

## CONTINUED SUCCESS FOR DELAWARE HGS PRISON PROGRAM

"For years I have been searching for answers to why I was raised in poverty, a bondage which until recently seemed inexplicable and inescapable....In my search for answers I enrolled in college political economy courses which always seemed to provide more questions than answers." Thus writes Joseph M. Walls, an inmate at the Delaware State Correctional Center, and a recent graduate of the three-course series in *Principles of Political Economy*, taught there by Philadelphia HGS Director Mike Curtis. In a three-page statement summing up his experience in the HGS courses, Mr. Walls eloquently identifies the need that is met by this unique program: Most prisoners at the DCC are serving sentences for economic crimes....Talking to these people I constantly get the feeling that most of these crimes were committed because [they] felt as if there was no hope for them in our society, that the cards were stacked against them. So why shouldn't they get what they want however they can, regardless of who it hurts?" Mike Curtis, who has been teaching in the Delaware Prison System for ten years, says: "Many people have come into the classes convinced that violent revolution is the only answer. Henry George's works provide prisoners with an indication that a just society is possible."



A recent graduating class at the Delaware Corrections Center

Mike Curtis has compiled some impressive statistics in the Delaware Prison Program since its inception in 1980. In that time, 195 students have completed *Fundamental Economics*, 84 have completed *Applied Economics*, and 47 have completed the entire study of *Principles of Political Economy*. He has also recruited sixteen teachers, most of who have taught the two advanced courses. This year, six are completing the three-part study--out of a group that began with eleven students thirty weeks ago--a very good retention rate! In addition, a weekly "Law of Rent" seminar is given at the Plummer Center, a work-release facility in Wilmington, Delaware. Mike, occasionally spelled by other teachers including longtime Georgist Don Hurford and fresh recruit Lindy Davies, has presented the seminar continuously for nine years--to a grand total of 4,722 individuals. Mike and Don have recently been honored for their efforts by the Delaware Department of Corrections, and a request was recently made to expand the program to

(continued on fourth page)



L to R: David DeLong, Univ. of Pa. Historic Preservation Program, Jim Collins, George Collins, Contractor Nicholas Koury, Stuart Rosenberg

## PHILADELPHIA BIRTHPLACE AWARDED FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESTORATION

On April 25th, Henry George School Executive Director George Collins travelled to Philadelphia where he was presented the John McArthur Award for Excellence in Building Restoration, by Building Conservation International, also known as Preservation Techniques. The award came to the Philadelphia School, which is also the Henry George Birthplace/Museum, in the category of building conservation projects with a budget under \$500,000. The award for projects over \$500,000 went to the Henry Ford Winter Home in Fort Myers, Florida. Previous winners of this award include the New York Public Library and the Rainbow Room in Rockefeller Center, New York.

The Birthplace was also the winner of the Grand Prize for historic preservation given by the Pennsylvania Historic & Museum Commission, Bureau of Historic Preservation. The award was presented on April 27th to the architect, Jim Collins, (of Collins Rosenberg Architects), and reads "Historic Preservation Commendation Presented for Outstanding Achievement to the Henry George Birthplace."

At both events, the audience, made up of historians, preservationists, architects and contractors, was treated to a discourse on Henry George. And a magazine, *Colonial Homes*, is now deciding in which issue it will run a picture story of the furnished Birthplace.



"The Dover Jail Single Tax Club" - a group of "depraved & irresponsible vagabonds" arrested for "disorderly conduct" during the 1896 Single Tax campaign in Delaware. The first Georgist prison program?

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## NEW YORK GRADUATES JOIN THE DIALOGUE

The New York HGS graduated 215 students from the eleven classes in its winter term; certificates were conferred at a graduation get-together on April 6th. The auditorium was packed, as usual—but this time the School was well-prepared. A video hookup was installed so that graduates could watch and listen to the proceedings from the second floor classroom (the room, incidentally, where the food and drink were placed). A good time was had by all; kudos were bestowed for jobs well done on both sides of the podium.

Perhaps even more significant than the numbers were the quality and intensity of graduates' evaluations. It has long been the policy of Director George Collins to ask one student from each class to say a few words about the shared experience. Most of the speeches are, of necessity, impromptu affairs—but this time around, two graduates of *Fundamental Economics* prepared extensive statements.

