



JUNE-JULY 2017 / \$3.00

VOLUME 30, No. 4

BRIDGING THE LEFT AND RIGHT DIVIDE

By Mike Curtis, Arden DE

(The following speech was presented by Mike Curtis at the CGO conference banquet July 31, 2017 in O'Fallon, IL.)



It's been nearly 50 years since I became acquainted with George, and I have never been so haunted by his words. He says:

"Given a community with republican institutions in which one class rolls in wealth and the many seethe with discontent at a condition of things they know not how to remedy, and power must pass into the hands of demagogues who will seize and wield it for a time, only to be displaced by worse demagogues."

"The accidents of hereditary succession may sometimes place the wise and just in power — but in a corrupt democracy the tendency is always to give power to the worst. ... "A corrupt democratic government must finally corrupt the people, and when a people become corrupt there is no resurrection."

Well, the system wasn't and isn't totally corrupt, but it is fundamentally corrupt. The foundation of American Capitalism is private property in land. And that institution is reinforced with every shift to income and sales taxes.

True, since there is no free land, all taxes are paid out of what would otherwise go to the owners of land and other monopolies, but income and sales taxes levy no direct penalty for land speculation, which is the cause of unemployment, un-affordable housing — and the reason why wages tend to a minimum below which the value of land would fall as well.

We've intervened with the Minimum Wage, and by some estimates we are redistributing nearly a trillion dollars a year with an array of welfare programs at every level of,

because there aren't enough jobs and wages are so low. And even that isn't solving the problem.

Why wouldn't the coal miners, assembly line workers, and every other semi-skilled person vote for Trump? He actually promised them something. They heard the Democrats and their concern for poor illegal immigrants and their kids who wanted to go to college, and the refugees who fled from the wars and chaos of the Middle East. And all the while they, as American citizens, were working at dead-end jobs or unemployed and our government did little or nothing to help them.

From the sound of the news, you'd think things were getting pretty good right now, but the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that eight million more people would have to be working just to get to the same percentage of adults employed as there was before the recession began. The \$7.25 Federal Minimum Wage buys less of the basics than it did in 1950. The median wage, increased by 10% while productivity increased by 100% during the last 40 years. And inflation takes more than the banks pay in interest. With every increase in productivity, wages & interest are becoming a smaller portion of what's produced, and there is never enough land sold that all the people who represent the increase in population, and those who were replaced by machines, can work and afford a decent living. The rich are getting richer and the poor are in greater need of assistance. Henry George, your time is now!

Bridging the Left and Right Divide — that's what Henry George did. That's what we do. I remember the last time we had a conference here in St. Louis. There were a good number of conservatives in attendance and someone asked: What on Earth are these right wing reactionaries doing at a Henry George Conference? And the answer is: We all agree on one thing: The rental value of land is a natural and just source of public revenue. That's it — But, it is the bridge between the Left and Right. And it's the one thing that all Liberals and Conservatives can agree on without compromise — as long as they understand the nature of land.

So, How do we advocate the same program to both these groups and still be in sync with what they believe? What can we say to the Bernie Sanders supporters that also resonates with the Ted Cruz followers, and doesn't alienate those who voted for Trump. How can we present the Single Tax and reach the 99%?

We often see other movements succeeding and wonder what we can learn from them. Can we replicate their success? How about Nelson Mandela? (Continued on page 14)