

Henry George Newsletter

published by

Henry George School of Social Science

121 East 30th Street
New York, NY 10016
(212) 889-8020

Lancaster M. Greene
Publications Chairman

George L. Collins
Director

Mark A. Sullivan
Editor

AFFILIATES

LONG ISLAND

Stan Rubenstein, Director
P.O. Box 553
Cutchogue, NY 11935
(516) 734-7543

PHILADELPHIA

Mike Curtis, Director
413 South 10th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19147
(215) 922-4278

NEW ENGLAND

Ernest Kahn, Director
114 Ames Street
Sharon, MA 02067
(617) 784-3086

CHICAGO

Sam Venturella, Director
4536 N. Ravenswood Drive
Chicago, IL 60640
(312) 561-9660

CALIFORNIA

E. Robert Scrofani, Director
1568 Schrader Street
San Francisco, CA 94117
(415) 661-6933
Harry Pollard, Director
Box 655
Tujunga, CA 91042
(818) 352-4141

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Lucy DeSilva, Director
Isabel La Catolica #212
AP #758, Santo Domingo
(809) 682-9361

CANADA

School of Economic Science
Craig Cringan, Director
2267 Westman Road
Mississauga, Ontario L5K 1M7
(416) 822-4694
Gaye/Gerry Shaw, Co-Directors
3017 25th Street, S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T3E 1Y2
(403) 242-4291

A THIRST FOR UNDERSTANDING

The opportunity to obtain a formal education is a relatively recent addition to the social goods we think of as necessary for a productive life. For most of history, only a privileged few enjoyed the fruits of being taught to read and write, to use mathematics in problem-solving or to reason by means of logic.

In the colonial period and early decades of our nation, private schools, most of which were founded for purposes of teaching religious doctrine, provided the institutional framework from which arose an enlightened citizenry. Periodicals spread the news of the day. Freedom of the press offered opportunities for expression of diverse opinions. As the philosophy of democracy took hold, the nation's leaders recognized the value of education, and publicly-financed schools appeared in communities throughout the nation.

This was the atmosphere in which Henry George grew to adulthood in the mid-nineteenth century. For the children of most native-born families, at last some schooling was available during their years of nurturing. The arrival of industrialization and its factory system later in the century seriously threatened this equalitarian character of the Republic, which resulted in the era of reform we refer to as Progressivism. New laws restricted the use of child labor, established modest health, safety and sanitary standards, and expanded public support of education. States founded land grant colleges all across the country to train teachers and conduct agricultural and other forms of scientific research. Education was also seen as a means of "Americanizing" the millions of immigrants who brought with them not only a foreign tongue but very different cultural (and religious) values.

In some ways, we have become one people with a shared sense of national identity. Education has played a primary role in this process. Moreover, there is a very visible shift in how people identify with one another that transcends ethnic or racial background and even religious beliefs. Beneath all the discussion surrounding our cultural pluralism is the homogeneity of values associated with socio-economic well-being. Many of us have achieved the standards of at least moderate material success -- a college education or specialized skills, homeownership and enough leisure time to enjoy life -- increasingly unobtainable for too many of our fellow citizens.

For reasons that seem mysterious to our nation's leaders today, all of the billions of dollars spent on public goods have not begun to solve our societal problems. And yet, education remains the key to understanding. Moreover, for most people discussion is a primary means of learning. For almost sixty years now, the Henry George School has provided this type of learning environment, and a long list of very dedicated people have contributed their time and energies to this task. We do not pretend that Henry George has answers to all our societal problems; public policy in a democratic society often relies on a shifting consensus. George's gifts to us were many, not the least of which was a set of well-reasoned principles from which the consequences of our actions could be assessed. As many of us have understood, without adoption of the important structural changes George identified, many of our problems would worsen despite the hopes and good intentions of reformers. Reform without a thorough understanding of causes may mitigate but cannot resolve problems.

— Edward J. Dodson, President, Henry George School

SQUATTING IN NEW YORK

When I moved to New York City a year and a half ago, my family and friends in rural Maryland were convinced that this biggest of bad cities would soon get to me. But no, I said, I've started walking as fast as a New Yorker, and defending the city like a New Yorker. When *Time* magazine did a cover story this fall on the rotting of the Big Apple, I hastily called home to reassure my mom that it's not *that* bad. Now, though, I am forced to admit that life in New York is getting to me. It's not because of the crowds, noise, rudeness, pollution, or even muggers, though. All those bad things are, in a sense, fair exchange for the grandeur and variety and sheer pluck of the place. The thing about New York City that has me sick at heart is the land speculation.

The eviction of squatters at 1728 Crotona Park East in the Bronx, which took place on the fourth of December, is only the latest in a series of such actions by the city. It is, however, the starkest example yet of our city's attitude toward its poor people. The building was abandoned. It is in a neighborhood of blocks and blocks of abandoned buildings. The eviction, then, does not have even the flimsy justification of protection of the rights of a private landlord, because the city is the landlord here. But the *New York Times* reported, on December 5, 1990, "Yesterday's action ended a bitter feud between the squatters and the

(continued on page six)

SQUATTING IN NEW YORK

(continued from second page)

city, which wants to rehabilitate the two buildings for homeless and low- and moderate income families." Don't take renovation into your own hands--let the city rehabilitate.