LaTrenda Hayden observed that the range of the course, and of Henry George's ideas, was far greater than she had expected: "...his social commentary concerning the relation of poverty and progress far exceeds the narrow category of economics. George's wisdom



LaTrenda Hayden

encompassed the whole scope of [human society]....according to George's greatest claim, our most fundamental right is the right to the land. Every human being that has been born...and will be born...needs the land for survival .... Without unrestricted/unmonopolized access to the land, we will continue to have poverty amidst plenty."

Joanna Gajardo emphasized the challenges to be faced by the School and those who have learned George's message. "I can't help but ask the question, why is it that in over one hundred years since this theory...has come to light, hasn't this been put into practice on a large scale?...What conditions are



Joanna Gajardo

needed so that George's theory can be given a chance to be implemented? For we all surely agree that urgent changes must take place and soon....why hasn't this [Georgist] enthusiasm been able to be transmitted to the legislature at city, state and national levels? Are there no Georgists at powerful decision-making levels? And if [not], why not?"

George Collins, in his introductory remarks, confessed (but didn't apologize for) the fact that these free courses aren't really free, for they confer a responsibility on those who have gotten Henry George's message. LaTrenda Hayden and Joanna Gajardo have indeed responded and joined the Georgist dialogue. Judging from the reactions of the rest of the graduates to their remarks, they may not be alone in that.

## ECONOMIST GAFFNEY ON URBAN DECAY

*The Business Research Institute of Saint John's College in New York has recently published, as part of its "Distinguished Papers" series, a paper by Mason Gaffney entitled The Role of Ground Rent in Urban Decay and Revival. The paper is the text of Gaffney's Henry George Lecture at Saint John's in October, 1988. Endowed by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, the George lectures have been presented each year since 1981. Gaffney's style is frank and unadorned; he details the causes and effects of urban blight. He makes a strong case for the justice of the public collection of rent, but he also outlines a sevenfold economic benefit to be had thereby. Taking ground rent through taxation would, Gaffney says, 1) lower the price of land, 2) remove the tax on, and therefore lower the costs of, buildings and other improvements, 3) remove constrictions on the flow of credit caused by high building taxes, which are come due just when developers are the least liquid, 4) effect a "regional spillover" which will spread the benefits of urban renewal wherever this reform is enacted, 5) tend to reduce the ill effects of absentee ownership by offering incentives for owners to develop their own land, 6) increase capital formation by providing an incentive to divert investment from land speculation to productive capital, and 7) contribute to government economy in many ways, including putting the brakes on urban sprawl, and decreasing the need for military spending, "at least those portions that are strictly boondoggling of a make-jobs nature." A free copy of The Role of Ground Rent in Urban Decay and Revival can be obtained from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 41 East 72nd St., New York, 10021.*

## EDITOR'S NOTES: Journals of Interest

*Insights: A journal of commentary on political economy* makes its debut this month with Volume 1/Number 1. The journal is published jointly by the Los Angeles Henry George School and LA Chapter of Common Ground USA. Its purpose is to cover the activities of its sponsoring organizations as well as comment on worldwide events. Among the articles in this first issue are: the 1990 Congressional budget hearings (in all their absurdity); an update on and history of Britain's poll tax; Russia's land policy from 1917 to the present, and what is to be done now, and "Insights' Awards to Los Angeles Philanthropists" - i.e., to low profile land speculators who are also high-profile celebrities giving to good causes. Stan Sapiro is the principal writer, and Marion Sapiro is editor and typesetter. To get a copy (no price is mentioned), contact the School in Tujunga.

*The Geonomist* also appears for the first time this month. This is the newsletter of the Institute for Geonomic Transformation at PO Box 157, Santa Barbara, CA 93102. The Institute is sponsoring the visit of Jeff Smith, with Prof. Nic Tideman, to Eastern Europe. This first typewritten issue gives an update and detailed itinerary of Jeff's tour (which was first announced in our April issue). The tour began April 21 in Bulgaria and will end on August 23 in Holland (with a break in July to attend US conferences). Jeff will be visiting various academic and political persons, including many in the Green movement, and has offered to convey messages from Georgists. Contact addresses and phone numbers for Jeff are given in this first issue, a copy of which can be had by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Editor of *Henry George Newsletter* in New York.

