



Georgists and Marxists

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GEORGISTS AND MARXISTS

INTRO

By an accident of history I fell into a nest of Marxists. Riverside, I have learned, is the California station on the Marxist underground r.r. in academia.

Before that I spent 4 years in B.C. where I was recruited by a Georgist who was working with "socialists", who bore some similarities with Marxists. My example will mostly come from Riverside, but with some Canadian additions.

Being tolerant, optimistic, and conciliatory by nature and training I did not view this with particular alarm. On the contrary, I have long seen Georgism as an overlapping of Communism with Capitalism, one which met the legitimate claims of both parties, and served as a natural synthesis. Marxists believe that progress is made through synthesis: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, and all that. I would put it to them that way, they would see the light, one Marxist would lead another, and I would convert them by the dozens -- it's cheaper that way, too.

Harry can sympathize, he's tried the same with Libertarians: exploit the overlap, the common ground, and take it from there.

A. Common Ground

What do Marxists and Georgists have in common?

1. We must make land common property. Better yet, the first demand in the Manifesto is to collect land rent for public purposes. Marx was a classical economist and had to know something about rent, unlike some modern neoclassicals who think it is the income of basketball players. And all good Georgists know that Vol. III of Kapital, if you are insomniac enough to read that far, is all about land rent, and we fondly believe that if Marx had lived long enough to finish it himself he would have converted himself to Georgism.

~~Thesis, antithesis, synthesis.~~

2. Anti-Malthusianism. Scarcity is all artificial. They carry it a lot farther than we do, in fact.

3. Emphasis on the evils of the enclosure movement,

locking up the common, locking out the worker. (Marx doesn't call it land, usually, but instruments of production, etc. But after you get used to the mysticism and gobbledygook and the preference for abstractions and fudge factors, you tend to ignore that and figure they just mean land.)

4. Underconsumptionism. This is central to Marx, incidental in George, so is perhaps as much a difference as a similarity.

5. Economies of scale, obsolescence of French and Jeffersonian ideas of equal division of lands. Stronger in Marx than George, but both saw the same need to find new ways to assert common rights under conditions of the factory system, centralization, and concentration. Arcadia was dead and would remain so.

6. Use of analytical concepts derived from Ricardo. George used rent law, and also labor theory of value, modified. Marx ignored the rent law, but made a big thing of labor theory of value. Modern Marxists still do.

Function of the theory in both cases was to legitimize labor income, cast doubt on other incomes. But led George to legitimize income from capital on grounds capital is produced by labor; and Marx to condemn same. (Neither one thought it through very well and I am an Austrian.)

7. Impugned motives of academic economists.

With this overlap of common ground I plunged ahead to tell the Marxists about Georgism, curious to see if they would see the cat. "How I escaped from the valley of the shifting, whispering sands I will never know but now, to pay my final debt for being spared, I will tell what I learned out there in the desert, so many years ago."

B. What are Marxists like, personally?

Marxists are not a random sample of the population. My own sample is small, but large enough, and similar enough to popular stereotypes, to tell us something.

They are not all alike. At the higher level a Marxist is moved by an ideal and sacrifices himself for a cause. At a lower level he uses Marxism to rationalize personal hatred and opportunistic advantage. I haven't seen much Marxist action at the higher level.

1. Alienation. Personally, most Marxists are alienated people. Some have parents who are shady businessmen of gray ethics and doubtful reputation: bootleggers, sports, wanderers, pushcart peddlers. One was an angry manual worker. Many are 3d-worlders seeking salvation.

They repudiate their parents' religion. If it is Jewish, they are against Israel, and pro Palestinian. (Brandeis and Joseph Fels, noted Jewish Georgists, were both Zionists in their day, which is not to say they would like what time has wrought over there.) One who was of Mormon origins seemed to use the connection rather cynically to clothe his true religion (i.e. Marxism) in the Mormon traditions. Many 3d-worlders of submarginal educational backgrounds use us as a stepping-stone to the coveted prize of U.S. citizenship. Yet others come from well-connected families whose names sometimes pop up for dipping into UNRRA relief funds, and whose return addresses include Swiss banks. We also have gentile Christians and Muslims and orientals who generally say nothing on religion and seem to ignore it.

