

## San Diego conference puts it all together

A lively exchange of views among a variety of students of Henry George characterized the School's 1975 Conference in San Diego, California, July 1 through 3. Working sessions — with time out for an afternoon in Mexico — were capped by a dinner on the last evening, featuring an address by Prof. Arthur Becker, economist from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The Annual Award for outstanding contribution to the cause of economic justice was presented to Robert Tideman, long-time director of the San Francisco School and now co-ordinator of Land Equality and Freedom (LEAF).

Opening the Conference, Tuesday morning (July 1), the Reverend Joels Addington developed his invocation on the theme of George's "Ode to Liberty." An official welcome by San Diego's Mayor Pete Wilson, who took time out of a busy schedule to greet the Conference personally, was augmented by an address by Councilman Floyd Morrow. Morrow, who is also chairman of the board of LEAF, expressed his belief that we ought not to talk about property taxes, but about nature and how man is abusing economic system that improperly allocates resources. Asserting, "action is the core of life," he counseled the School to develop an active alumni to strive toward the "good life." This happy state he described as having health, friendship and happiness

along with a modicum of wealth, which could be obtained if nature were available to all.

Catherine Covell, executive secretary of the School of Northern California headquartered in San Francisco, talked about the School's concentration on classroom work in *Progress and Poverty*, *Protection or Free Trade*, *Social Problems*, *Science of Political Economy*, *Democracy vs. Socialism* and a treatise on money by Robert DeFremery, as well as a tax course given by an assessor. In addition she reported the School's participation in seminars on metropolitan affairs.

William Truehart expressed his dismay at the lack of classes in San Diego and his interest in reviving such activities there.

Tideman described LEAF as a democratic organization, "independently financed and independently motivated." The organization's immediate goal, he said, is 30 chapters in the state of California; then it will seek to branch out in other areas. The best way to begin, he suggested, was not to seek numbers, but to convene a steering committee to set local objectives — all pointed, of course, toward reform of the property tax through proper assessment. "Who can call you revolutionary," he asked, "if you're insisting that the assessor obey the law?" Successful political action, he said, "is just another form of education."

Noah Alper talked briefly about his activities in St. Louis, reiterating his metaphorical approach to a tax as a "pump." We argue the wrong point when we discuss what tax to use, he said, we should talk about what source to tap.

Harry Pollard, head of the Los Angeles School, discussed his continuing development of "Mini-Course" presentations in the local high schools. New courses, he said, deal with production and distribution and return to capital based on time preference and treat land as location value.

Lancaster Greene, as vice president of the Schalkenbach Foundation, reported on groups in several states being reached by the Foundation and aided in efforts to remove, or at least reduce, the tax on improvements and increase it on land values. Recently, he noted, Schalkenbach has printed and is distributing two pieces: one, an excerpt report of a conference on the financial crises of our cities co-sponsored by the Foundation, the other, an abridgement of C. Lowell Harriss' article on the property tax written for the current (1974) edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Also in work, he said, are new printings of *Progress and Poverty* and *Protection or Free Trade*.

Greene praised the work and enthusiasm of Idaho State Representative William Onweiler who has submitted two

(continued on third page)

## CONFERENCE (continued from first page)

bills to the state's legislature. One would make land value taxation mandatory in the state; the other would give any county the option to adopt such taxation. Having read George in college, Onweiler's own observations in the real estate business and his reading of reports from the Urban Land Institute launched him on his present campaign. He uses the Foundation's "One Way to Better Cities" film and a slide presentation of his own, presenting local scenes as examples of his argument in favor of his legislative proposals.

Concluding the first session was a brief report by Gaye Shaw of Alberta, Canada, who described their class activities and their work in preparation of briefs presented before provincial Government agencies, such as the Land Use Commission.

Tuesday afternoon was given over to a report from New York. Dean Meridith led off with a discussion of the Learning Committee's efforts to improve understanding of George and the development of a non-fragmented approach to the presentation of his ideas and analysis.

