

Henry George Newsletter

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CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Stan Rubenstein has announced that he will be stepping aside as director of the New York Henry George School headquarters. George Collins, current director of the Philadelphia School, will take over in his place. And Mike Curtis, director of the School's Arden Activities in Delaware, will replace Mr. Collins in Philadelphia. Mr. Rubenstein is not retiring, but will go on to devote his time to running and expanding the School's high school program which he founded five years ago.

George Collins came to the United States from Jamaica in 1955, and, six years later, enrolled as a student at the Henry George School in New York. In 1964, he was appointed director of the Philadelphia extension and Henry George birthplace/museum. For nearly a quarter-century, Mr. Collins has been active building up adult education classes and conducting land tax research at the request of public bodies in the Philadelphia area. He has also been quite successful in getting attention from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, other newspapers, and local radio stations. As a result, there is now much lively interest in land tax reform in Philadelphia.

Mr. Collins has also participated extensively with Philadelphia's Parkway Program, an alternative approach to high school education outside the confines of the classroom. He has been an active professional in the theatre, films and television — which has contributed to the production of the School's video series in economics and history. Mr. Collins has also served as secretary of the Henry George School board of trustees since 1977, and thus is quite familiar with the work of the New York headquarters. Some of his goals as director will be "to seize the opportunities presented by our new location to expand the adult education program, improve its faculty, and establish the Henry George School as an economic institution and resource within the community. It is an enormous challenge to come back to New York City," said Mr. Collins. "A challenge to continue and build upon the work being done in this city and in this age where new creative approaches are required."

Stan Rubenstein has served as director of the New York headquarters in 1973-74 and from 1982 to the present. He also serves as director of the Long Island extension, which he founded in 1967. In 1983, Mr. Rubenstein retired from professional high school teaching to devote more of his energies to the Henry George School. He did not leave the field of high school education, but rather began to develop what is now a highly successful program of supplementary social studies activities and materials for high school students, now used by thousands of teachers in the U.S. These include the *Land and Freedom* printed lessons in *American History*, *World History*, and *Economics*; and videoseries in basic economics and American history. Mr. Rubenstein will shortly be retiring as Henry George School director in order to devote even more time and energy as its national high school co-ordinator: creating new supplementary materials, and making further periodic visits to high schools and social studies conferences around the country. "It is most gratifying," said Mr. Rubenstein, "when social studies teachers are so receptive to our materials. Obstacles encountered twenty years ago are simply not there. Teachers recognize the importance land plays in the course of human history."

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School Notes

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TRUSTEE REPORTS

Felice Gruskin, Henry George School trustee, is the founder and Executive Director of TRIP – Transit Riders In Pursuit, Inc. – a membership organization devoted to improving the quality, and lowering the consumer fare, of New York City's subway and bus systems. One of TRIP's proposals is to fund mass transit by a surcharge on land value taxes.

TRIP has embarked upon an advertising program to increase its membership (dues are \$1 per year – the equivalent of one ride on bus or subway). As a result of three ads placed in *The Village Voice*, inquiries were received and TRIP's membership total was nudged over 800. More ads have now been placed in other local papers, i.e., *Newsday*, *Our Town*, and *Westside Spirit*.

The Subway and the Impact of Land Value Taxes has been shown several times on Manhattan and Paragon cable stations. This is a half-hour video program featuring Nan Braman and Robert Clancy of the Henry George Institute, and Ms. Gruskin. High on the agenda for the next half year is the writing of a position paper on the effects of LVT on taxpayers. Using the subway system as a starting off point, it will also show how subway riders will gain. TRIP may be reached at PO Box 310, New York, NY 10032.

Steven Cord, another School trustee, heads the Center for the Study of Economics in Columbia, Maryland, assisted by Hanno Beck, a Henry George Institute graduate. The Center has recently coached Clairton and Oil City, Pennsylvania, in adopting "two-rate" property taxation (i.e., taxing land at higher, and buildings at lower, rates). The Center is now preparing to advise Philadelphia on the effects of switching to LVT.

Dr. Cord has also made a recent trip to Taiwan "to present the new hard evidence for LVT to an international group of academics and tax-gathering professionals." The conference was sponsored by Taiwan's land reform institute. Other activities of Dr. Cord include testifying in Utah before a joint state legislative committee considering a tax-exemption-on-improvements constitutional amendment; and presenting studies in Detroit, Kalamazoo and Lansing, Michigan. Dr. Cord and Mr. Beck will also be preparing studies on how those cities which have adopted the two-rate tax approach are experiencing increases in building construction.

UNDERSTANDING ECONOMICS IN BELOIT

Thanks to the efforts of Nadine Stoner and the Wisconsin Property Owners League, the School's nine-part videoseries, *Understanding Economics*, has been broadcast on Beloit Cablevision in two halves on January 3rd and 10th – and again on January 17th and 24th.

