

EDITORIAL

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Lessons From Santo Domingo

All those who attended *La Primera Conferencia Sobre El Impuesto Al Valor de la Tierra* shared the sense of something significant they were helping to make happen. Many Georgist conferences have been held in many parts of the world in the past but in Santo Domingo the specific relevance of the deliberations provided a new note of urgency. This was a real consideration of a policy option by a government planning its economic future. It is not often that conferences around any ideas are so directly involved with their implementation. It has been rarer still, especially in recent years, for the principles of Henry George to be debated in such a real context. With all of the political terror and economic turmoil in the Caribbean, it was particularly gratifying to present a peaceful alternative in a rational setting along with the hope for genuine reform to improve people's lives.

Whatever the outcome of land value taxation in the Dominican Republic--and it appears more likely to happen than not--the value of our outpost in Santo Domingo is underscored. The survival and growth of dedicated groups teaching, studying and activating the ideas of Henry George remain the best way to focus public attention in an otherwise indifferent climate. While we need to take our ideas out of the classroom and into the media and other arenas of public affairs, there is no reason why these efforts should not be mutually supportive. In fact, a nucleus of people who have taken our courses, and some of them trained to give them as well, can be the springboard for change. Similarly, a possible policy reform can be made more attractive if there is a strong commitment on the part of a local following to see it through. There is really no debate between education and action and probably little ultimate difference in the two approaches.

It is a measure of our maturity as an organization that we are able to plan and support an overseas conference at very short notice and with the cooperation of other organizations with whose spokesmen we are not always in full agreement. The Lincoln Institute and scholars of every persuasion may present other models of tax reform and land policy without obscuring our message. As a number of Dominican officials summarize in their evaluation, the tax on the value of land must be kept simple, both for the people to understand and for the government to administer. The clarity and simple truth of the remedy we propose will insure its ultimate triumph.