

PACE UNIVERSITY LEFT FORUM PANEL

(from p. 12)

has suggested this as well). Hudson regularly ranks George among those who "get" the concept of economic rent, along with other classical economists like Ricardo and Marx. Whatever his personal negative experiences with later-day followers, or with those who ran the Henry George School when he worked there, it is a shame that this has interfered with his otherwise sound scholarship. Hudson does have a point in that the Georgist economic philosophy does not fit neatly into Right or Left boxes. However, if one looks at the theories of Henry George, and drops any ideological bias before doing so, one can decide if they are valid or not – and that should be the only criteria for judging economic theories. As Cay Hehner taught me from my first classes at the Henry George School, it is best not to try to determine if Henry George was to the Right or to the Left, that will just make it much harder to understand his theories. Perhaps Hudson should heed this advice as well.

Beyond that, this author cannot speculate as to Hudson's motives.

After this article went to press on Opednews, I received an update from panalists Cay Hehner and Michael Hudson.

From Cay Hehner:

I didn't call for a "coalition of the right & the left", but for a coalition of all progressive forces. I've often said in class that I'd call for an across-the-board coalition, following George's rare magnanimity in political matters. You may have had that in mind when you wrote this sentence.

Truthfully speaking I do not care for the right or far right and am as uneasy with reactionaries as is Michael. In my political analysis the far right creates fascisms and totalitarianism, two pitfalls to be avoided at all times & costs. I can coalesce more easily with a neo-Keynesian or a liberal Marxist than I can with a neo-classical economist or a right-wing libertarian. Climate change deniers and Heartland institute people are off-limits for me as are, say, white supremacists. If you wanted to identify and classify my position you could say I'm a neo-Georgist, like Mazzone, and a progressive libertarian, like George, philosophically speaking I'm a progressive Hegelian Platonic, and spiritually speaking I follow Sri Aurobindo. Anyway, that might be breaking the boundaries of your summary a tad.

When I was in college my first year I had a neo-Keynesian professor named Michael Bolle, brilliant man who had taught at Harvard, who urged us to always identify our own position, economic, social political, philosophic upfront before engaging in a free-for-all discussion. I believe till today that this is a sound piece of advice and if followed it would clarify discussions and obviate much misunderstanding.

The concept of "libertarianism" is radically different in different contexts, cultures, and settings. In French,

for instance, there is no such thing as "right-wing" libertarianism, if you designate some one or yourself 'libertaire', the word comes from liberte after all, that automatically denotes a progressive position and mind set. It also is connected to a very precise anti-authoritarian, emancipatory political and economic philosophy. Ct. Kropotkin would stand as one of the spiritual fathers of that movement, even the Great and incomparable Lev Tolstoy. It took me a while to realize that here on this side of the Pond "libertarian" can mean anything and everything not excluding the kitchen sink. For not just historic reasons but reasons of plain common sense and brotherly ethicality I am fundamentally ill at ease to be put in bed (ideologically speaking) with any kind of conservative or reactionary. Fox News, and its various reactionary offshoots & commentators are not viable news distributors, they are ideological machinists, slanderers, and character assassins. The Reagan-Bush era or the Thatcher/Kohl era overseas was an abomination in my eyes that did incalculable damage to national and world history. By contrast the Progressive Era of the beginning of last century carried (domestically) by TR and (internationally) by Woodrow Wilson as well as after the Harding/Coolidge/Hoover national bankruptcy by FDR's WPA went broadly speaking in the right direction and it carried the U.S. and humanity as a whole forward in leaps and bounds. As if you needed a physical proof the Harding/Hoover years led in the worst financial crash of the century, and so did the Reagan/Bush deregulation. The Italians foolishly voted in this speculator/monopolist Berlusconi only to have him preside over the worst financial debacle of this venerable country. I let you draw your own conclusions regarding politics in our town. Just because someone has the nimbus of being rich doesn't mean he or she will make you rich when you vote them into office. Likelihood is on the contrary that they will continue to pick your pockets as they have done all along.

Anyway an alliance with right-wing libertarians is not something I would recommend or stand for under any circumstances. Anybody who knows me or has taken five minutes of class time or discussion time w/ me would be in the clear on as much.

From Michael Hudson:

The problem with "Georgist scholarship" (an oxymoron, I realize) is that they only read George from the late 19th century, not the other contemporary literature of his time. The idea of ecology -- above all the return of urban waste (nightsoil, slaughterhouse refuse, etc.) -- was a fundamental tenet of American protectionism. On my website you will find my PhD dissertation on E. Peshine Smith, who emphasized this. Henry Carey picked it up and pointed out that under free trade and the specialization of labor, urban/rural balance of this sort was blocked. Protective tariffs were needed to balance the economy and its ecology.

I give a long history of this ecological argument in America's Protectionist Takeoff, and also in my Trade, Development and Foreign Debt. George often plagiarized Carey and others, removing their (continued on page 14)