The American Marxists know nothing of religion, are unfamiliar with the scriptures, and contemptuous of them. "Liberation theology" is never discussed, except in Religious Studies (ask June where it stands, and if our people participate).

Also likely to be alienated from children and ex-wives. Above-average divorce rate, at least for academicians. Coupled with high birthrate. High incidence of mixed marriages, racially and religiously. Conventional, stable nuclear families are the exception. Social lives are unconventional, limited to other Marxists and to graduate students. Generally light drinkers and often hard workers, although there may be some drug abuse and "fried brains".

2. Antinomianism. True followers of Ann Hutchinson. If you are saved that gives you license to break all the 10 Commandments. Rules are for others. (Cf. my environmentalist

friend at Muir Woods, that sign is for the masses, I'm a scientist.)

Disbarred attorney; CP member; boasts of using CP membership to avoid service in Korean War, but is outraged it was used to disbar him (I suspect there were other reasons, from what I have seen).

Self-righteous. Anything goes to further the cause. Fair play is for suckers; go with the winners. No Bob Meyers.

Dwell heavily on faults of others, justify their own amorality thereby, to compensate. Like Galbraith's idea of "countervailing power". Or L.A.'s rationale for grabbing water early -- got to get there before those greedy other fellows do.

Pick on UCLA for its free market bias. More generally, everyone is biased, is a creature of his economic position -- ideas are economically determined, objectivity is hypocrisy.

3. Hostility.

a. Marx's destructive style of writing is the model followed. Attack, denounce, ridicule, humiliate, scorn. There is more interest in destroying rival philosophers than in developing one's own ideas. It is also safer in such a company because when you are done there is nothing of yours to attack, you have just levelled someone else.

b. Marxists ape this. Resent the presumption of anyone else to interpret. Quotes from article on Marxism and rent in France.

But they need these enemies to attack. So they love extremists on the right who make easy targets. They are not looking for conciliation but for controversy, on which they thrive.

c. Destructively jeer, scorn, sneer, mock. "Trashing" is a much-admired skill, and feared, too, a form of bullying they use on each other as well as on others. Public denunciation of deviants is common, and part of the art is organizing a clique to reinforce yourself and jeer the victim.

Physical intimidation is also admired. Idolization of

"street-wise" chopper thug by grad students.

"Dirty tricks" are highly thought of. Packed one Prof's class during evaluation time. Another, obtained and replaced evaluation sheets. Place anonymous calls to unwanted candidates, warn them not to accept. Would have been at home in Nixon White House before Watergate.

C. Collective Behavior

1. Networking. There is a vast network of mutual support: campuswide, nationwide, worldwide. Their telephone bills must be enormous, or would be if they used their own phones. There aren't so many of them but they use their allies manyfold, e.g. to get letters of support for their friends, or to trash their enemies -- and anyone who is not a friend is an enemy, there are no neutrals.

They have Marxist allies spotted all over campus: professors on key committees; graduate students who show up for visiting lecturers if they are Marxist celebrities, and otherwise stay away. The Marxist grad students focus on the GSA and the campus newspaper. They love the campus paper. They have learned that they can say all manner of outrageous things there and enjoy automatic free legal protection with University lawyers.

They make ordinary grad students leave GSA where they feel they are wasting their time. So it is really the Marxist GSA. It has a student rep on the grad council, who can leak info. This is useful to faculty members who leak info, too, they can always blame it on the grad student.

Locally they always vote as a bloc. Whatever the issue, it always has a Marxist interpretation and a proper Marxist vote.

They are held together by a sense of persecution. They are clannish, and do not give themselves away to non-Marxists. This is probably futile because it would be surprising if they were not infiltrated by informers and agents provocateurs.

2. Power consciousness. "Seize the commanding heights" is the Marxist watchword in revolutions, and they apply the same idea to thought control in the University. Friendly

persuasion is not their style. Take control and flatten 'em, is the attitude. It is Jesse Carr politics: when you've got 'em by the short hair, their hearts and minds will follow.

Thus the minute they get a one vote majority they force through their whole program without the slightest concession.

3. Premeditated disorder. They put a high priority on controlling meetings or, if they can't control, to disrupt and stop business. They are strangers to Robert's Rules, and find them very confining and disabling where they are observed.

Packing meetings and stampeding. They bend every effort to admit as many grad student reps and observers as possible to faculty meetings, to let them speak, and give advisory opinions, and finally to vote. When not voting, they join in cheering and jeering to influence things their way.

