

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

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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?

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.

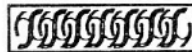
The purpose of the awards are "to encourage more companies to be friendly to the environment," according to Frank Tsai, president of Working Assets Money Fund, another cosponsor. Nominees were considered in areas such as environmentally sensitive products, recycling programs, energy efficiency, financial 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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