*The Truth Seeker* is a "Freethinker's Publication Since 1873." Many of its articles concern intellectual, social and economic freedom. Its current issue (Volume 117, No. 1) addresses unjust and unlawful taxation, and alternatives proposed by Henry George, Thomas Paine (perhaps the greatest champion of free thought) and others. Feature articles are divided into three main sections: *We The People* (which includes "American Indian Roots of The U.S. Constitution"), *Taxation Without Representation* (including a defense of "Proportional Representation"), and *Progress And Poverty* (including Georgist reprints as well as a graphic piece by Editor James W. Prescott suggesting that a 10%

## NEW YORKERS CONSIDER HOUSING & LAND ISSUES

New York Director George Collins attended Governor Cuomo's Conference on Housing at the Javits Convention Center in Manhattan on April 26th. Federal, State and local housing officials, activists, developers and members of housing organizations filled the audience. Mr. Collins exposed them to Georgist ideas concerning housing in open sessions and in private conversations. Among the latter were fact-to-face exchanges with Mayor Dinkins and builder Jim Rouse. Mr. Collins returned after a full day with many requests for literature and follow-up contacts.

Next evening, at the New York School, members of the public attended a Friday Night Forum on "Land in the Movies." The motion picture, *Country*, dealt with the plight of farmers in the 1980s who borrowed heavily in the basis of inflated land values only to be foreclosed upon when land prices dropped. No amount of hard work and efficiency proved sufficient to reduce their debts which had been caused by economic forces beyond their control. A very spirited discussion followed which emphasized the distorting effects of speculative land price spirals.



tax on land assessments is the only one we need). This certainly is one issue students of Henry George won't want to miss. Send \$4 to *The Truth Seeker*, PO Box 2832, San Diego, CA 92112.

*Kentuckians For The Commonwealth* is a grassroots movement promoting reform in several areas including economic, ecological, and educational. KFTC's advocacy of an unmined minerals tax, among other measures, brought them to the attention of Georgists a few years ago. For a copy of their latest annual report, contact KFTC at PO Box 864, Prestonsburg, KY 41653 (Tel. 606-886-0043).

### A Summer of Conferences

Listed below are conferences that should be of interest to students of the Henry George School:

**TOES: The Other Economic Summit.** July 6-8, Houston, Texas. An international, non-governmental forum; "The Voice of People for a Change." Contact: Larry Martin, TOES, 1442 Harvard Street NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202-667-4659).

**Ninth Annual Fourth World Assembly.** July 11-15, The Catholic Information Center, Irving, Texas (near Dallas/Ft. Worth Airport). Includes Kirkpatrick Sale & Susan Witt (E. F. Schumacher Society), Jeff Smith, and Tom Greco (School Of Living) - all friends of the Georgist movement. Contact: Gene Marshall, Realistic Living, PO Box 140826, Dallas, TX 75214 (214-324-4629).

**Permaculture: Design for Sustainable Human Communities.** July 15 - August 11, Gap Mountain Permaculture, Jaffrey, New Hampshire. Co-sponsor: School Of Living, RD1 Box 185A, Cochranville, PA 19330. Contact: Gap Mountain Per-

maculture, 9 Old County Rd., Jaffrey, NH 03452 (603-532-7092).

**1990 North American Georgist Conference.** July 25-30, College of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Common Ground USA Pre-Conference, July 23-25. Contact: Mark Sullivan, Council of Georgist Organizations, 121 East 30th St., New York, NY 10016 (212-595-1669, 1-9 PM); James L. Busey, Intermountain Single Tax Association (ISTA), PO Box 7, Manitou Springs, CO 80829; Earl A. Hanson, ISTA, PO Box 207, Cedar City, UT 94720.

**Third National Community Land Trust Conference.** August 16-19, Burlington, Vermont. Will highlight innovative public programs supportive of CLTs in Vermont, as well as training workshops for developing and existing CLTs. Contact: Carrie or Julie, Institute for Community Economics, 151 Montague City Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301 (413-774-7956).

### UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE NEW YORK SCHOOL

*Land in the Movies II: Friday June 1st, 7 PM. Film to be announced.*

*Nicaragua -- What Next? Saturday June 9th, 1-4 PM, with Mike Curtis, Director of the Philadelphia HGS, and visitor to Nicaragua.*

*Drugs in America -- Legalization or War? Saturday June 16th, 1-4 PM, with NY State Senator Joseph Galiber, Chairman of State Subcommittee on Hard Drugs; Rev. Dino Woodard, Assistant Pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem; and Michael Sehested, Program Coordinator for ADAPT, which provides services and information on AIDS and drug issues.*



## CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS ADDRESS ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

**San Francisco:** the Bay Area Socially Responsible Investment Professionals teamed up with Earth Day sponsors to present the Northern California Environmental Achievement in Business Awards on March 29th at San Francisco's War Memorial. The Northern California Henry George School served as a member of the Awards Ceremony Host Committee, thanks to the initiative of new Board President Cathe Smeland.

The purpose of the awards are "to encourage more companies to be friendly to the environment," according to Frank Tsai, president of Working Assets Money Fund, another cosponsor. Nominees were considered in areas such as environmentally sensitive products, recycling programs, energy efficiency, financial support of environmental organizations, and several others. Winners were chosen from four areas: large corporations, medium-sized corporations, small businesses, and individuals promoting change at work or in the larger community. "Dishonorable Mentions" went to companies with poor environmental records.

**Hollywood:** the Southern California Henry George School held its Final Friday dinner on April 27th and examined "The Case for Nuclear Power" as part of a series on the environment. Speakers were Roy Bedgley, top speaker on the subject and manager for the US census, and Sheldon Plotkin, engineering consultant, member of the Southern California Federation of Scientists, and an activist who recently helped prevent North American Rockwell from installing a local nuclear reactor.

"Designated Hitters" (lead-off questioners) were Michael Green, founder of the Albert J. Nock Supper Club in Long Beach; (not *the*) Jerry Rubin, Director of The Alliance for Survival, currently on a 102-day fast "from Chernobyl to Hiroshima"; Dennis Bottom, an architect and Green activist; and Bob DeTolve, printer/manufacturer and Henry George School senior teacher.

Harry Pollard, LA-HGS director, characterized the meeting as a "continuous battle between the two speakers." Rubin called for a moment of silence for those killed by Chernobyl. Harry pointed out that there is more radioactivity in the 30,000 truckloads of coal waste than in one truckload of nuclear (for which the same amount of energy is produced) and added that coal particles in the air are responsible for 50,000 to 80,000 deaths a year in the U.S. How (and where) to get rid of nuclear waste was the crucial issue for the participants.

For May's Final Friday, Harry promised a "blanket debunking of current ecological pop-dread" - and to point out that the way to really stop ecological destruction is Georgist land reform.



### PRISON PROGRAM

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Delaware's other state prison, the Gander Hill facility in Wilmington.

In spite of the official kudos, however, there have been some stormy spots in the program's relationship with prison management. Classes have been unexpectedly called off because no guards were available. They were restricted to two

meetings per month for more than a year, apparently because of shortages in guard staff. Courses were continued by correspondence when they were unable to meet in person. However, there have been bright spots too--some of the guards, compelled to be present in the classes, actually started studying and ended up completing the study! One such "captive" recruit presented Mike with a plaque.

In 1988, a group of economics majors at nearby Delaware State College agreed to debate the DCC economics students on basic political economy issues. The college students withdrew after viewing the questions which the Henry George-trained inmates were prepared to discuss.

His students at the State Prison have learned more from these classes than simply George's ideas, Mike says. They have also gained skills in teaching, public speaking, and conceptual thinking--the ability to read and understand *Progress and Poverty* is a complex skill, with far-reaching applications, which they would have gotten nowhere else. But more importantly, these classes have enabled students to rise above self-defeating provincial thought and begin to identify the deeper social causes of racism and exploitation. In his statement, Joseph Walls concludes, "It is amazing to witness the rehabilitative results achieved with this realization of the source of our economic enslavement." The courses have made a profound difference in many lives. Many members of Mike's HGS classes are also part of another movement that has given prisoners a sense of dignity and purpose--the Black Muslims. Mike cannot help wondering how history would have been changed had Malcolm X enrolled in a Henry George School course when he was in prison.

-- Lindy Davies

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