

ESTONIA (Continued from first page)

part the ethnic Russians came to Estonia "as an occupying force under Stalin - thinking they came in as liberators."

Mr. Klasen stressed that the political and economic future of Estonia is intimately tied with that of Russia. For that reason, he feels that the country is now at an especially tense, crucial point. Much depends on the outcome of the current Russian Congress of People's Deputies, and the reform programs under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. "If reactionary forces gain ascendancy in Russia," Mr. Klasen warned, "it will spread to Estonia."

The good news of Mr. Klasen's presentation, however, comes with his request for help. Last year, he said, he'd have given a 25% chance of success for Georgist land reform in his country; this year he gives it a 75% chance. Because Estonia now has a new president and a new parliament, now economic reforms can be implemented - but, "the next year is crucial."

Land is vital in Estonian culture. "Estonians are an agrarian people. Even city people have roots in the country, and most own some small plot of land." Estonians understand how important land is, and they are thus quite receptive to "the land question" - if it is presented properly. Understandably touchy about reforms that seem to threaten land tenure, Estonians tend to reject the idea of "common property" in land. They are much more comfortable, however, with the idea of a tax on land values. In fact, the Estonian parliament is "not interested in taxing improvements." This (as in Pakistan) is an idea based more in pragmatism than in ideology; it is simply too cumbersome and expensive to assess the land and the improvements. "They are ready to tax land."

Like the rest of the nations emerging from the failed Soviet system, Estonia does not have the luxury of simply applying a tax to its land market. Markets must be established first. The Estonian Agricultural University in Tartu is embarking on the "1993 Project," which will supply intensive support for pilot projects in agriculture, industry and forestry, based on a land-tax model. Mr. Klasen invites any and all who possess relevant expertise to lend aid to this endeavor.

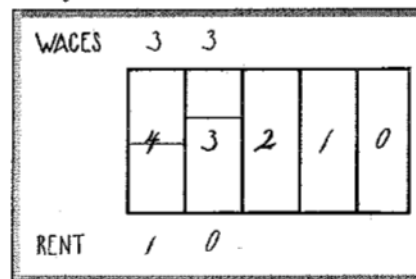
The future of Estonia is tied to that of Russia - but not just in a negative sense. Although Estonia's prospects for free-market reform would be all-but-erased by a resurgence of hard-line policies in Russia, Olaf Klasen asserted that any reform plan that succeeds in Estonia will be eagerly watched by its huge, troubled neighbor. "If we succeed in Estonia," said Mr. Klasen, "it will be a model for Russia." 

With this issue, we begin a feature that we hope teachers and students of the HGS will find useful. The School has been at the business of teaching political economy for over sixty years now; literally thousands of teachers, mostly volunteers, have brought their own styles and concerns to the work.

As all teachers (and perceptive students) know, teaching is much more of an art than a science. That means that there are as many techniques for imparting information, ideas and values as there are classrooms. And that being true, how could the unsung hero (ines) of any movement (its teachers) not benefit from swapping trade secrets? That's what we propose to do here: to share techniques, hand-outs or exercises that have succeeded in getting your students to "see the cat."

The first offering comes from Philadelphia HGS Director Mike Curtis. Mike has been toiling in the Georgist vineyard for many years, ceaselessly seeking for the very clearest way to present the Law of Rent. He has tried arcane strategies, plain words, maps, charts, and role-playing. But he called us in November, bursting with joy over one small-but-pivotal adjustment in his presentation that has made a world of difference. The adjustment is admirably simple and, like the plain truth so often is once we've seen it, perfectly obvious.

To grasp the significance of Mike's innovation, we must take a brief look at history. Although no one knows exactly when the chart was first used, it appears as early as 1906, in the pamphlet *The Single Tax* by Louis F. Post. This innovative teaching



tool became standard fare in the Henry George School's lessons in the thirties, and it has persisted to this day. It has been given new numbers and new graphic treatments, but the basic layout of the chart has persisted, sphinxlike, posing its riddle to each new generation of students.

It has never, alas, been an entirely satisfactory way of getting the idea across. It has always tended to bamboozle students - even, sometimes, professional accountants! Well, then, it must be the inherent resistance of people brainwashed by

TEACHERS' CORNER



the institution of private land ownership - it couldn't be the chart! The chart is perfectly clear, just like that cat - once you've seen it.

OK, perhaps it is the chart. Some teachers dispense with it, relying on sheer oratorical brilliance and "The Story of the Savannah", because that is much easier to listen to. Students nod their heads smartly, but still don't understand the dynamics of distribution. All right, so we tried maps. But what with incoming settlers and bridges and factories and all, and new

wealth numbers, our carefully-drawn maps turned chaotic, unreadable...here came that dad-blamed chart again.

After beating his fool head against the Law of Rent chart for twenty-odd years, Mike Curtis made the brilliantly obvious observation that people read (in this culture) from left to right, and from top to bottom. Unfortunately, that was not the way we were asking them to read our chart; we were asking them to read in every which direction, giving them headaches, making them crazy. Could this be why half the students always drop out of *Fundamental Economics*? Will pedagogy, not politics, be our downfall? "This -" proclaimed Mr. Curtis, "will not stand!"

He has arranged the chart like a simple subtraction problem. **Wealth Produced - Wages & Interest = Rent**. Are we not kicking ourselves?

Aha: sounds fine in theory - does it work? The new chart has been tested in the unforgiving laboratory of Mike's Delaware prison classes, and it has worked. Comprehension rate is way up. The proof? Well: for years, Mike has done a weekly seminar at a work release center in Wilmington. Out of an average group of ten, none of whom are happy, initially, to be there, four or five usually get the point; the rest just leave, bye. But with the new chart, for two weeks, the **entire group** has responded with enthusiasm.

Classes here are over for the fall, but I can't wait to try it out next term! - L.D.

