

# In the Steps of Lucy ...

**M**Y FIRST meeting in the Dominican Republic was with Milagros Ortiz Bosch, the Vice President of Republica Dominicana who also serves as Minister of Education. She was acting President because Hipolito Mejia was in Guatemala signing a new free trade agreement. Lucy Silfa, Director of the Henry George School of Social Science, encouraged Milagros to include Georgist economic education in the school system.

Lunch at the Congress with legislators. Eulogia Familia and Elias Wessin are graduates of the Henry George School. Eulogia is working closely with a coalition of labour union leaders. Elias is Secretary General of a political party. Eulogia arranged for Lucy to conduct a seminar with the labour union leaders in conjunction with a selected group of legislators. The Senate is now working on proposals to bring in a national sales tax to replace funds that will be lost when the country removes some of its tariffs, as called for by the WTO.

At the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (founded 1538, oldest university in the Western hemisphere) we met Hector Romero Ramos, Director del Depto. de Economia, and two professors, one of whom, Nelson Pena, had taken the course from Lucy in 1968. Lucy invited to present a seminar for the economics faculty.

**M**EETING with Hector Perez Mirambeaux, Director General of the National Cadastre, to discuss their land and property evaluation data. He seemed to understand the importance of proper assessments to implement land value taxation. He would welcome collaboration with assessment experts in our movement.

The Instituto Cartografico Militar, a building guarded at the entrance by a soldier with a rifle and a friendly smile. Cordial chat over tea with the Director, Colonel Eugenio A. Matos Rodriguez, who gave us five large maps with topographical and geographical details of the country. This can help us gain an overall perspective on land values as they might be expected to concentrate in various areas.

At the United Nations offices, we met briefly with a former student of Lucy's, Adolfo Marti Gutierrez, who is now Oficial de Programa para Asuntos de Coordinacion y Aspectos Economicos. We gave Adolfo a copy of the UN Habitat II Land Access Action Agenda, my article which is published on the UNCHS website – "Land for People, Not for Profit" – and the new Green Tax brochure.

**N**ext at the UN campus we met with Dr. Francisco Roberto Arias Milla, Representante de la FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) en Republica Dominicana. The main approach of FAO to



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rural development is to give cash grants to the poorest of the poor to buy agricultural land, seeds and farming equipment, along with technical and educational support.

**S**PECIAL program to celebrate the 34th anniversary of the Escuela de Ciencias Sociales Henry George. More than 100 people filled the meeting room at the National Library. TV and newspaper reporters interviewed Lucy.

After a talk by Adriano de La Cruz, the first student to register for the school (1966), Lucy presented 137 graduation certificates. A delegation from NAJAYO, a prison in San Cristobal, presented Lucy with a Special Certificate of Recognition for her economic education teaching work there.

Dr. Cesar Bido, a Santo Domingo City Council member and former student of Lucy's, gave a heartfelt speech and presented me with a beautiful certificate – a Resolution to Declare Alanna Hartzok a Distinguished Guest of the City of Santo Domingo, the First City of America. What a wonderful honour! Dr. Bido said it was remarkable that the City Council had agreed to this proclamation unanimously, as unity of any sort is extremely rare because the council members represent six different political parties. Lucy is held in high esteem everywhere in this country and it is to her credit that I received this proclamation of welcome.

**A**T THE Dominican Institute of Journalism, where Lucy has been teaching Georgist economics classes this year, some students told us they had seen televised portions of her 34th anniversary and graduation program for the Escuela de Ciencias Sociales Henry George.

Approximately 60 students listened closely to my lecture and asked questions about globalisation and Georgist economics.

Santo Domingo Cathedral, the first in America, built in the early 1500s. Sure enough, another one of Lucy's students was in the cathedral. He is with a newspaper, *El Caribe*, and promised to help her with publications.

Then, to the barrios. Sandy dirt lanes among tin roofed shanties where people were living crowded together in one or two little rooms. Jammed between the hills and the polluted river, some of the shanties experience frequent flooding. Such a contrast, these terrible shacks with some traces of modern life – little TVs, old refrigerators – crammed inside. Sprinkled here and there were little stores selling food and household items. In open drains flowed water contaminated with human waste.

Out of a city of 3m people, about half the population of Santo Domingo, the capital city, live in such conditions. Lucy tells me that most of the rural land of the country is vacant. I had seen some of that myself from the airplane. This is a typical pattern throughout Latin America.

**H**ELEN Zapata takes us to Najayo, a federal prison 30 minutes drive west of Santo Domingo. It now holds 3000. There are limited water supplies and not enough floor space for everyone to sleep lying down. To secure a bed, prisoners have to pay US\$150. Lucy has been teaching classes there for two years and has graduated 345 persons.

The prisoners tell their friends and relatives about the economic understanding they are gaining. Several say they intend to work for this reform upon their release.

At the National Association of Professional Agronomists, a man in the waiting room warmly greeted Lucy. He tells me: "You are walking around with one of the most prestigious people in the country." Geovanny Arias, Secretario General of the Asociacion, took the *Progress and Poverty* from Lucy in 1986. Agreement to collaborate on educational seminars all over the country.

After a challenging drive through the chaotic freedom (read: no one obeys traffic signs) of Santo Domingo, we met up with Fermin, who had arranged an appointment in the Direccion General de Impuestos Internos (like IRS). National Budget Director Luis Ernesto Perez Cuevas had learned about land value taxation in Taiwan. The Minister of Finance, Fernando Alvarez Bogaert, walked in and told us that he knew Henry George was a famous man who he learned about while attending Columbia University. While exiting the front door of this government building, Lucy was greeted with a warm hug by Angel Lockward, the Secretary of Industry and Commerce, who said "Lucy is a good friend of mine."