

Prentice Tells Conferees George's Reform is Gaining 'Respectability'

by Harlan Trott

San Francisco "I've got a shock for you," publisher Perry Prentice told the national conference of Henry George Schools in San Francisco in July. "You are becoming respectable."

This was his theme at the 1971 banquet honoring him for his monumental work in bringing Henry George's principles into the mainstream of academic recognition and public policy consideration.

Prentice pointed out many areas wherein the breakthrough has occurred, in the published hearings of the Muskie Committee, in policy declarations by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, in faculty pronouncements at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and in the prestigious Committee on Economic Development where one CED official told Mr. Prentice: "You don't have to sell me on land value taxation. How do we get something done about it?"

Delegates from places as far apart as Calgary and the island republic Dominica heard New York's Arnold A. Weinstein, President of the School, announce exciting new goals to build more effective teaching programs.

Weinstein said the Trustees are taking steps to make the course based on *Progress and Poverty* "more relevant in a modern industrial society." Part of the broad new program calls for experimental courses in the applied disciplines—anthropology, and psychology in particular, he said. The school will "draw on history," and there will be a special course focussing on "economics and urban problems" augmenting the Trustees' plan to offer college transfer credits.

Weinstein recalled the tentative offer of a university chair at Berkeley held out to Henry George, and how that prospect was dispelled by his forthright address to the Berkeley faculty with its harsh likening of professors to "monkeys with microscopes."

"Unfortunately," said the national president, "too many of his followers took on this bias when a professor didn't agree with them 110%. We must assess every professor on the basis of his own individuality. Instead, we alienated

(Continued on back page)

Urge Site Tax To Save City

The American Institute of Architecture's critical commentary on the City Planning Commission's 1969 plan for New York City may provide the answer to New York's two most crushing problems: a lack of decent housing and an overabundance of automobiles.

The critique, recently released by the Institute's Design Subcommittee, recommends that land value taxation be implemented to provide private enterprise with an incentive to build housing. The 1969 Plan cited the need for increased housing, the report says, but proffered no suggestions regarding how or where to build it.

Under the committee's proposal, every parcel of land would be assessed and taxed by the "local" (presumably city) government according to its location value and relative to its planned usage. With taxes on improvements systematically waived or reduced when land is put to "better or higher" use, pressure would be on landowners to erect something more "socially desirable" than parking lots. Beyond housing, the report does not specify the characteristics of "higher or better" use.

Tax exemptions or reductions are also recommended for well-maintained buildings, removing the deterrent to improvements inherent in present taxes.

Land value taxation would also facilitate the assemblage of parcels of land for large projects by automatically eliminating land speculation, the report adds.

New Course Notes African Site Levy

Henry George may have been the first to expound the ethics and economics of site value taxation in the Western world, but in Africa tribal societies have been practicing it for centuries.

"Of course it isn't taxation as we know it, but the ethics, and the effects, are the same," according to Barbara Rockefeller, who will teach "The African Experience" to New York City social science teachers this fall. The accredited course, offered as part of the city's "In-Service Training" program for teachers, will examine the geography, history, and culture of Africa.

"Most people know a few exotic facts about Africa, but few realize that African systems of thought are as sophisticated, complex, and rich in tradition and history as our own," Miss Rockefeller explains. Like many of the new courses offered this fall, "The African Experience" will present George's ideas in a new context for a wider audience.

"Although there are more than 2,000 tribes in Africa, some aspects of philosophy, social organization, and religion are universal," she says. "All African societies have a monotheistic cosmology so similar in concept to Christianity, that the success of Christian missionaries and the growth of African churches is hardly surprising."

Of particular interest, she notes, is the African tenet that each individual has a birthright to a plot of land on which to live and support himself. "The trend now is to talk of the 'natural socialism' of the African. This is a fallacy.

"It is true that all land is considered to 'belong to' God, who allocated some portions of it to the tribe. Each tribe has a myth of origin in which God gives land to its founder. Succeeding chiefs and elders are his fictional descendants and hold the land in trust for all the tribe, present and future."

Africa

Miss Rockefeller is quick to point out, however, that tribal authorities do not "own" the land in any absolute way. "It is their heritage," she explains, "and belongs to future generations of the tribe as well as to the present. This is why revolts and rebellions mark the colonial era during which white settlers 'bought' land in perpetuity from African chiefs.

"When Africans began to understand that the white settlers intended to keep the land despite the Africans' increasing need for it, they realized they had unwittingly betrayed a religious trust."

It is interesting to note that Christianity made little headway in areas where land shortages grew severe, for white missionaries defended white settlers' monopolies of good land. During the "Emergency" or Mau Mau in Kenya, tribal religious practices, closely connected with the use of the land, and rites of passage were revived to promote solidarity against the encroaching settlers.

