

July 10, 1985

Morgan Harris  
3959 Shedd Terrace  
Culver City, CA 90230

Dear Morgan,

Your letter of June 21, as well as our most recent telephone conversation, indicate that you are perhaps somewhat dismayed by what I have put together as the organizational structure for Common Ground. Similar, though even more strained, feelings were expressed by Marion Sapiro in a conversation I had with her last week. Others, however, have conveyed very approving comments. What troubles me is that you feel I am "taking over."

From the very beginning of my involvement, I attempted to make clear my view that Common Ground must first bring Georgists together. The Council of Georgist Organizations was created in an effort to accomplish this feat. Just putting together the annual conference stretches the limits of the Council's finances and the energies of Bob Clancy as well. You have been quite right all along about the inability of Georgists to function as a movement with one voice; I believe Common Ground can, in time, help to solidify the efforts of those already Georgists and attract others to the movement. Yet, in pursuing this goal we must recognize that each existing Georgist group or entity is working toward goals it feels are worthwhile, by means its leaders have debated and agreed upon. Is it reasonable to expect these groups to willingly give up their autonomy or open themselves without a corresponding benefit? No. I don't think that could happen.

Most Georgists who sit on the boards of the organizations with the most substantial financial bases do not seem interested in the conferences (although more are attracted to the International conferences). There are many individuals associated with Schalkenbach and B.E.E., for example, whom I have never met. Although a number of individuals sit on both the boards of the Henry George School and the Schalkenbach Foundation, many of us on the School's board have little knowledge of what Schalkenbach is planning. There is often cooperation on specific projects, however, when such projects are deemed sufficiently important and have potential for success. Bringing these, and other, individuals together on the board of Common Ground would be a major accomplishment and, I believe, a step forward toward a real movement.

THE HENRY GEORGE  
ASSOCIATION

*Action*  
FOR TAX RELIEF

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*The product belongs to the producer.*

*The income you earn is yours.*

*No one else has a right to any of it.*

*The state has no right to any of it.*

*By collecting the public revenue it creates (ground rent) as taxes, the state will have enough to pay for all the government we need.*

*This will create jobs and full employment.*

*Freedom from taxes on earned income means prosperity for everybody.*

All they've got is money. Are we going to be "bought off" with it? Bribed? What have they done with the money and the power it gives them? run the HG moomt into a decline from which it will never recover unless an organization like Common Ground comes along, disregards them, and starts a movement headed for success.

Dear Ed Dodson:

15 July 1985

In response to the comment in your letter of July 10: "...I attempted to make clear my view that Common Ground must first bring Georgists together. The Council of Georgist Organizations was created in an effort to accomplish this feat."

My response is: let the Council do it.

In my statement to the participants in the Henry George Conference, which (I hope) Tom Sherrard will read, you will note that I have detailed two ways in which money has stymied the HG movement. There is a third way which I will share with you in this letter, but which I can hardly say publicly.

It is that the foundations with the money control the movement --they determine the philosophy and the program. Unfortunately they lack a clear goal, they lack intention (determination) and they lack the ideas and knowledge of how to create a successful program. They are losers.

If we are going to "bring Georgists together" on their terms it means we are achieving unity at the expense of our integrity--at the expense of success.

Their terms have dictated the movement up until now --and look at it! Failure, incorporated.

The whole purpose of Common Ground is to unite individuals --people--in a totally different kind of program, a program which has a chance, at least, of succeeding.

If we are going to join with losers on the basis of their ideas, on the basis of what they lack in vision, on the basis of what they will accept, then we, too, will be losers.

"TO ABOLISH ALL TAXATION save that upon land values."

You say, "I believe Common Ground can, in time, help to solidify the efforts of those already Georgists..." My response is: efforts oriented toward failure.

You say, "...each existing Georgist group is working toward goals it feels are worthwhile by means its leaders have... agreed upon."

Exactly! Therefore, those leaders will not be interested in the means we will use.

I see no evidence for hope in existing groups and their leaders (with notable exceptions such as Mary Davis, Steve Cord, Dan Sullivan, et al)

When you unite a group of losers, what you end up with is a group of losers.

Common Ground is the organization for individuals who are determined to be winners.

Best wishes,



P.S. Colin Bonner's letter (enclosed) points out that these losers are not even Georgists.

cc: Steve  
Marion  
Tom Sherrard  
et al  
Colin Bonner