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The new year and the new decade bring a strong ray of hope for the future of the Henry George concept. While the national and world pictures remain almost unrelievedly grim, something good must be said for what is happening at the local level.

Since its inception, the Pennsylvania graded tax has not sparked a major reform movement. While Pittsburgh and Scranton adopted the optional system, other cities stayed with their conventional revenue measures. But within the last year, new interest in the Georgist reform has erupted across the state.

Much of the credit must go to long-time Pennsylvania Georgists like Steve Cord, Jack Kelly, and John Weaver, who never gave up the good fight. Timely and pertinent research by Dan Sullivan, under the direction of our own Center for Local Tax Research, also helped convince the uninitiated.

Above all, we need to encourage the support of courageous councilmen, like Bill Coyne, of Pittsburgh, and Ben Howell, of Allentown. Perhaps someday, Pennsylvania mayors, who are still strangely more eager to tax the wages of their citizens than the land of their cities, will finally get the message.

What should be clear is that any advance in the application of our ideas is based on our ability to persuade others, rather than merely communicating among ourselves. Henry George himself was as much the political fighter and social reformer as he was the economic philosopher. We like to think he would approve of the growing, if still small, application of his remedy, and encourage more use of his ideas, even by those whose understanding of them is still incomplete.

Director Appears Before Senate Group

(The following is an excerpt from testimony given by Philip Finkelstein before the Real Property Taxation Committee, of the New York State Senate, on November 29, and 30, 1979, in New York City).

The real property tax in the state has been documented as the most burdensome, inequitable, inefficient, and economically unjust in the nation. Most of these ills have been traced to assessment practices that have been declared by our highest court to be illegal. An equitable, efficient, economically rational, and less onerous property tax burden—these are or should be the goals of legislation.

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Profile: John Daniels

This is the first in a series of features, introducing personalities active in the Henry George Schools. This profile was written by Louise Pulini from an interview taped by Richard Biddle at the School in Philadelphia.

John (Jack) Daniels, Deputy Commissioner of the Dept. of Streets, part of the Public Works Program in Camden, New Jersey, took a course in *Progress and Poverty* three years ago, and is now one of the most active members of the school in Philadelphia, also the birthplace of Henry George.

Daniels was born in 1939, on May 29th, "the same day as John Kennedy and John Wayne." He lived in Akron, Ohio until he was two, and then moved to Camden, to live with his aunt and uncle, when he was orphaned. His uncle, now in his 80's, is halfway through *Progress and Poverty*, and Daniels says he is enjoying it, as it explains why the present system is so corrupt. Fifteen years in the Air Force took Daniels to many places, but his most provocative assignment was at Andrews Air Force Base, where he was part of the team that transported the President, members of the Cabinet, and other government officials, during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Daniels soon learned that "five per cent of the people in this country control ninety-five per cent of the wealth," and was dismayed by the "laziness and greed" he saw in Washington and elsewhere. He saw too many "robots" and not enough "thinking people." He decided to strengthen his own study skills, by answering an ad in a Philadelphia newspaper, and thus began his association with the Henry George School. He reflects that his class had only four people in it, but now he is pleased to see classes of twenty or more, and reports that the school is "bursting at the seams," as more people are discovering the relevance and currency of Henry George.

"Had Henry George lived through his second mayoralty campaign, and had he been elected Mayor of New York City, would (New York City) be in the shape it is in today?", Daniels asks. He worries that "there is no practical application of George's single-tax ideas." Although he applauds the efforts of those in Arden, Delaware, and Fairhope, Alabama, he feels that these people are too isolated from other surrounding communities.

He cautions against "losing the advantage of good ideas," if the lines of communication between Georgist organizations are not kept open. Participation in school activities, such as films and lectures is encouraged, so that "new voices can be heard." Daniels reported on his experiences at the Centennial Convention in San Francisco in August, 1979, when he spoke at a recent day-long program, held at the school, in Philadelphia. He was impressed by the large group of intelligent, informed people, who freely traded ideas, and presented their plans of action, both political, and educational.

Daniels feels that land value taxation methods that George advocated would only serve to benefit urban

areas like Camden, which is changing from a primarily industrial city, with isolated ghettos, to one where low-income housing is being integrated into commercial areas; an example being a development built in the shadow of the Campbell's Soup plant, only blocks away from Center City. A gentrification process, still in its infancy, is bringing new residents into the city. This rebuilding will require a greater need for municipal services, which calls for strengthening of the tax base. A land tax increase, rather than a wage tax increase, would be to the advantage of taxpayers, whose property taxes have not been raised in seven years.

When asked about some of the people he has met or been influenced by, Daniels singled out John Kennedy, whom he found "inquisitive, never afraid to ask questions; he always wanted to know what was going on around him." He described Lyndon Johnson as "competent." He also feels that George and Geneva Collins, of the school in Philadelphia, have been responsible for keeping his interest in the school alive, as they are both "charming and enthusiastic."

Daniels finds that people are interested in his reactions to Henry George in terms of racism, as George's mother was pro-slavery. Daniels remarks that George voiced his opposition to slavery as a young man, but never imposed his opinions upon his parents, by forcing them to see his point of view. Above all, Daniels is most impressed by the "poetic justice" of George's views, as well as interpreters of George; Wylie Young, foremost among them, whose book, *Antidote for Madness*, he calls, "Henry George simplified."

As for the future of the Georgist movement, Daniels would like to see the physical expansion of the George birthplace and school in Philadelphia, and exposure of more students, including his own daughter, to *Progress and Poverty*, and the vision of Henry George.

Director

(from page 2)

Protecting the homeowner is of paramount political purposes, but homeowners of different and even the same jurisdictions bear tax burdens with no relation to each other, to economic and political reality, property value, or ability to pay. A better way to protect the homeowner besides classification, would be an outright homestead exemption, depending on how generous the legislature wants to be with which class of homeowner taxpayer.

Assessing land at full-value is the key to both tax relief and tax reform for both city and state. It is the key to equity, with valuable central locations paying the most, and residential neighborhoods paying least; with slumlords penalized for milking bad buildings on good land, and investors rewarded by not taxing their new improvements.