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HGS Celebrates Earth Day

"Economics of Peace: An Earth Day Conference", held at the Henry George School in New York, was attended by over seventy, according to Mark Sullivan, Secretary of the Council of Georgist Organizations.

The Council worked in cooperation with Mildred Loomis of the School of Living in planning the agenda. Georgist groups such as the School, Henry George Institute, Henry George Foundation, Land and Liberty, and Incentive Tax League provided speakers and resources. Outside groups with common interests such as Students for a Libertarian Society, New World Alliance, People's Assembly and the Earth Society Foundation were invited and participated as well.

Highlights of the morning's activities included Mark Brady of S.L.S. on American intervention in other countries, Mildred Loomis on war atrocities and Jack Schwartzman on militarism. There was general agreement that violence, whether by individuals or by governments, was no solution to social conflicts.

The Law of the Sea was a primary topic in the afternoon schedule. U.N. Ambassador Arvid Pardo of Malta gave a capsule summary of international law relative to the oceans. Only 40% of the earth's oceans remained unclaimed by national governments, a major change from when 97% of these bodies were considered "high seas", free of national jurisdictions. The draft treaty is an attempt to place these unclaimed ocean resources, especially the mineral-rich sea beds, under international supervision. The treaty is currently in danger of being scrapped, due to the Regan administration's move to reconsider the progress made so far.

Continued on page 5

Conference Set For N.H. July 1981

The 1981 Georgist Conference, to be held on the campus of Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire, is scheduled to begin Thursday, July 9 and run through Sunday, July 12, according to Robert Clancy and Mark Sullivan of the Council of Georgist Organizations, who are coordinating activities for this event.

The small, private college is located on a lakefront with a spectacular mountain view. Many recreational activities are available including swimming, tennis and hiking. The site is accessible by bus from Boston's Logan Airport or by Vermont Transit Lines. A package deal that would include conference fee, accommodations in the dormitories and meals is now being arranged.

REPORT FROM FAIRHOPE

FAIRHOPE, Alabama--Here on the subtropical shore of Mobile Bay this early spring the blossoming of the white dogwood for the annual Arts and Crafts Weekend is regarded as timely as the principles of Henry George on which the community is founded. From Henry George Park, overlooking the beautiful beach, pier and promenade given to the city by the Single Tax Corporation, to the compact little downtown (uptown to Fairhope residents), land and the collection of its economic rent are major current subjects of concern, discussion and even passionate debate as they are nowhere else in the country.

Continued on page 7

Ideas are important to the community not only because of its founding in 1894 as a single tax experiment by Georgists from Iowa but because of the future of the 1,200 leaseholders of the Corporation and the several thousand residents of the city that grew up around the "single tax colony" may turn on how they are now to be interpreted and applied. The Corporation collects a reported \$300,000 annual approximate land rent on its some 4,000 acres, out of which it pays all taxes to the city, county and all other local levies. While some lessees complain that their rents are too high and a few even refuse to pay at all, there is general recognition that the annual charges are something of a bargain, even in a state with one of the lowest property tax rates in the country. In fact, the low and most unchanging rents are part of the issue since the land itself has zoomed in value--perhaps to 100 times the current rent--as Fairhope grows in desirability as a community.

While there are some who like to debate the "single tax" as an abstraction, there is hardly anyone in Fairhope who professes to be against the idea as such. Even the so-called "dissident" lessees who are attacking the Corporation have abandoned the clause in their own declaration of incorporation that sought to "demonstrate the unbeneficial nature, non-utility and impracticability of the single tax theory". Now the debate is not over whether the principle works in practice but over how assiduously it should be implemented. The Single Tax Advocates want to teach and promulgate the ideas of Henry George and urge the Corporation to carry out the provisions of leasehold spelled out in the Constitution. The advocates want Fairhope known not just as a nice town in the area but as a successful demonstration of a Georgist community.

They feel the days of experimental colony are long past and it is time for the rest of the world to sit up and take notice, maybe learning something and maybe pushing Fairhope to be the model originally intended. The Corporation, suspect by almost all because of its less than fully public disclosure of its activities, expresses greater caution. Aware of the routine violation of its constitution by some leaseholders who sublease their properties for higher rents than they pay, of chronic non-payers, absentee holders, improper users and outright speculators, officers and a few leading members talk of a "crackdown" and a stronger effort than in the past to have the community live by its own rules. Hope tinged with skepticism is the general reaction to these recent protestations. The attempt of the Corporation to dissolve itself a couple of years ago, legally thwarted by a group of non-member lessees with the outcries of outraged Georgists from around the country, continues to fuel the doubts about its basic motives. The distrust extends to the former head of the Corporation, reportedly the wealthiest citizen of Fairhope and widely believed to control the affairs of the Corporation, a control he personally disavows.

A further and sometimes ominous awareness, that the stakes have become too large to allow any one group to dominate or to try to cash in on the bonanza. A lucrative lease for oil rights on Single Tax property--there has been no exploration yet--has drawn heightened interest both from within and outside the community.

Is farming still viable so close to town? How do you compete with the highway shopping center? Should growth be encouraged, contained, channeled? These and many other questions faced by communities all over are being asked in Fairhope. It is a measure of the success of the community as it nears a century of survival that the answers it seeks are still, in part, in terms of the basic ideas of Henry George which brought its founders here.