

HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

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SPECIAL REPORT:

GEORGIST CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON ACTIVISM, NEW MEDIA

Some 100 Georgists recently converged on the Holiday Hills Conference Center in Pawling, New York to assess events of the year past and examine new avenues of acceptance for the future.

FACT-FINDING BY STATE REPS.

The annual Georgist Conference kicked off on Thursday evening, July 26, with a program on the New York State law which calls for a study of the implications of a land value tax in the state. Conference Chairman Robert Clancy noted that previous conferences focused to some extent on Georgist activity in the host state.

"To be truthful, we had already chosen New York as this year's site before we had the study bill, but we are nonetheless happy to continue the tradition," Clancy said.

Felice Gruskin, chairwoman of the New York State Incentive Taxation League, moderated the program, which included remarks by Albany activist Al Hartheimer, Ellen Everett, legislative aide to Assemblyman Daniel Feldman (the bill's sponsor), and Larry Farbstein, of the Temporary Commission on Real Property Taxation, which will undertake the study.

Other commission members were also in attendance, as were members of the State Board of Equalization and Assessment.

"A TALE OF FIVE CITIES"

The session was followed by a sneak preview of "A Tale of Five Cities", the new documentary produced by the Washington-based Center for Public Dialogue. The 30-minute film, which describes the evolution of incentive taxation in Pennsylvania, was widely-praised by those in attendance as one of the most impressively-packaged Georgist films to date.

An impromptu critique involving state officials, Professor Steven Cord and New York Director Stan Rubenstein followed. Commission members were generally intrigued by the film's content, but reserved judgement on its relevance to New York until after their investigation.

Walt Rybeck, who wrote the script and supervised production, announced that "A Tale of Five Cities" would be available for rental or purchase in 16 mm. or on video cassette later in the fall. For further information, contact the Center for Public Dialogue, 10615 Brunswick Avenue, Kensington, Md. 20895.

REPORTS FROM HENRY GEORGE ORGANIZATIONS

Progress reports from Georgist organizations throughout the United States dominated the early sessions on Friday. Some two dozen groups and individuals reported on what they had been working on during the previous twelve months. The emerging picture was diverse:

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some focused exclusively on education, some only on legislative action, some mixed both. Georgism seemed to be moving slowly yet perceptibly into new areas. George Collins chaired the session.

CABLE TELEVISION

One of those areas was television. A new 12-part series, "Understanding Economics", was unveiled on Friday morning. Produced by the Henry George Schools of New York and Philadelphia in cooperation with WIUP - TV of Indiana, Pa., the series brings the basic Progress and Poverty course into the livingroom.

Each program is largely self-contained -- that is, a newcomer tuning in to the sixth lesson will be able to understand much of it and proceed with the subsequent programs. Yet each also builds on what has preceded, strengthening and reinforcing Georgist concepts as the series progresses.

Stan Rubenstein and George Collins are the presenters.

Each program also contains a discussion with three university students and comments from Professor Cord. Graphics by Mark Sullivan and Ed Dodson supplement the presentations.

"Understanding Economics" will appear on four cable stations this fall. More details will appear in the next issue of the Henry George Newsletter.

FAIRHOPE, ARDEN AND CLTs

Removing Henry George's philosophy from the realm of theory and observing it in practice is the Georgist's goal. The closest one can come at the moment is in the Georgist communities of Fairhope, Alabama and Arden, Delaware.

Mitch Chanelis of Boston chaired a program which focused on these Single Tax communities and on community land trusts. Gale Rowe of Fairhope and Mike Curtis of Arden discussed the benefits of those experiments as well as the practical problems they have confronted.

Robert Swann, of the E.F. Schumacher Society, discussed the development of community land trusts which have sprung up in several rural areas and, although not Georgist per se, offer a unique opportunity to expand the single tax concept.

Richard Schubart, a historian from the Exter Academy, discussed the life of Ralph Borsodi, founder of the School of Living and a prime developer of the concept of alternative lifestyles which embrace land trusts. Mr. Schubart is writing a book about Borsodi.

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APPALACHIA REVISITED

Bob Scrofani, director of the San Francisco School, held a session on the Appalachia situation. Making use of the CBS Bill Moyers Journal program about the Fair Tax Coalition and the Hunger and Poverty lesson plans developed by the San Francisco School, Scrofani brought Georgists up to date on the people's struggle to share in land's riches. A resolution was approved to draft a statement in praise of the Appalachia telecast to be sent to Moyers and the program's producers.

TALKING TO POLITICIANS

Two Georgists have been particularly effective in translating single tax theory into law -- Steve Cord and Dan Sullivan. They co-chaired a discussion on the proper way to seek out and convince elected officials that LVT is a workable incentive for development.

BRAINSTORMING

It was billed, "Toward a Master Plan for Georgist Victory", but getting Georgists to agree on any single aspect of the plan is itself a major undertaking. Yet, under the chairmanship of Steve Cord, and thanks to pointed remarks from Dan Sullivan (ITL of Western Pa), Jeff Smith (Basic Economic Education, San Diego) and Morgan Harris (who has launched a nationwide membership organization called the Henry George Association: Action For Tax Relief) the program turned into a thought-provoking brainstorming session. Ideas such as university scholarship programs, political action committees, and nationwide lobbying organizations were discussed.

GLOBAL DEBT

The international debt crisis was the topic of a session on Saturday morning which also included the telecast of the PBS presentation, "The Moneylenders". Ed Dodson of Provident National Bank chaired the program, which also featured remarks by Dr. Oscar Johannsen of the Schalkenbach Foundation, Richard Barbuto of Central National Bank, and Robert Swann of the E.F. Schumacher Society. The consensus was that the bank's contention that "there is no crisis" was in error, that the centralized banking system is inferior to the decentralized system which preceded it and that a Georgist response is not only appropriate but necessary.

ANNUAL BANQUET

Stan Rubenstein was the host for the annual banquet on Saturday evening. Assemblyman Bill Filante described some of the problems inherent in being a Georgist legislator, stressing the fact that there are non-Georgist matters which often take priority. LA Director Harry Pollard demonstrated techniques which win over hostile audiences. Jack Schwartzman, editor of Fragments, spoke in honor of Louis Post.

WORKSHOPS

The conference was preceded by two important sessions. First, Morgan Harris chaired the first meeting of a new activist membership organization, the Henry George Association: Action For Tax Relief. The following afternoon, Don Hurford conducted a session on teaching the adult learner, which focused on the differences in educating adults and children.

WRAPPING UP

The conference closed with meetings of the Henry George Foundation and the Council of Georgist Organizations. The Council agreed to hold the 1985 conference in St. Louis.