

A Classic Reissued

THE SELF-SUPPORTING CITY, by Gilbert M. Tucker. Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York. 1958. 100 pages. \$1.

Reviewed by MARSHALL CRANE

Georgists will welcome the news that, in response to a very considerable and persistent demand, Gilbert M. Tucker has completely revised and rewritten *The Self-Supporting City*.

The first edition of this work appeared while we were still in the throes of war-time "prosperity," and it has been suggested that this was unfortunate. At the time few of us could recall the recent depression without a shudder, and while the book attracted attention, naturally not all the comment was favorable. But the author, thoroughly acquainted with what he was writing, had written it well. He presented a picture of conditions obtaining in numerous towns and cities, and none of his critics were able to produce anything resembling an adequate rebuttal.

Every articulate Georgist, while sowing the good seed, has encountered the objection that reform—specifically, the tax reform which he advocates—is not "practical." The objector, unless he happens to be a devoted Marxist, does not often disclose what system he thinks would be practical, but he is apparently quite sure that tax reform would not be. In fact, his principal article of faith seems to be that change of any sort is a perilous, unworkable business at best, and something to be avoided at all costs. To many of us this is a most annoying method of attack. Either in spite of its essential weakness or because of it, it seems to suggest no

effective line of defense, and we concede the battle with a sigh.

Henry George approached this problem from an entirely different angle. He never forgot basic theory and never permitted his reader to forget it. He was a social philosopher first and last, his system resting solidly upon essential truth and natural law. Nevertheless he was precipitated into the maelstrom of economic thought and controversy much less by metaphysical speculation than by his perception and conviction that something was vitally wrong with the way men in general managed the production, distribution and consumption of wealth. The system was not only unjust. It was utterly impractical as well.

In much the same way, it is our present system that Mr. Tucker works on, in both the original and the revised editions of *The Self-Supporting City*. Economic theory is kept before the reader at all times, but always with the methods of its application in mind. So what is studied is not only what is right, but also what actually can be done—what will save public money—and what will be of real advantage to taxpayers, both as a group and as individuals. The author offers no panacea or formula; for cities, no matter where they are, are as different from each other as the people who inhabit them. Nevertheless he does suggest a number of things which the observant and thoughtful citizen will recognize as practical expedients, all of which might be applied with profit in his own home town.

As might be expected, the subject of subsidies from central governments to local communities receives the at-

tion it well deserves. The author says—and it could hardly be said better:

"By whatever agency our taxes are levied, we ourselves must keep filled the pork barrel from which we would grab and, by and large, the taxpayers lose more from subsidies than they gain. All such schemes are open to another grave objection: he who plays the piper calls the tune, and trying to shoulder off onto state or nation obli-

gations which are ours means the loss of self-government and the destruction of our liberties. We clamor for subsidies for schools, roads, public improvements, housing, the relief of destitution, and for many a supposed benefit, and for this mess of pottage—and a mess it is!—we sell our freedom. Remember Franklin's warning: "They who can give up essential liberty, to obtain a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."

THE PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

In a report sent to the Henry George School conference by Gilbert M. Tucker, president of the Economic Education League, he stated that the next objective is to consider the employment of a full-time field worker to further the acceptance of tax principles supported by this group. He would work mostly in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania where during the past year, an excellent study was made dealing with the arrangement and financing of a land value tax program. "This is, we believe," wrote Mr. Tucker, "the first thorough and scholarly study of its kind made in America. It was made for us by the Institute of Research of Lehigh University and, although the League financed it, we left them rigidly alone with no attempt at interference, dictation or prejudice in findings. The study is most satisfactory and will be, we think, very valuable. It has been published and is available in paper binding for \$1, cloth binding for \$1.50."

Copies of the book reviewed above, as well as the recently published textbook *Common-Sense Economics* (special price, \$4.50 postpaid), may also be ordered through the Henry George News or from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation at the same address, 50 East 69th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

On September 2nd friends everywhere are invited to come to Philadelphia to celebrate the 119th birthday of Henry George at his birthplace, 413 South 10th Street. The meeting will begin at 4 p.m. and there will be outstanding speakers, including Agnes deMille and Philadelphia civic leaders. Plan to come and stay through the evening.

Robert Clancy
3353 82nd Street
Jackson Hgts., L.I.