisfied with our progress.

The devotion and intelligence and efforts of so many, over a number of years, is immeasurable; but, there is no way we can rationalize-away the fact that we have little to show, for an expenditure of millions of dollars.

Where have all that devotion and energy and money gone? I submit that it has gone "to fight the enemy"; and, as Pogo said, "The enemy may be us!"

The American people are crying out for a return to our origins, and a way to move our society to the fulfillment of lives, with liberty with justice and, the pursuit of happiness.

The American people are no longer sure who they are, or whether they will have a future, because we don't know where we are, where we're tending and, thus, what it is that must be done, and how best to do it.

The American people are not certain that they can trust themselves, and the level of distrust of business and government has probably never been higher. And, it isn't apparent from either the private or the public sectors that either is guided by sufficiently noble purposes to merit our faith and trust.

We have tremendous problems within the Georgist movement; and yet, we have tremendous opportunities in meeting the needs of the larger society . . . in helping America find herself again. I

agree with Peter Drucker when he said, "Results are obtained by exploiting opportunities, not by solving problems!" We're going to have to become social-change entrepreneurs, and the needs of the larger society, and the risks necessary to satisfy those needs should shape who we are, what it is we must do and, how best to do it.

We have been too timid about advocating George's underlying philosophical premise and, worse still, we've tried to twist and contort George into the prevailing behaviorist molds, in the name of relevancy.

We haven't been relevant and convincing to the American people because we've cut the heart out of our world view, and we have tried to play this very serious game of life by someone else's rules. We've tried to put everything in its place, scientifically, without insisting upon the natural order of things. Too bad. It doesn't fit.

Let me conclude with a few thoughts from John Gardner, Common Cause:

"At the root of many, perhaps most, of the problems facing our social order is the shattered relationship between the individual and society.

Significant social change is accomplished by people with vision in their heads, and a monkey wrench in their hands.

People who control the course of events leave nothing to the technicians.

Ideals without a program are fantasy. And, a program without organization is a hoax.

We do not engage in educational campaigns for their own sake, nor research for its own sake; nor, do we make pronouncements or engage in debate on any issue unless we intend to fight that issue through to a conclusion.

Citizen action must be a full-time, continued presence. Effective communication is the most powerful single weapon in the public interest lobby.

Form alliances. Select a limited number of targets, and hit 'em hard.

Significant change depends on reaching the middle range of opinion. Citizen's groups should treat their membership as a cadre, not as a bloc; and, they should not have vast numbers, but active members."

I wish that I could say that our greatest communications problem was merely to make the difference between Henry Carter and Jimmy George per-

fectly clear to the American people. "Our work," as Henry George said in *The Standard*, "is not so much to educate men as to uneducate them, to

bring them back to natural perceptions and first principles."

Time for action

by Glenn E. Weeks

Several months after the Henry George School of Social Science was founded in January 1932, a fund appeal was to read: "In the lecture field and elsewhere the fiscal aspects of the Single Tax have heretofore been largely emphasized; and while this method has its advantages, the prevailing chaos in state and industry, and the befuddlement in the minds of the highly placed, demand a more fundamental treatment of Henry George's proposals — a treatment that will meet all the current fallacious theories; a treatment that will oppose reaction of every kind; a treatment that will prove that Henry George's teachings point the only way out of our age-old and now threatening economic difficulties."

Recently submitted to the New York Henry George School's board of trustees for 1976-77 fiscal year funding consideration were various Georgist activity-related proposals totalling an aggregate of \$254,615.00

One cannot examine these requests without reflecting on our past progress and to assess our relative position in a substantially more complex economy and a society no less imperilled by adversary and social quandary than previously. As inheritors of the early Henry George School mandate tradition and founding effort, now, forty-four years later, we find that our efforts do not entirely fulfill our common expectation of widespread persuasive articulation of the alternative Georgist paradigm, although some progress can be noted. The question of continued programming activity based on past efforts in progress, therefore, again confronts us.

Some observations about our past and continuing efforts are appropriate. They are personal. Does our relatively slow progress result from a lack of scholastic achievement and/or effort to express our point of view? The evidence would indicate otherwise. Since this

past April, copies of Georgist materials that have come to my attention comprise a file approximately 1-1/2 feet deep. As I look through these papers, I am impressed, not with a paucity of effort and lack of responsible articulation on the part of Georgists, but with the plentitude of it. There is a veritable plethora of information being written. And yet the general public seems no better informed of Georgist economic and ethical relationships and is even less persuaded.

May I suggest some probable causes? First, the generous volumes of Georgist information are being generated without the discipline of a framework of specifically selected goals on the part of a "Georgist movement." Secondly, performance criteria for funded efforts has been objectively vague, the necessary result of unprioritized goals. The resultant dispersion of poignancy for lack of concentration is analagous to a diffused light source that defies identification and blends without distinction into competing illumination or lack of it, whereas if light source energies are concentrated, the source becomes clearly identified and potentially powerful. Consider the laser beam. Briefly, the Georgist movement has a goal prioritizing problem. Fortunately, this is a deficiency that can be overcome by utilizing available management techniques.

What must be done?

Before distinctly defined incremental achievement goals can be established for any endeavor, a guiding consensus of directional philosophy must be established. Philosophic statement that touches the meaning of man's existence is the heart of Georgist concern. Is it inappropriate, therefore, to state this worldview summation succinctly and objectively? I think not. It is imperative that we do so publicly and with determination. This is the cohesive bond that can bring focus to the pre-

eminence of the Georgist paradigm.

As an action agenda, I will propose to our Board of Trustees the following program:

- (1) The convening of a representative group of responsible Georgists to form a consensus statement of the Georgist worldview and to articulate the Georgist moral purpose. A short publishable monograph is the goal.
- (2) Expansion of the *Henry George News* to be more inclusive of diverse Georgist expression and to serve as a clearinghouse vehicle for relevant Georgist activity information.
- (3) The development of 'goal focus,' a prioritization of Georgist program activity through a five-year plan oriented to the "Management by Objective" approach.
- (4) The subsequent creation, through a selected group of qualified Georgists, of text material that can serve as a comprehensive analysis of the Georgist paradigm in the modern context of expression. The paradigm standardization is the goal.
- (5) The development of media consciousness and area image creation tied to area specific research and standardized paradigm expression for selected audiences. Abstraction levels are to be predetermined.
- (6) Selective funding and objective performance evaluation to actualize the prioritized program. Specific time frame allocations are necessary.

Purposeful articulation of Georgist moral concern is particularly timely in the formation of a distinct identity profile. In the current synthesis of popular issues, strong focus on selected achievement goals will enable Georgists to prioritize programming in a more meaningful manner. A distinct identity profile and selected action goals will go far in moving the Georgist alternative to social injustice back into the mainstream of public consideration.