Glenn Weeks reported on the progress being made in research. We seek, he explained, to synthesize George's message with the realities of today's world, using current data to make a contemporary presentation of the problems of land use and the shifting of the incidence of taxes to the land. He called on Mal McCarthy, who displayed a land value map of the heart of Toronto as an example of how research is used to present land value taxation as a viable recourse for hard-pressed local governments. McCarthy made the interesting observation that the studies he has made in Toronto and its suburbs indicate that the

total market value of the land in these jurisdictions would come close to equalling, if it didn't indeed exceed, the aggregate of current assessments of land and improvements together.

Commenting on the problems of communication, Stanley Sinclair noted that George, who was a journalist, gave us a clear directive in saying we may "assert the common right to the land by taking rent for the common use" and proposing "the simple yet sovereign remedy . . . to appropriate rent by taxation." It is incumbent upon us, therefore, he said that we use all the media we can reach with our limited resources to communicate the necessity of achieving this property tax reform.

These reports were summarized by Arnold Weinstein, president of the School, who cited the division of labor among the active trustees enabling them to cooperate as equals in running the New York School. Thus, in handling what is becoming an increasingly complex task, he explained, the School has the advantage of multiple professional skills brought to bear on its day-to-day operations and is relieved of the expense of hiring executive personnel.

Wednesday (July 2) was devoted to reports on George Schools' activities in the high schools of their various communities. Talking about New York, Stan Rubenstein explained the role of the "alternative high schools," those innovations in the system that operate outside the traditional classroom, and commented on the success of game simulations in this area. George Collins, from the Philadelphia birthplace of Henry George, demonstrated CLUG, the Community Land Use Game that figures most prominently in this program.

Mal McCarthy of Toronto detailed how his School of Economic Science has been able to participate in local high school classroom work through the geography departments. With the aid of high school students, he said, the Toronto School has been compiling local realty maps that have been accepted by and paid for by the respective jurisdictions they depict.

William Filante, in the San Francisco Bay Area, told how he has been able to use his political clout to develop classes in "Environmental Economics" in local junior colleges.

Harry Pollard discussed his "Inter-student" program as directed toward cooperation in equality.

Wednesday afternoon featured a bus trip into Mexico.

Philip Finkelstein, director of the School's research program, presented a "Tale of Two Cities" as the theme of his remarks on Thursday morning (July 3). Proceeding with the assumption that problems are not the same in all places and at all times, he developed the idea of how theories we accept as valid apply to the problems we face in various jurisdictions today. (Finkelstein's paper on Jersey City and New York City is excerpted elsewhere in this issue.) In his analysis of Jersey City's plight, Finkelstein suggested that enough new revenue could be tapped from proper assessment of vacant and underused land to replace the recently-enacted payroll tax which is causing the city to lose businesses and is under attack.

Mal McCarthy also presented some of the findings developed by his research in Toronto and adjacent areas and discussed two articles by an associate that were writ-

(continued on last page)

## CONFERENCE (continued)

tute of Municipal Assessors of Ontario: "The Argument for Site Value Assessment" and "Basic Economic & Planning Reasons for Using Site Value Assessment" by R.W. Hewison.

The Thursday afternoon session was addressed by three professors, Bernard Siegan, law professor at the University of San Diego; Harry Scheiber, history professor of the University of California at San Diego, and Albert Segelhorst, senior economics professor of the California

State University at Long Beach. Siegan's topic was the "prospects for land use control by state and federal governments" and he appeared to favor legislative and administrative techniques for this purpose. Scheiber, talking on "historical perspectives" presented a fascinating review of the background against which George developed his approach to land and taxes and how he came to write *Progress and Poverty*; Segelhorst spoke about "some land use implications of urban transportation

policies" and suggested that the benefits that accrue to those who hold land along the way of transportation routes are so great that they can afford to foot the bill for the transportation improvements and more.

Speaking at the closing dinner, Becker recounted some of the familiar difficulties faced by the country's major cities and from which smaller jurisdictions are not immune and indicated that the time is ripe for application of the "sovereign remedy."