School Notes

PENNSYLVANIA & DELAWARE: WINTER CLASSES HELD

The winter semester has proved a busy one for the Philadelphia school. With its regular headquarters, Henry George's birthplace, being renovated for the summer sesquicentennial celebration, classes are being given at specially-arranged locations. Part I of *Principles of Political Economy, Fundamental Economics*, is being taught on Wednesday evenings, 7 to 9:30 at the Gershman YM&YWA. *Understanding Economics* is being held on Wednesday afternoons, 12:15 to 1, at The Free Library of Philadelphia, *How Wall Street Works*, Part I, is being taught on Tuesdays from 7 to 9 PM, also at Gershman YM&YWA. Two Saturday seminars were also scheduled this semester: *the Income Tax and You*, January 28th; and *The Property Tax and You*, February 18th — both at The Free Library from 1 to 3 PM.

Mike Curtis, director of Arden Activities in Delaware and soon-to-be director of the Philadelphia school [see article beginning on front page], has recently completed a six-week *Seminar in Fundamental Economics* in London Grove, Pennsylvania. The students were recruited by Artie Yeatman and Lindy Davies, and class was held at the Quaker Meeting House. George Collins, current Philadelphia director, presented diplomas and words of wisdom. Mr. Davies also continues a weekly seminar on the law of rent, low wages and unemployment at Plummer Work Release Prison in which the students are engaged through Socratic questions, role-playing and building an economic model.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: A NEW LOOK FOR THE MERCURY

The Mercury (Winter 1988-9), newsletter of the San Francisco school has recently been published. Edited by E. Robert Scrofani, and sporting a new two-color logo, *The Mercury* is an attractive 4-page collection of lively articles and photographs, and one cartoon (in which "We the white, male landowners of the United States" is deemed "too long" an opening for the Constitution). Items covered include: Roman Catholics Seek New "Land Ethic", National Conference: Georgists in Georgia, Celebration of George's Birthday in Philadelphia, and Common Ground's Sapiro Speaks in the Bay Area.

An article by Mr. Scrofani calls attention to nationally known ecologist Harold Gilliam who has called the economic theories taught in California high schools "musty concepts that have been obsolete for generations" and a "mishmash of facts, pious assumptions . . . and fairy tales" which omit any recognition that what we buy in stores "originates in the Earth, and that their production depends on the healthy functioning of the biosphere." Gilliam advocates NNP (Net National Product) to replace GNP (Gross National Product). GNP is a "fraud" since it includes not only "'goods' but 'bads' such as the cost of automobile accidents." A *Net National Product*, on the other hand, would subtract these costs as well as the value of depleted resources used to produce wealth. Suggesting that it might be better to not teach economics at all than to leave out the role of land, Gilliam went on to say that "Economics without ecology, i.e., our dependence on limited resources of the earth and its natural systems, is like a house without a foundation." His thoughts were echoed by Economics Professor Herman Daly of Louisiana State University.

Another article focuses on Robert Gilman, editor of the "new age" journal *In Context*. Gilman advocates a George-inspired model to redistribute the rental value of land as a Common Heritage Dividend (\$4000 per capita annually) after setting some aside to support wilderness areas and soil conservation. Those wishing to receive a copy of *The Mercury* may contact the San Francisco headquarters.

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Mike Curtis has been active with the Henry George School since his first course at the Philadelphia School in 1970. One year later he founded Arden Activities in Delaware as an extension of the Philadelphia school, and ten years ago, the *law of rent seminar* at the Plummer Work Release Prison in Wilmington. Mr. Curtis has developed his own teaching methods and materials to explain the law of rent and its relationship to unemployment and low wages. Mike (as he prefers to be called) was born in the single-tax community of Arden, where his maternal grandparents, who were active Georgists, had made their home. Their "affirmation" of George's ideas being part of his family heritage, he went to the Henry George School for the "explanation." Counting himself a "protégé of George Collins," Mike has resigned from his career as arborist for Winterthur horticultural garden and museum of Americana (near Wilmington) to begin training in Philadelphia with his mentor.

George Collins will stay on as director of the Philadelphia school until after the international Georgist conference in Philadelphia this August. 1989 being the sesquicentennial year of Henry George's birth, the Philadelphia birthplace is now a national landmark and is being restored to its 1839 appearance — the culmination of many years of effort on the part of Mr. Collins and his loyal group of volunteers. Among the volunteers staying on in Philadelphia to assist Mike Curtis will be the school's long-time secretary, Lucia M. Cipolloni, who will provide additional support and continuity during and after the transition. Stan Rubenstein, as national high school co-ordinator will also provide continuity to Mr. Collins after the changing of the guard in New York, which will take place on the first of September.

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