

The Henry George News

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Conference Opens New Building

by Louise R. Pulini

More than one hundred people attended the 1980 Annual Joint Georgist Conference at the new headquarters building of the Henry George School in New York over the Labor Day weekend.

In his opening remarks recalling the 1979 Centennial Conference, HGS president Paul S. Nix, Jr. said:

This will be a more modest conference than last year's in the size and scope but not in spirit. Our success should be judged not in numbers but in our renewed willingness to work with each other and all others who are ready to listen to the fundamental truth of our ideas.

Mr. Nix welcomed all Georgists to come to this new home and share the ideas and present approaches about how the School can have greater impact and more visibility.

The inequalities and vagaries of the current property tax and assessment system and feasible solutions for these problems were presented in panels on New York and Pennsylvania situations. Philip Finkelstein, who chaired the New York panel, characterized "reform" efforts as "a very powerful tail wagging a very important dog." Don Clifford of the New York State Board of Equalization and Assessment, referred to proposed legislation that would offer viable alternatives to homeowners and George Kerchner of the Center for Local Tax Research presented a proposal that would ameliorate the property tax burden in New York City. Larry Spancake, also of the Center, offered his view as an economist of the effects of full value assessment in the New York metropolitan area.

Councilman William Coyne of Pittsburgh reported on the surge in building in his city that has resulted from the doubling of the land tax in 1978; Richard Biddle predicted that within five years there would be a differential tax rate in Philadelphia. Steven Cord, who headed the panel, urged homeowners to get involved politically on behalf of their constituents.

The economic planks in the platforms of Republican, Democratic, Libertarian, Independent, and Citizens presidential candidates were explained to the conferees by representatives of the respective parties that was followed by a question-answer period.

Dr. Arch Woodruff headed a panel on the Developing World. Alanna Hartzok, education director of the HGS in San Francisco, who recently attended a World Citizen's Assembly that met in Tokyo, Lucy de
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Conferees gathered 'round the Henry George tree.

Name New HG Council Heads

Robert Clancy of the Henry George Institute and Ed Dodson, a banker from Philadelphia, have agreed to serve as chairman and vice-chairman, respectively, of the Council of Georgist Organizations. The two men were elected to serve a one-year term at the meeting held on Sunday, August 31, during the annual Joint Georgist Conference.

Philip Finkelstein (who chaired the meeting in the absence of Clay Berling, the past chairman) recognized the importance of committing resources to people and offered space to the Council in the School's new building. Floyd Morrow offered the charter of Land, Equality and Freedom (LEAF) with 240 active members to the Council as well. Claude Arnold of Fairhope agreed to head a committee that will consider organizations which will comprise the council and lend financial support.

Mary Davis of Atlanta, who had been instrumental in getting the Council on the Conference agenda, was recognized by the group for her support and her efforts to get a national membership organization off the ground. Davis expressed the hope that the Council will perform vital coordinating and clearinghouse functions for the Georgist movement in the future.

Another function of the Council, as suggested by Steven Cord, would be to help smooth the transition from one conference to another, with periodic reports on future plans for ensuing meetings.

Both Clancy and Dodson were given authority to develop a budget for the next five year's income and to spend it on staff and equipment.