But the city has many hundreds of abandoned buildings on its hands. Why is it suddenly in a rush to renovate the ones that have already been refurbished by squatters? The former residents of 1724 and 1728 Crotona Park East have repaired walls, painted, cleaned, installed plumbing, and rewired. They are not wealthy people; all their savings have been invested in this project. Their presence has made a dangerous block considerably safer. They even left a deposit with Con Edison to have electricity (legally) turned on. The money has not been returned. Perhaps that step toward "legitimizing" their occupation was what finally precipitated the Housing Police's action -- enough, after all, is enough.

No, this is not the first time; similar evictions have taken place on the Lower East Side and in the Bronx, and more will come. The city government makes little attempt to conceal its contempt toward those at the bottom of its sinking economy. The U.S. Supreme Court has, at last, upheld the TA's ban on begging in the subways, but local courts have given the *Daily News* a go-ahead to place hawkers there. The hawkers are homeless. Two hundred papers a day is good change for them -- but they have precious little protection against possible hostility from striking *News* workers.

The *Times* story began: "After a three-hour standoff with the police and building officials, about two dozen homeless people were removed from the abandoned city-owned building they were living in...." Interesting. For one thing, according to other reports there were far more than two dozen people living there; fifty would be a closer figure. For another, in exactly what sense were these people homeless? They took a rotting, abandoned building and built serviceable homes there, and lived in them. They are homeless now, because they have been moved to welfare hotels and other forms of city-run "shelter" to be maintained in squalor at exorbitant cost to taxpayers. But as they were living in that Bronx building, which no one else wanted, and they had made livable by their labor -- in what sense could they be called homeless? Henry George would have an answer.

-- *Lindy Davies*

SAN FRANCISCO'S HARLAN TROTT DIES

Harlan Trott, longtime correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* and a former editor of *The Analyst*, the Northern California HGS newsletter, died recently.

Harlan grew up on the East Coast and captained a minesweeper in World War II, while his brother worked for Admiral Raymond Spruance, later Ambassador to the Philippines. After coming to the West Coast as a *Monitor* correspondent, Harlan was introduced to the ideas of Henry George by J. Rupert Mason, former President of both the School and International Union for Land Value Taxation & Free Trade. After "seeing the cat," his understanding of political economy increased. "It gave his work an additional insight," said one of his colleagues at the School. "His writings were penetrating and often courageous."

Harlan had many friends among members of the School, particularly Bob DeFremery and former Director Robert Tide-man. He introduced many people to key water issues, still prevalent in California today. His article, "Doing It the Wright Way" relating to the 1887 land value tax financing method for irrigation, appeared in *Frontier Magazine* and guided a number of people to "see the cat" in the water monopolists.

Harlan was the father of two sons and lived in Walnut Creek with his wife Eleanor.

-- *E. Robert Scrofani*



At the New York HGS fall graduation & holiday party on Dec. 14th

ELIZABETH MAGIE PHILLIPS

(continued from first page)

"After reading Phil's book, I had many unanswered questions," said Pat McFarland, "And I made a mental note to look for this *Landlord's Game*. Little did I know what it would mean when I found it!"

What she found was "much more than just a game. It was obviously the work of someone with tremendous intelligence and humor, and its purpose was to teach about economic justice. I really felt that there was a purpose in my finding this game, and that I had to tell Lizzie's story."

To that end, Pat has done quite a bit of traveling, and spent quite a bit of savings. She insists that she has no intention to challenge or discredit Parker Brothers, only to tell Lizzie's Magie's story; but the company did not rush to her aid. They answered her inquiry with a short note saying that her set was the only one known to exist. That could be so, for it seems that all the existing copies of *Landlord's Game* disappeared when *Monopoly* became a big hit in the late thirties.

Last August Pat acquired a big piece of the puzzle: she located a grand-niece of Lizzie Magie Phillips who supplied her with a journal and a number of photographs. The journal provided further evidence of Lizzie's wit, and showed that she was deeply involved in politics.

"The Single Taxors," wrote Lizzie Magie, "ought surely to win out, for they are the only people who have good grounds for their contentions."

Since then, Pat McFarland has been at work on the project every night, laboriously searching out details in the life of a true American original. She discovered that Elizabeth Magie Phillips was born in the 1860's, and was a game inventor (Parker Bros. published four of her games,) an actress, reformer, and teacher. She founded a Henry George School extension in Washington, D.C. in 1935, and was acquainted with Henry George, Jr., as well as other prominent voices for reform such as Frank Stephens, Joseph Dana Miller, and Upton Sinclair. She and her game were mentioned in Sinclair's book *A Cry for Justice*. Her father, a newspaperman, gave her a copy of *Progress and Poverty* in the 1890's. She remained a staunch Georgist for the rest of her life.

Pat says that she has, perhaps, eight months to go on her research. Her goal is a biography of Lizzie Magie Phillips which also brings to life the epic sweep of American history encompassed in the span of her life. To accomplish this she plans to use "not just words but many images." Indeed, she has already been approached about a TV movie based on Lizzie Magie. And, as a special appendix to her book, she and Philadelphia HGS Director Mike Curtis are at work on adapting Lizzie's old Single Tax game rules to the modern *Monopoly* set. Although that connection is what gives her project its mass-market appeal, Pat McFarland is convinced that the intriguing, enchanting story of Lizzie herself is what will truly strike a chord with the public. Next time: More on the story of Elizabeth Magie Phillips and the history of *The Landlord's Game*.