HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

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SANTO DOMINGO HOSTS 1992 CONFERENCE

Media Covers Meeting with President Balaguer

This year's annual conference of the Council of Georgist Organizations enjoyed a far higher level of visibility and prominence than Georgists are accustomed to! No, you didn't see coverage on CNN, but had you been watching the local TV stations in Santo Domingo, you would have seen Lucy Silfa, George Collins, and other Georgists interviewed on five separate occasions prior to the opening ceremonies on June 17th.

President Balaguer with Richard Noyes and Lucy Silfa Mark Sullivan

There were a number of firsts at this conference. The conference was listed in the official registry of national events marking the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's voyage. Most of the members of the City Council of Santo Domingo attended a seminar on land and public revenue. Three prominent visitors, George Collins, Richard Noyes, and Ed Dodson, were presented with mayoral proclamations naming them "Distinguished Visitors" to the city. The conference was covered prominently in all three of the capital city's three daily newspapers. And a delegation of Georgists was received by the president of the Dominican Republic, Joaquín Balaguer.

The credit for this hard-won prominence in the Dominican dialogue goes to Lucy Silfa, director of the Dominican *Escuela Ciencias Sociales Henry George*, who has worked incessantly since 1966 establishing the school in her troubled and impoverished home city. As George Collins reported in his article on the Santo Domingo HGS's 25th anniversary celebration last year (see the Nov.-Dec. '91 *HGN,)* "...the school has educated thousands in every sphere of life on the virtue of Georgist land reform.... A devoted core of volunteers have reached out from the Santo Domingo school in every direction." Many of these volunteers attended Lucy's classes 20 or 25 years ago and have gone on to prominent positions in society. One distinguished alumnus is Pedro Bretón, General Administrator of the Agricultural Bank. Bretón authored an impressive oped piece in the newspaper *Hoy,* and was the conference's keynote speaker at its official public opening session.

My first encounter with Lucy Silfa's boundless energy came when I arrived, on the afternoon of Sunday, June 14th. As soon as we touched ground, HGS Director George Collins was whisked off to a TV studio for an interview. *Doña* Lucy (as she is called in her hometown,) was expected at the TV station, and she delivered. There was no time to relax, but they got the interview. Everywhere she goes in the city, Doña Lucy seems to receive the respect and admiration of a survivor, a mentor, and a tireless worker for economic justice.

On Tuesday June 15th, the day before most of the conferees arrived in the country, a special seminar was presented by George Collins at the National Library. The audience was composed of members of the city council, some of whom were graduates of the Henry George School. The seminar focused on the issues and implications of taxation and public revenue in an urban setting. New York HGS student Cyla Gurewicz shared translation chores with Lucy Silfa

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Gathering Extends the Georgist Family

A Georgist Conference serves many purposes. In addition to attracting others who are new to the paradigm of Henry George, the North American Conference serves as an annual reunion of an extended family whose binding ties are that of a common cause. That cause is well expressed in the motto of the conference sponsor, the Council of Georgist Organizations: *To liberate production from taxation, the earth from monopoly, and humanity from poverty.* The slogan was borrowed, in the spirit of common cause, from a member of the Council, the Intermountain Single Tax Association.

Most of the sessions at the June 1992 Conference in Santo Domingo reflected in some way this common purpose and motto. Thursday morning, June 17th, was taken up with an orientation on the history of the Dominican Republic - a history of taxation, monopoly, and poverty rooted in invasion, conquest, slavery and foreign intervention. Dr. Fernando Perez Memen, friend of the Dominican *Escuela Henry George,* covered his subject with great skill, spanning five centuries beginning with the landing of Columbus on Hispaniola. (See page seven.)

How to better get the message across - to deal with these issues of taxation, monopoly, and poverty - underscored Thursday evening's gathering. Dr. Donald Hurford led a demonstration of

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Media Covers Meeting with President

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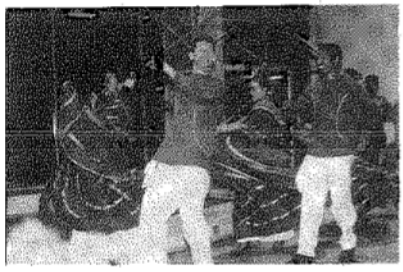
(who occasionally broke in to further explain a point or two in her own language). Responses and questions from the audience indicated consider- able interest, and those who came to the seminar unfamiliar with land value taxation left wanting to know more.

