

GEORGIST ACTIVITIES IN AMERICA

Ted Gwartney reports from New York

GEORGISTS in the USA are stepping up their activities.

A centenary conference to commemorate the death of Henry George 100 years ago was organized by Professor Ed O'Donnell of the Hunter College history department and held at The Cooper Union, where George spoke more than a century ago.

Jeff Smith, President of The Geonomy Society in Portland, Oregon, has promoted the public collection of rent through the Society's newsletter and various other direct action. He has generated interest among environmental activists to include charges for land use and environmental harm in their proposals and has won the support of 40 organizations for a land value tax initiative. He will be the Portland co-host with Mary Rose Kaczorowski, at the Council of Georgist Organizations 1998 conference, July 29 to August 2. The Governor of Oregon has been invited.

Alanna Hartzok coordinated a seminar on 29 January in Philadelphia on Regional Tax Reform Using Two-Rate Taxes, for city officials, administrators and citizens. Speakers included state and local officials, academics and Georgists.

Dr. Fred Foldvary presented a paper, "Ground Rent Seeking in U.S. History", at the Southern Economic Association meeting in Atlanta.

To introduce their students to George's ideas, St. John's University conducts a Henry George Lecture Series. Dr. Nic Tideman gave the Henry George lecture, "Social Justice and Economic Reform", and Dr. Dick Netzer gave the lecture, "What Economists Still Need to Know about Land Value Taxation".

The October 1997 edition of *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* is a landmark 300-page commemoration of George's 1897 death, with articles by 15 different authors.

Some publishing events are worth noting.

- A new edition of *Progress and Poverty*, abridged by Arthur Madsen, introduced by Dr. Kris Feder of Bard College, together with a companion workbook designed by Lindy Davies, based on the on-line course he developed for the Henry George Institute.
- *The Henry George Centennial Trilogy*, edited by Dr. Ken Wenzler, published by the University of Rochester Press, and available from the Schalkenbach Foundation at reduced prices: Volume I, *An Anthology of Henry George's Thought*. Volume II, *An Anthology of Tolstoy's Spiritual Economics*. Volume III, *An Anthology of Single Land Tax Thought*.
- *The Capital Gains Debate*, written by Dr. Michael Hudson to secure public attention to the true beneficiaries of reductions in the "capital" gains taxes. This is available from the Levy Institute.
- *Privatization in the Ancient Near East and Classical World*, edited by Dr. Michael Hudson. Scholars analyse land monopoly as a cause of poverty and social unrest. Harvard University's Peabody Museum.

DR MICHAEL Hudson has studied statistics relating to the value of land and the income from land that are published in the National Income and Product Accounts and the Flow-of-Funds data of the Federal Reserve. He has concluded that land values exceed \$9 trillion in the United States before other components such as natural resources and the frequency spectrum are added.

The third conference of the International Institute for the Study of Long-Term Trends was held in St. Petersburg, Russia. This organization of Russian and American anthropological archaeologists takes an interest in how private land ownership developed beginning 5,000 years ago in ancient Sumer, now Iraq.

● THE HENRY GEORGE Foundation of Great Britain held a dinner at the Eccleston Hotel, London, on 1 November, to commemorate the centenary of George's death on 29 November 1897. The occasion was chaired by Norman Slater. The dinner had been proposed by Karl Williams, an Australian representative at the International Union Conference in Brighton in August, and was organised by John Hatherley, a member of the Foundation's Board of Management.

Taxman's land tax

CRITICS say that taxing the rent of land would force people to build houses in their gardens, writes Peter Poole. Incorrect: the tax would fall on the current realisable value of the land, taking into account existing planning constraints.

But under the current fiscal regime, Britain's taxmen are not deterred by existing law, as Jean Prosser discovered when she inherited her late mother's house.

The Inland Revenue presented her with a tax demand for £50,000, which she paid. Then the taxman decided that she could build a house in the garden - and delivered

a demand for another £28,000.

When she objected, she was told that, with planning permission, the property would be much more valuable - hence the tax liability. Now her husband Richard has applied for planning permission (as the taxman told them to do) and his wife Jean has lodged an objection - she does not want to build a house in the garden!

"If the Revenue insist on having their money we will have to build a house there to pay the extra inheritance tax. But that is the last thing we want to do," says Mrs Prosser, of Palestine, a village in Hampshire.