

HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

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NEW CASTLE REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR LVT

New Castle, one of the five Pennsylvania cities to adopt land value taxation, has increased the tax rate on land by 20 percent for 1984.

The 1983 land tax rate of 40 mills has been increased to 48 mills this year, a significant step forward for the area's land tax advocates. Unfortunately, however, the building tax rate of 22.8 mills has also been increased, to 25.8. Yet, while this represents a 13 percent increase in improvement taxes, it is offset by the larger increase in the land tax rate.

Prior to 1982, land and buildings were both taxed at 25.09 mills. So while the new rates show that building taxes have crept ahead of their pre-LVT rates, land taxes have soared a whopping 91 percent.

New Castle's land tax is largely the result of Steve Cord's efforts to win the support of New Castle's Business Manager Bill Tallman. After a five-year struggle to enact the measure, the city is now realizing LVT's benefits: New Castle's economic slump has slowed greatly. It is faring much better than the surrounding non-LVT cities of Sharon and Butler.

In other Pennsylvania developments: Scranton's Mayor Edward McNally has come out in favor of basing the city's entire property tax structure on land values. As reported in a recent edition of Incentive Taxation, Scranton's new development continues to outstrip that of Wilkes-Barre, a neighboring non-LVT area.

The Allentown City Council approved by a 4 to 3 vote a two-tiered property tax system which would have up-taxed land and down-taxed buildings. As promised, however, Mayor Joseph Daddona vetoed the measure. The fifth Council vote needed to override was not to be had.

TRUSTEE LEONARD RECKER DIES

Leonard Recker, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Henry George School for fifty years, died recently.

Mr. Recker was an early financial supporter of the school and was instrumental in establishing the school at its first headquarters on 79th Street. He also developed the notes of the school's first director, Oscar Geiger, which later became the first teacher's manual.

Trustee Lancaster Greene, a student of Mr. Recker's, expressed the school's gratitude for Mr. Recker's service: "Leonard Recker was a prime mover in the Henry George School during its early years and we are indebted to him for what he did."

POVERTY, USA

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That poverty exists throughout the world is readily evident. But the alarming extent of poverty in the United States has once again become a political football and, as usual, effect replaces cause in the search for solutions.

Launching the opening salvos of the presidential campaign, Democrats have argued that the present administration's policies benefit the wealthy at the poor's expense. Republicans reply that their policies have halted inflation and that the recovery is indeed "trickling down" to the poor.

Attempting to ameliorate economic conditions while diminishing poverty has been the government's objective for 50 years. From the massive welfare programs of the Great Depression through the War on Poverty in the 1960s, untold billions of dollars have been spent to ease the plight of the poor.

Based on voluminous data (which is, of course, subject to conflicting interpretations), the percentage of poor has declined. However, while the programs which sought to make this possible have had the desired effect, little attention has been paid to the cause of the problem.

Progress has been made during the same half century, but the relationship of input (the programs) to output (the decrease in poverty) is debatable.

The '60s witnessed a dramatic drop in those classified as poor, from 22 percent to 12 percent of the population. But during the '70s the drop had been insignificant -- despite our massive welfare programs. And in the last five years, the percentage of poor in this nation has risen, although the administration disputes these figures.

In a country which is the greatest wealth producer of all time, it is incongruent that poverty has not been eradicated.

To Henry George, the unequal distribution of wealth that bred poverty was "inequality in the ownership of land."

He wrote: "The ownership of land is the great fundamental fact which ultimately determines the social, the political and consequently the intellectual and moral condition of a people. Everywhere, in all times, among all peoples, the possession of land is the basis of aristocracy, the foundation of great fortunes, the source of power."

Until our major political parties recognize poverty's fundamental cause, it will continue to be a persistent social and economic phenomenon.

Stan Rubenstein

SCHOOL NOTES

NEW YORK

The newly-formed Graduate Research Committee held its second meeting recently. Coordinator Elizabeth Reeves reports that four committees have already been formed: Legislation, Membership, Programs and Research. Another meeting is being planned to maintain the enthusiasm of the initial encounters.

Information packets have been mailed to 235 religious leaders active in social concerns. It is part of a networking attempt to establish a meaningful dialogue with groups that might accept a Georgist interpretation of the social problems they confront. The packets included a covering letter, copies of the American Heritage article, "The Tax to End All Taxes" and the recent Fortune magazine piece on LVT in Pennsylvania. Also included were copies of two of Henry George's speeches: "Thou Shalt Not Steal" and "Thy Kingdom Come".

SAN FRANCISCO

New graduate Doris Lee has compiled materials on Henry George and comparative economic systems for inclusion in an advanced English language training program offered by Dynamic Reading Systems International, headquartered in Sydney, Australia.

This reading-enhancement course will be offered first to members of the Singapore and Malaysian parliaments. Later offerings will be geared toward Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and, perhaps, the People's Republic of China. Approximately 10,000 people are expected to take the course, which will include excerpts from George's books as well as analytical pieces on the importance of land.

The school plans to later submit materials for use in similar reading programs for corporate professionals in the United States.

LOS ANGELES

A seven-week course, Land, Justice and the Bible, is being offered at Robert Schuller's famed Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove. The course, conducted by Margil Wadley and Mason Gaffney, focuses on the relationship of Israel to land as a unifying theme for understanding the Bible synoptically. It also seeks ways to use Biblical wisdom to guide modern land use.

Rev. Schuller's "Hour of Power" is the most widely-watched religious television program in the country.

NEW ENGLAND

Two courses are being offered this winter based on the Classical Analysis method developed by Harry Pollard. The program uses Socratic questioning and independent group participation to explore fundamental Georgist economics.

Radio spots throughout the Boston area were used to advertise the classes.

HENRY GEORGE BOOTHS AT SOCIAL STUDIES CONFERENCE

The Henry George School and the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation each sponsored booths at the Greater New York Metropolitan Social Studies Conference on January 14. The conference was held at New York City's Sheraton Centre. The program's theme was, "Toward a Global Understanding."

The HGS presented a workshop, "Henry George, the Reformer". The panelists were Barry Smith, Dave Norflus and David Redman, all of whom are on the faculty of the New York School or the Long Island Extension. The workshop gave background information on George's role during the Reform period.

Mr. Redman also made a demonstration of the "Land and Freedom" lessons -- 20 self-contained units on the importance of land in American history. Using the pamphlet on the Louisiana Purchase, he presented examples of how high school teachers could integrate the land question -- and Henry George --, into their curriculum.

The Schalkenbach booth, staffed by Pat Aller, displayed George's books, as well as Alternative America, The Power in the Land, the Journal of Economics and Sociology, the HGS catalog, the "Land and Freedom" lessons mentioned above, the Hunger and Poverty/Appalachia lesson plan and numerous pamphlets.

More than 130 lesson plans were distributed at the half-day conference. In addition, 57 teachers, chairpersons and other educators signed up to receive information on George in the future.

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