

# Fairhope Centennial Conference

Thursday, October 6  
- Sunday, October 10,  
1994

1994 marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of Fairhope, Alabama as a Single Tax colony. The Council of Georgist Organizations held its 14th



Annual Conference there, and it was well attended, with over a hundred persons from all parts of North America. George Gilmore of Fairhope and Sue and Scott Walton were conference organizers. The conferees were housed in the Ramada Inn, about 20 miles from Fairhope, and were bussed back and forth to meetings in Fairhope. There was some feeling that they would have liked to be closer. Fairhope is an attractive community, mostly residential, with some farming and small business.

Pre-Conference meetings were held Tuesday and Wednesday by Henry George Schools, Henry George Foundation of America, and Common Ground, as well as the Council of Georgist Organizations.

The Conference opened on Thursday at the Civic Center Auditorium with a welcome by James P. Nix, Mayor of Fairhope. (It should be noted that the city is an entity separate from the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, which has land partly inside the city and partly outside.) Charles Ingersoll, President of the Corporation, added his welcome with some comments on fairhope. Most sessions were held at the Civic Auditorium.

The first session was addressed by Paul Gaston of the University of Virginia on "Fairhope, Past and Future." Prof. Gaston is author of a new book, *Man and Mission: E. B. Gaston and the Origins of the Fairhope Single Tax Colony*. (Paul is a descendant of E. B. Gaston, one

of the founding fathers.) The book is available from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation for \$18. Prof. Gaston is also author of *Women of Fair Hope*, dealing with three outstanding women associated with the colony. It has been out of print but has now been reprinted in paperback.

Conferees learned that the Corporation, in addition to collecting land rent from its lessees, has imposed a tax on improvements to pay for such taxes imposed by higher taxing bodies. There is also an additional fee on land to pay for expenses of the Corporation.

A late morning session discussed developments in Russia, Prof. Nicolaus Tideman presiding. He has been in Russia several times, consulting with Russian authorities and has explained the principles of land value taxation to groups. Three Russians were present and spoke: Tatiana Roskoshnaia, Tamara Chistiakova and Yuri Bocharov, all of whom have attended previous CGO conferences.

The rest of Thursday was a more leisurely period, with informal discussions, and a performance by the Eastern Shore Choral Society.

## **Practice and Theory**

On Friday morning there were reports on developments in Two Rate Tax System (a higher rate on land than improvements). A report was given by Steven Cord on the progress of the system in cities of Pennsylvania; also on recent developments in Maryland where there are now possibilities for the two-rate system.

Albert Hartheimer reported on developments in New York and Connecticut, notably the city of Amsterdam in New York, where a two-rate system has already been approved. Francis E. Peddle told of efforts by the Canadian Research Committee on Taxation to promote the system in Ontario. And Eugene Levin commented on efforts by the Washington State Georgist Association.

A later session was devoted to "Georgist Analysis of Laws of Production and Distribution as a Guide to Understanding the Modern

Economy," with Edward J. Dodson presiding. Speakers included Michael Hudson, newly appointed Research Director of the Henry George School, Nicolaus Tideman and Ian Lambert of the Cayman Islands.

## **Elections and Plans**

The CGO Annual Meeting was held Friday afternoon, with the current Chairman, Richard Noyes, presiding. Elections were held. Titles were changed, from Chair to President, from Deputy Chair to Vice-President; and the post of Secretary-Treasurer was made into two posts.

Drew Harris was elected President, Mark Sullivan Vice-President, Susan Klingelhofer Secretary and Jacob Himmelstein Treasurer. Mr. Himmelstein proposed that CGO be incorporated in Pennsylvania, as a state where it would be simple to do so, and this move was received favorably.

The venue for future conferences was taken up. It was agreed that the 1995 Conference be held in Chicago. An invitation from Canadian Geogists to hold the 1996 Conference in Ottawa was also approved. The Conference for 1997 was discussed but no decision was made. It was noted that 1997 marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Henry George in New York. Geogists from the State of Washington propose that in 1997 the Conference be held in Seattle.

On Saturday morning there was a session on the Henry George School, with George Collins, Director of the School in New York, presiding. Updated reports on the various extension of the School were given, as well as New York headquarters. Lindy Davies, Assistant Director of the New York School, spoke on new methods of teaching, including the use of computers and possible use of Internet. He urged all in the movement who have electronic mail addresses to send them to him; the New York HGS's address is: [hgsld@echonyc.com](mailto:hgsld@echonyc.com).

In the afternoon, a bus tour of surrounding points of interest and historical sites was hosted by Dian and Claude Arnold.

## Final Business

Sunday, the final day of the Conference, began with an ecumenical service, led by Ruth Rockwell, with the theme, "Jubilee: Return of the Land and the Fruits of the Land." There followed a discussion on Liberation Theology as expounded by Robert Andelson and James Dawsey. Participants included Lindy Davies, Michael Johnson, Ian Lambert and Dr. Andelson himself.

There followed a session on land trusts. Gale Rowe spoke on Fairhope, and Mike Curtis on Arden. He pointed out that Arden still relies on land rent for revenue; it pays the taxes on improvements imposed by higher taxing bodies entirely out of the rent of its land.

In the evening was held the Conference banquet at the Grand Victorian Hotel. Guest speaker was Michael Johnson, Professor of Economics. His remarks were surprising for a Georgist meeting. He cited Henry George as a visionary, offering a panacea; land is not so important any more - technology has rendered it less important; land rent would not be enough for government expenses; and we must move on from Henry George to modern economics.

And so Georgist conferees moved on after this Conference, but not necessarily in the direction advised. by Prof. Johnson.

It was agreed that it was worthwhile to visit Fairhope and to enjoy the annual reunion of Georgists.

*"They that shall make good theories work and prove the value of proposed social solutions by practical demonstration will do far more to move the world than the wisest and most brilliant theorists." - E. B. Gaston*