

1 OPEN FORUM

Land and Liberty Autumn 1995

NAME CHANGE DEBATE AT DANISH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON THE agenda of the International Union business meeting in Denmark was the knotty problem of the name of the organisation. In Australia in 1993, a senior Georgist, Jan Pot of Holland, had brought the subject to the fore and a special committee, chaired by him, had communicated by post during the interim period.

Jan Pot's main bone of contention was that the existing name implied it promoted a tax when in fact the organisation was against taxation.

Jan had done a very thorough job in canvassing Georgists and more members than had probably ever been asked, or had been involved before, had the opportunity to express their views. The debate had been widened by Dr John Loveless, Chairman of the English organisation, Centre for Incentive Taxation, who was seeking an acceptable collective term to describe the supporters of the Georgist philosophy and this survey had drawn comments from Georgists all round the world.

In the survey conducted by Jan Pot, 42 people had responded which represented about 20 per cent of the current International Union membership. Of these, 40 were in agreement that the name should not include the word "tax". Only seven members had suggested the inclusion of a reference to Henry George by name and in fact, as the President pointed out in the analysis he gave of all the replies received by Jan Pot, the majority appeared to feel that the use of George's name in any form was a distinct hindrance. The inclusion of the

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word "international" (34 replies) or "world" (12) indicated a strong preference for underlying the international nature of the Movement. The word "union" appeared 30 times and words such as "association" or "movement" a further 32 times. There was therefore some unanimity at least in the wish to keep "International Union" in the title. But the words "land-value taxation" or with the substitution of "site rent", did not find favour with the majority. The word "revenue" fared better with 17 mentions. Others suggested "incentive" (twice) "justice" (four times) "economics" (eight times) and "International Union for Land and Liberty" (three times).

In the general discussion which followed Jan Pot's research conclusions, attention was drawn to the fact that only 20 per cent of the membership had felt strongly enough to indicate a desire for change and of these, apart from a more or less general dislike of the word tax and a fairly general wish to keep the term "International Union" there was no real agreement on any alternative name. Indeed this prompted the representative from Hungary, Karoly Ravasz, to suggest that any new name chosen would not represent the wishes of the majority and could well cause dissent amongst members.

The length of the name was acknowledged by many to be something of a problem but no one

could suggest an acceptable alternative wording that, in describing the purpose of the organisation, was any shorter. There were those who saw no need to explain the purpose in the title at all and others who seemed to think, since you were going to have to explain it sooner or later, it might just as well be spelt out in the name.

Quite an appreciable amount of time was given to the discussion of "Geonomics" and "geonomists", with those supporting the terms expressing themselves very positively about them and the name "International Geonomics Union" was formally put as a motion to the meeting but was defeated by 17 votes to 4.

The name change debate was finally put to rest at the General Business meeting when, by a majority of 16 votes to five, it was agreed that the existing name should be retained.

All members joined in expressing praise to Jan Pot for the very thorough and workmanlike research he had done and for his courtesy in replying to all the letters and in keeping all the members apprised of his findings. The views of a real cross section of members had been given attention and examined in a democratic manner. Jan Pot presented the International Union with a bound copy of all the correspondence and said, before departing, that the meeting would have to be his last appearance at an international conference. All members will admire his tenacity of purpose and devotion to the Georgist cause.