

# Education IS Activism:

## Frontiers of Georgist Education Explored in Arden

**T**he conference sponsored by the Henry George Institute and the Arden Georgist Gild this July in Arden, Delaware was a resounding success, filling a perceived need among Georgist gatherings, and inciting a call for more meetings like it.

At the opening reception on Sunday evening, Arden's Gild Hall was beautifully decorated, with little white lights, and panels of Arden and Georgist archival images. Arden Archivist Mark Taylor presented a fascinating slide show on Arden's founding and development, and influence of such figures as Frank Stephens, Upton Sinclair, Joseph Fels and those "depraved and irresponsible vagabonds" from the Single Tax League of Philadelphia who tramped up and down the state seeking to convince Delawareans to adopt the single tax. He showed that Arden was far more than a mere economic demonstration. It prospered as an arts community and a haven of free thought, and to a considerable degree it retains that character still. Arden offered a warm and gracious welcome. A walking tour led



*Rodney Jester (at right) leads  
an Arden walking tour*

by Rodney Jester acquainted guests with the three villages' woodland paths, architectural variety, greens, and lore.

"Georgist education" has often been stereotyped as merely the catechetical teaching of George's works; there had been a sense, in recent conferences, of there being little left to say about it. This conference presented a broad range of issues and techniques of Georgist education on many fronts. The opening panel, on "Reaching Targeted Audiences", reflected that approach. Six advocates discussed their techniques for communicating our message in very different markets: Josh Vincent of the Henry George Foundation, for local politicians; Geonomist-at-large Jeff Smith for environmentalists; Local-to-global activist Alanna Hartzok for the international NGO community; Dan Sullivan for finding common ground with local activists; Hanno Beck for the wild frontiers of new media; and Sam Venturella for dialogue with religious groups.

Pat Aller presented a fascinating survey of Georgist and single-tax influences in American literature, art and theater — and then proceeded to lead a discussion in which dozens more examples of such cultural connections, and how to use them, were offered by the audience.



Dr. Don Hurford and Ken Ford, of the Henry George School in Philadelphia, summarized and reviewed the year's two most important new Georgist titles, *The Losses of Nations* and *The Corruption of Economics*.

A discussion of the all-consuming rent theory — and its place both in contemporary economic theory and Arden land assessment practices — was led by Dr. Jerome Heavey of Lafayette College, and Dan Sullivan. Assessment issues were considered in full depth in an important session featuring Ted Gwartney, Director of the Schalkenbach Foundation, who presented a detailed overview of land assessment techniques. Then, Mike Curtis and



*Mike Curtis does the Law of Rent*

Rodney Jester considered the theory and practice of land assessment in Arden. Arden's charter mandates the assessment of the full rental value of the town's land. Its failure to achieve that goal has engendered controversy for decades. To counter the claim that accurate assessment of land's rental value is impossible, Curtis has developed a clear, simple demonstration of how it is done. Gwartney's paper, "Estimating Land Values," is must reading for Georgist educators preparing to face the tough questions.

Concurrent sessions during the conference allowed practicing teachers to demonstrate techniques. Mike Curtis offered three different seminars, on The Law of Rent, International Trade and The Urban Dilemma. Sam Venturella did his own version of the Law of Rent, and Ed Dodson showcased his presentation, *The Search for the Just Society*. Chuck Metalitz, Director of the Henry George School of Chicago, discussed results of focus group research on how students are lost and kept, and led a discussion on how to modernize the HGS curriculum.

At the Monday evening banquet, special guest Emcee Mark Twain (aka Sam Clemens) offered cranky, hilarious remarks about "that damnable human race," albeit reserving some kinder words for single taxers and Ardenites. Keynote speaker Lindy Davies spoke on "The Joyful Noise of Economic Justice," cautioning against quick fixes, affirming that our progress is as inexorable as it is slow. In closing he offered a eulogy to a fallen colleague, Ray Abrams, a devoted every-Georgist, whose influence though limited, was not trivial.

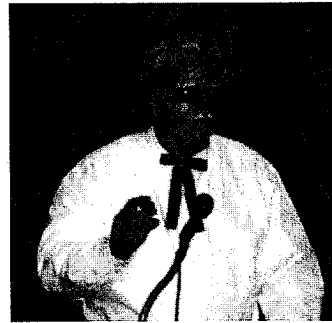


*Nan Braman and Lu Cipolloni*

The Henry George Institute's specialty, education through written words, was not ignored at this conference. Each registrant was given a brain-teaser question, and paired up with an "instructor". In their spare time (which was, alas, very rare at this over-packed event) conferees racked their brains and jotted down responses, devising answers to a series of the nastiest puzzles that Mike Curtis and Lindy Davies could pose.

In earlier days, the collected papers of Georgist conferences were routinely published — a practice that has lapsed over the last decade. For this conference, that tradition is being revived. Papers presented at the Arden conference are available for free on the World-Wide-Web. They can be found on the Henry George Institute's web site at [www.henrygeorge.org/arden.htm](http://www.henrygeorge.org/arden.htm). If sufficient demand exists to justify the expense, printed versions will also be made available; contact the *Journal* for information.

As successful as this conference was, there are no immediate plans to hold another one. The low cost was mainly due to the generosity of the Arden Club in offering free meeting space (and the hosts in volunteering their labor) — and would be hard to duplicate. The organizers hoped to present the breadth and depth of today's Georgist education efforts, and to show that such presentations can be a productive part of every annual conference. But in Arden, "Ye are welcome hither!" — especially next September, for the village's centennial Arden Fair!



*Mark Twain, Guest Emcee  
(portayed by Dan Sullivan)*