Ligia Pereyra, Dr. Nelson Frias, George Collins

The opening reception on Wednesday evening took place at the National Library. There, City Council President Dr. Nelson Frias presented proclamations of Distinguished Visitorship to HGS President Ed Dodson, CGO Chairman Dick Noyes, and George Collins - who reciprocated with HGS certificates, which were gratefully accepted by the council members who had attended his seminar the day before. The reception concluded with a delightful performance by the *Ballet Folklorico* dance troupe - and some impromptu folk dancing with the visitors.



The official public opening was held on Friday morning at the Central Bank. Excerpts from the opening remarks by Lucy Silfa and the keynote address by Pedro Bretón were also carried on the evening news. A panel discussion ensued on global development and free trade. Panelists were Ed Dodson, HGS alumnus and Economic Professor Dr. Marcelo Puello, Richard Noyes, New York HGS teacher Nibaldo Aguilera, and Cayman Islands attorney Ian Lambert. The event was attended by some two hundred people, and simultaneous translations were provided by Santo Domingo HGS associates Ligia Pereyra and Fifi Dominguez.

Pedro Bretón, Marcelo Puello

After the Central Bank came the most notable event of the conference, which was covered, with photos, in the daily newspapers *Listin Diario* and *El Siglo*. A Georgist delegation met with President Joaquín Balaguer. The meeting was not lengthy or detailed, but it was fruitful. President Balaguer received the group warmly, and expressed great appreciation for the work the Henry George School has done over the years. According to *El Siglo*, Balaguer "repeated his admiration for [Lucy Silfa] and recognized her perseverance and skilled work." Balaguer also "showed his support for the application of the Georgist doctrine concerning land and its economic rent."

On the presidential steps

Conference Extends Georgist Family

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Toastmaster's "Table Topics". Six volunteers were each given a different question and two minutes to respond without having prepared ahead of time. Like any extended family, opinions varied, and so did reactions from the listeners.

Ben Sevack

Ben Sevack, Canadian family member from Montreal, Quebec, followed with a slide presentation of a trip he took with fellow Georgists to Russia and Estonia. Several of the familiar faces in the slides were also in the audience that night - including a new family member, Russian filmmaker and Tolstoyan, Radi Kushnerovich. Ad hoc humor was provided by John Burger of Minnesota while Ben and several others busied themselves adjusting and readjusting the screen and projector. Yet underlying even this informal meeting of our extended family was the shared mission of spreading ideas of economic liberation - in this case, to Eastern Europe.

Radi Kushnerovich

A Dominican-style barbecue on Friday evening at the Arryo Hondo Social Club was clearly and simply for the fun of being together. If the themes of taxation, monopoly, and poverty were discussed, they were discussed over picnic tables loaded with good food and drink. And the more-than-loaded schoolbus that took us to and from the barbecue brought us, needless to say, even closer together.

At Arroyo Hondo

Then there was the family business: the annual meeting of the Council of Georgist Organizations. The main function of the Council is to foster this "family spirit" of cooperation among the various Georgist groups, principally via annual conferences. It is the umbrella for Georgist organizations in North America, with ties to the Georgist Council of Australia, its "sister umbrella."

Scott & Sue Walton

Chairman Richard Noyes of New Hampshire guided a packed agenda to completion in an hour and a half before lunch on Saturday. Reports were heard from Secretary-Treasurer Mark Sullivan, conference host Lucy Silfa, conference co-ordinators Sue and Scott Walton, 1993 conference host Marion Sapiro of the Los Angeles area, 1994 conference representative Dian Arnold of the Fairhope (Alabama) Single Tax Corporation, Council advisor Bob Clancy of New York, Council affiliate Ian Lambert from Grand Cayman, and Hanno Beck from the Maryland office of Common Ground USA. Marion Sapiro was elected a Council advisor for the coming year. The feeling in the room was of a group of people genuinely interested in being of service to one another, sharing what they knew and making valuable suggestions. One person remarked afterwards to HGS Director George Collins that the