"African systems of land tenure are remarkably in the spirit of George," Miss Rockefeller points out, "in contrast to the Western laws and ethics brought by the colonists.

"Each individual's right in land is guaranteed by tribal authorities as long as the individual uses it. He may inherit the land from a relative or, as in the case of younger sons, daughters, and newcomers to the area, it may be allocated to him by the chiefs or elders."

In pre-colonial Africa, Miss Rockefeller says, no one could claim ownership to a parcel of land he did not use, if another person wished to use it. This was the case no matter how strong or clear his inheritance rights were.

Although in many parts of Africa the current trend is toward permanent ownership in the Western tradition, and lands are being surveyed and registered, most land disputes are still settled according to tribal law. The individual who can prove that he is using the land, by having planted tree crops or made other improvements, has the better claim. In more remote tribes, even today, the system of taxation is closely related to land ownership and use. Each individual must devote a specified number of days per year or give a certain amount of produce to support public administration and services, such as road construction and well digging.

This tribute is levied according to the wealth of the individual, which is a factor of how much land he has and its quality. If inequitable distribution was not prevented by taxation, the land was reallocated every ten to fifteen years.

Although many of these pre-colonial land practices prevail, the African land situation is growing to resemble that of the West. Urban land speculators are holding land until cities expand and

demand for it rises. Land registration for private ownership increasingly encroaches on the tribe's ability to maintain equitable land distribution.

"But Africa changes slowly," Miss Rockefeller says "and Africans may discover the method of land ownership, proposed by Henry George. Site value taxation would surely appeal to Africans, because it is so consistent with their traditional ethics."

Uganda Economy to Embrace All

The following is extracted from the May Day speech of Uganda General Idi Amin Dada.

The people of Uganda and indeed the whole world have been waiting for an authoritative pronouncement on the economic policy and objectives of the Government of the Second Republic. The full unfolding of these policies and plans will necessarily have to await the publication of the Third Five-Year Development Plan which will be completed by June this year. Of immediate interest, however, is the question of government participation in the economy of the country and the extent to which the Second Republic intends to implement, vary, or reverse the May Day Pronouncements made by the last Government on the 60-40 formula.

The question as to whether my Government will go Communist, Socialist, or Capitalist is of academic importance only. I am one of those who believe that pure Capitalism like pure Communism or Socialism is neither desirable nor practicable. The balance of advantage clearly lies in choosing the best elements from each of these economic systems and adapting them to the special requirements of Uganda. In other words, we believe that the private sector has an important and vital part to play in the economic development of Uganda. We also believe that the direction and impetus in the entire economic development of the country must be provided by the Government. This will be achieved by active participation where this is deemed necessary, by means of a well coordinated plan, and by a national strategy in which every person, every group, union, or organization will have a part to play.

My Government firmly believes that economic development and improvement of social welfare are generally easier to obtain by expanding the productive base of the economy and by providing additional services. A change of ownership of existing facilities and services does not necessarily bring about the desired results. It follows, therefore, that the limited resources available to Gov-

ernment should be used to promote economic development and to build health centers, schools, factories and help the farmers.

Private savings and investment are of vital importance in attaining the highest possible rate of growth for the economy. But even if it were considered desirable to do away with private enterprise, the fact is that the government does not presently have the financial and manpower resources to replace private activity. Even the Government of the First Republic expected that about 40% of investment during the Second Five-Year Plan would be made by the private sector.

I wish to make it abundantly clear that my government's policy is to see to it that Ugandas participate fully in the industrial and commercial activities of the nation. To this end all companies will be required to submit a program of Ugandanisation. Further, it is the view of my Government that all companies of reasonable size and profitability should convert themselves into public companies and thus give an opportunity to Ugandans to participate as shareholders.

We have taken a major step to restore the country's economic health. Private businessmen are now free to move forward with confidence, and to invest in the future of the nation. Furthermore, my Government is confident that the private sector will respond by taking steps to Ugandanise more rapidly, to train the workers to produce more efficiently, and to offer their shares to the public. Together with the active and dedicated support of those whom we honor today, the workers of Uganda, we shall march forward to brighter future for all.

Conference Seeks Cures to World Ills

The war, poverty, pollution, and apparently all things tending to make the future instant apoplexy will be the targets of "Adequate Action," a conference sponsored by the Heathcote School of Living and twelve other organizations, September 3-6 at Gettysburg, Pa.

The purpose of the Labor Day meeting is "to make apparent to many people that there are positive ways of working for the future, that there is no need or excuse for sitting back, giving up hope, and letting the rest of the world go by or take over." She links the difficulties confronting civilization with the policy of permitting land holders to collect rent, particularly to reap speculative gains while holding land out of use.

Details about the conference can be obtained from: School of Living/ Heathcote Road/ Route 1/ Box 129/ Freeland, Md.