

HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

Volume 49, Number 2

February 1985

NEW YORK CITY GEORGISTS STIR ACTION ON LOCAL FRONT

Georgists and incentive taxers from the New York City area have seized the opportunity provided by the statewide study of land value taxation currently in progress and worked dilligently in recent weeks to focus the attention of city officials on LVT.

The first thrust of this effort was a simple ceremony held at the New York School's graduation exercise. Assemblyman Daniel Feldman presented the pen used by Governor Mario Cuomo in signing the study bill to Nan Braman and Felice Gruskin. Feldman was the bill's chief sponsor in the Assembly.

"In a way you could call this presentation a memorial to Phil Finkelstein," Feldman said, recalling the late director. "I only wish he could be here tonight to witness what I hope will be only the first of our legislative successes."

Trustee Bill Davidson organized a luncheon for city officials several days later. On hand were Commissioner William K. Block of the Finance Department, David Goldstein, the chief assessor, Councilman Stanley Michels, and representatives from the offices of Deputy Mayor Kenneth Lipper, Council President Carol Bellamy and several other local officials.

The luncheon was preceded by a viewing of the new documentary, "A Tale of Five Cities -- Tax Revolt, Pennsylvania Style." The animated discussion which followed included this backhanded compliment from Commissioner Block:

"I know what this tax is supposed to do, but the city doesn't want it. We don't have the infrastructure to handle such development."

Representing the Georgist point of view were Davidson, Lowell Harriss of the Academy of Political Science, Dr. Oscar Johannsen and Michael Gavaghan of the school, and Richard Barbuto and Felice Gruskin.

A third project designed to focus attention on LVT in the city is the February 10th program sponsored by the Graduate Research Committee. "Progress Without Poverty for the People of Harlem" will probe a proposal for the city to undertake a study of LVT which would include the famed uptown community.

The program will begin that Sunday afternoon with a 1 PM bus tour of Harlem, led by Dr. Rita Webb Smith, a community organizer and outspoken Georgist. The bus will depart from the school (5 East 44th Street) and reservations are necessary. Call Elizabeth Reeves at 697-9880 to reserve space.

The probe itself will take place at the Harlem State Office Building at 7th Avenue and 125th Street, beginning at 2 PM. George Collins, director of the Philadelphia HGS, will moderate a panel of non-Georgist experts on banking, real estate development, community organizing, zoning, urban planning and taxation and assessment. The program will include several audio-visual presentations and will conclude at 5 PM.