They schedule and cancel and reschedule meetings solely for the convenience of those on their side.

They rule on who can and cannot vote.

They take business out of order, giving priority to their topics, deferring ours indefinitely. One of ours is By-Laws. Another is minutes.

They use minutes for editorializing.

They spring complicated proposals without warning, demand immediate votes.

D. Opportunistic Alliances

This is the amazing part, and the most truly revealing. The UCR Administration is their patron. That same administration is in bed with the local Babbitry, land speculators, C of C, chemical companies, etc.

Four years ago the Academic Senate launched a Pearl Harbor attack on the Department. (Marxists aren't the only dirty players.) No one said it was an attack on Marxism, that might violate academic freedom. But most people assumed it was. So did

I.

But in form it was an attack on the slow turnover of graduate students. That could reflect on me, the graduate advisor, so I responded. Fairly straightforward matter of fact: the charge was false. Our grad students didn't really hang around forever; it just seemed that way (they were so obnoxious).

They also said we weren't scholarly. So I dug through Citation Index. During period when we were cited an average of 300 times each (modesty forbids that I should tell you which of us did most to raise the average) our chief accuser was cited twice -- once by himself.

You'd think that would have ended the matter, especially among learned scholars dedicated to The Truth. But my words like silent raindrops fell, and echoed in a well of silence. I was threatened with a libel suit if I released the information on citations.

Slowly it became clear, the technique was to level false charges, publicize them, and ignore the answers.

Henry Clay: "The arts of power and its minions are the same in all countries and in all ages. It marks its victim; denounces it; and excites the public odium and the public hatred, to conceal its own abuses and encroachments." 1834.

Inevitable conclusion: real motives ^{hidden agenda} were being hidden, by people who were not bound by By-Law #9.

What is By-Law #9? Found in EX 20:16. Evidently this is not just a latter day sin. In fact, Moses repeated the 9th Commandment for emphasis, EX 23:1-3: "You shall not utter a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man, to be a malicious witness. You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; nor shall you bear witness in a suit, turning aside after a multitude, so as to pervert justice;"

So what was this hidden agenda? To root out the Marxists, or so we all assumed. But then came the big unveiling. The Chancellor refuted that by reorganizing economic studies. He took the #1 Marxist and named him Chair of Economics. He shifted the former Chair to History. He refused tenure to another non-Marxist. He left me isolated with 3 Marxists, and took away our right to grant

a graduate degree in any field of study except Marxist economics.

He turned my courses in land economics over to the soils dept; and my courses in finance to GSM.

Finally dawned on me that paranoia is true perception: the attack was on me and on Georgism, not necessarily in that order.

How had a nice old non-Marxist, market-oriented pussycat like me offended?

a. Advocated higher tax rates on land, and assessments based on market values. Patrons of UCR include holders of half the remaining developable land in Orange Cty (Irvine, Mission Viejo); speculators in the avocado crescent.

b. Taught agricultural economics, condemned subsidies to big farm landholders.

c. Taught resource economics, emphasis on water development, condemned wasteful government subsidies extending cheap water to same avocado crescent. As an avocado grower myself, used myself as a bad example to show how people waste water when it is underpriced.

Worse yet, read Constitution, noted that water belongs to the People, (a provision which, I have learned, was put in by Georgists when the Constitution was adopted), an interest to be asserted through the State Govt., just like our interest in Tidelands oil.

d. Taught how to identify and eliminate waste in government.

i. Charity begins at home: UCR wasting 450 acres city land.

ii. Peripheral Canal. Hit MWD, demonstrated land speculator control. MWD is nerve center of establishment control in S.C. MWD and its minions are unforgiving.

iii. City annexations, w/o cost-justified rate differentials.

iv. San Onofre. Physics Dept. prominent in the attack. The kind of Dept. that invites Edward Teller; I'm the type who invites Amory Lovins. The kind who issue soothing syrup statements about

see note 9
note 10

how much greater background radiation is than anything that can possibly escape from a nuke, even if it was installed backwards on an undetected fault line on badly poured concrete with faulty welds overlooked by intimidated inspectors with cooling pipes suspended from faulty hangers too tight-packed to be inspected or replaced etc. The kind who may consult for the industry, or receive grants, or hope to.

e. IPM. Called a "chemophobe". Large grants from chemical companies that make pesticides.

d. Articles on special tax loopholes for oil and gas producers.

