

THE OTHER ECONOMIC SUMMIT

WORKING Alternatives: A World That Works, was the 1997 headliner for The Other Economic Summit (TOES), an exciting international gathering of hundreds of people convened as an alternative event at the G-7 (plus Russia) Economic Summit held this year in Denver, Colorado, in June, reports *Alanna Hartzok*.

As stated by Ward Morehouse, Chair of the conference, in the preface of this year's TOES book, *A World That Works: Building Blocks for a Just and Sustainable Society*, each TOES gathering over the past dozen years has helped to make history by demonstrating that there are viable alternative ideas and practices to the economic globalization that is enveloping the world.

The theme of Day 1 asked the question "What is Real Wealth?" Panellists explored issues concerning working alternatives to neo-liberalism, envisioning a post-corporate society, ecological economics, creating community currencies, understanding debt and the World Bank and IMF structures. Presenters gave perspectives from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mexico, India, Canada, Haiti, Nicaragua, Malaysia, South Africa, Japan and the USA.

In a workshop entitled "What Works for Just and Sustainable Cities?" I outlined economic theory and practice with a particular focus on the benefits of land value based local tax reform being implemented in 16 cities in Pennsylvania. Participants learned of the importance of linking land tenure and tax policy issues and how they relate to inner city

revitalization, affordable housing, sprawl and wealth distribution.

Workshops explored G-8 policies in Central America, international activist strategies to combat globalization, responsive local government structures, Gandhian economics, African perspectives on economic policy, microfinance strategies and numerous other concerns and alternative approaches.

"Taxation for Community Sustainability" was the title of a workshop with presenters Peggy Duxbury of Redefining Progress, Peter Barnes, author of *Land Reform in America*, and Bill Batt, an economic consultant from New York state who explained the relevance of land value tax policy to issues such as urban sprawl and financing infrastructure. Duxbury indicated that her organization is recommending decreasing taxes on labour while increasing natural resource taxation. Barnes focused on air pollution issues and presented his concept of "Sky Trusteeship."

David Giesen, actor and education director of the Henry George School of Social Science in San Francisco, enacted a speech by Teddy Roosevelt wherein he expressed his strong commitment for establishing public lands and protecting natural resources against the profit motives of America's early land barons. The following day Giesen, in moustache, beard and brown suit, gave spontaneous vignettes from speeches by Henry George.

Paul Johnson, also of the Henry George School, contributed to furthering land and taxation economics education by

organizing and maintaining the economics literature table at TOES and through his insightful comments during various workshops.

Alliance for Democracy, a newly forming American progressive organization held a forum entitled "What is Real Democracy?" The plenary featured Victoria Tauli-Corpuz of the Philippines on "Globalization: Key Threat to the Security of Peoples' Nations and the Earth" and Shri Dattapant Thengadi, founder of India's largest trade union, Amalia Dixon, a Miskitu from Nicaragua, Lisa McGowan from "50 Years is Enough" (a campaign against the Bretton Woods organizations) and Sulak Sivaraksa, a Buddhist human rights activist from Thailand.

Numerous other workshops explored topics such as "How the World Bank, The IMF, and G-7 Governments collude to Provide Corporation Welfare to Transnational Corporations and What you Can Do About It", "How the U.S. Dominates the World Economy by Controlling Space", "The United Nations, NATO, and Regional Organizations² and ³Teaching Economic Literacy."

Plans are underway for TOES '98 which will be held in Birmingham, UK.

* To learn more about topics from TOES order *A World That Works* (ed: Trent Schroyer), which contains 40 articles by TOES '97 presenters, including Hartzok's "Pennsylvania's Success with Local Tax Reform"; \$19.50 plus \$3.50 for postage and handling from Bootstrap Press, 777 United Nations Plaza, Suite 3C, New York, NY 10017, telephone 1-800-316-2739.

BRAZIL

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of rules that enable individuals and species to flourish through evolutionary time scales.

Possessory rights were based on proof of the need to use land to reproduce the species. Primates needed land for productive purposes and the more sophisticated the level of economic activity the greater the need for permanent settlement.

But none of this justified the mass hoarding of surplus land and the exclusion of needy individuals who would otherwise lead full lives with the minimum of physical labour.

Somewhere in history we abused the

lessons of nature and introduced an exploitative system of property rights. The focus of analysis ought to be not on the distribution of land itself but on the flow of income from land. For rent is the tool by which governments can solve economic problems by remaining faithful to the primordial principles of fairness and utility.

IN BRAZIL, the peasants with their machetes are no match for the gun men hired by the landowners. The peasant movements that are fighting on behalf of the landless will never succeed if they continue to channel their energy primarily in the direction re-settling a relatively few families on disputed land. Time and money

is on the side of the landowners. Time is not on the side of the babies born on the roadsides who are then abandoned in the streets of Rio, there to scrounge an existence on the municipal rubbish heaps or brothels or begging in the streets.

Where should the action be focused? President Cardoso has announced a tax on under used land (*Land & Liberty*: Spring 97, p.3). The odds are against his being allowed to implement this policy in such a way as to achieve real benefits. It is too easy to construct defensive strategies that would thwart the intention of the fiscal policy as drafted by Cardoso.

And yet, a fiscal solution is the only

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