There's more, but those are some of the thoughts that rushed through my fevered, paranoid brain as I tried to understand why they were doing this to a nice boy like me, whose work was more widely cited in the scholarly literature than anyone else on campus.

Now I see it. The propertied establishment is the fellow traveller. It can live with Marxists. They don't meddle in actual affairs. Marxism is a nice safety valve for possible troublemakers. It is so distinctive that they are easily identified, and contained behind a cordon sanitaire of their own making. It is heavily philosophical and disputatious, and ties up the troublemakers for years in irrelevant hairsplitting.

At the end the graduates are nearly unemployable. Most of them panic and do something as conventional as possible to get a job. E.g. one at Redlands, rooting for Armacost; another on alfalfa, finds no exportable surplus of water. KCWA couldn't ask for anything more accommodating. Stu Pyle is free to call you a commie if you say his boys shouldn't be subsidized; but what the real commie does is curry favor by supporting it.

Shades of R.R. Livingston!

E. Philosophical positions

1. Differences from Georgists.

a. Against the market. Fervently, irrevocably. (There may be

more hope in Chinese Marxists.)

b. Against the middle class. Putting down middle class morality is more than a passing sneer, it combines antinomianism with a strategy of allying the rich and the poor against the middle. The rich provide the money, the poor the votes.

R.R. Livingston!

c. View of history not cyclical but evolutionary and deterministic. We are bound to win, climb on the bandwagon. This jibes with their belief in power rather than persuasion: power will convert the minority.

No possibility that modern civilization may decline. Capitalism will, but then they will take over, they see that as progress.

d. They are less concerned with the unequal distribution of property than the unequal distribution of talent and drive. Upward mobility bothers them.

E.g. students' reaction to Jerry Grosvenor, age 34, account. They were relieved to learn he inherited it. Success is a reproach to others, brings pain.

Lawnmower psychology: cut off those that rise above their level.

e. Personal hatred and jealousy are primary moving forces. First hatred is directed, not at the wealthy, but popular philosophers. Anyone with a following is hated and pilloried.

As to wealth, they are more concerned with taking it away than distributing it. They are less disturbed by the suffering of the poor than the happiness of the rich. (I once met someone in the George movement who was like that, but he was a bought Georgist.)

The true leveller hates success in the same spirit that the true conservative hates welfare. It is not the loss to others, what he can't stand is the thought of those people enjoying themselves.

2. Philosophical buzzwords

Value and distribution theory
Labor theory of value
Circulation of capital, and of money
"Epistemology" -- grounds of knowledge are suspect, i.e. all the evidence is loaded, that justifies our loading it our way.
Dialectic
Surplus value -- if you think you can get them to identify that with rent, forget it.
Reswitching
Falling rate of profit -- but never because of overvalued land.
Materialism.

3. View of Imperialism.

Georgist sees it in supply side terms, quest for raw materials. Georgist also sees monopoly elements, quest to preempt raw materials to control world markets, sustain price.

Marxist sees demand side, quest for markets, and vent for surplus capital.

Thus it is peculiar to capitalism. Soviet Imperialism is only defensive.

F. Chances of mass conversion?

You can't do business with Hitler. They are committed, and for reasons that transcend logic or evidence. Transaction analysis says you talk to people on three levels. We talk to them as adult to adult -- that is not where they're at.

Same is probably true of Libertarians -- their commitment is at a level we cannot reach.

Individuals can be converted, yes, and have been. But not wholesale. Conversion is like weight loss -- one spoonful at a time.

Is war with Russia inevitable? No, most people remain

unattached, you just ignore these committed people and go for the previously uninvolved.

New generations mostly begin life as outgroup members (except for a few Gerry Grosvenors). So do immigrants and outgroups.

Battle of the young and dispossessed has been fought and, in part, won before. But you have to do it yourselves. My generation isn't going to do it for you. The ingroup races aren't going to do it for you. But we have all inherited a structure of laws through which you can do it.

Senator Smythe: "You, sir, speak for the present generation; I speak for posterity!"

Henry Clay: "Yes, and you seem resolved to speak until the arrival of your audience."