

## Letter-Writing Boom on Land Value Taxation—Why Not?

by Georgina Millar

The New York Times recently ran a front-page story titled "Property Tax Reform Enthusiasm Lags." In the second paragraph, the author tells us "there is widespread agreement on the problem — the property tax is an unfair, burdensome, and inadequate way to finance education and basic government expenditures."

After this, the story concentrates on dissatisfaction with alternatives to the property tax; first and foremost is fear that when revenue is no longer raised locally, government decisions can no longer be made locally. New York State's Fleishmann Commission and Board of Regents, for example, have already recommended a much larger state role in financing education. Both groups would freeze expenditures per pupil at a certain high level and forbid districts spending at that level to increase property taxes and expenditures until other districts catch up. Moreover, under present state law, cities except the six largest cannot raise their school taxes more than 2% of property values averaged over the past five years.

In response to this, representatives of 40 of New York's 56 school districts met to form a Small Cities Coalition for Education. Although there are now eight districts in New York which have reached the constitutional tax limit, the Coalition recommended seeking authority to raise property taxes "even higher in the belief that basic reform is so far off that the cities cannot afford to wait for it."

According to one spokesman, "Real reform is going to come only when the property-tax burden is so great that there is a real revolution." This educator thinks

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## Spring Semester Focusses on George

The spring semester at the School will concentrate on the works of Henry George. **Reform for Our Time**, which has been presented for three semesters, is the core course; it is based on the text prepared especially for this course. **Reform for Our Time** will be taught four nights a week for ten weeks, with the Wednesday session a special section directed toward architects, investors, developers, and underwriters. Architect and city planner Dean Meredith will teach this class.

The book *Reform for Our Time* contains ten chapters, corresponding to the ten sessions of the course. According to the Preface, "This little book is an attempt to offer some of George's insights and recommendations in the idiom of the late 20th century."

Chapter 1 deals with urban America, describing the causes of urban blight and showing that the plight of the poor derives from faults in the system rather than in the individual. Chapter 2 declares the source of land value and cites George on the remedy for the injustices of private property in land.

Chapter 3 reproduces a long passage from *Progress and Poverty* — "the story of the savannah," and applies George's statement of the law of rent to a modern industrial example. Chapter 4 outlines the land question, and is followed by demonstration of the universal validity of the argument through historical examples. Chapter 6 details the American land problem, and Chapter 7 is an exposition of the theory of land value taxation. The example of Southfield, Mich., is repeated, and supply-demand analysis used for the case of land taxation. Chapter 8 discusses the case for land value taxation from all sides, bringing up the problems of zoning, planning, and sufficiency of revenue.

Chapter 9 describes the most important theories of the business cycle, pointing out the contribution of land speculation to the cycle. Chapter 10 discusses the ethical and political meanings of land value taxation. The book also contains five appendices, which explain terminology, Say's Law, Ricardo's theory of rent, assessment practices, and fractional reserve banking; a long "note" contains a biography of George.

In the classroom, *Reform for Our Time* provides the basis for discussion of current social and economic problems that students may not have perceived as land-based. *Progress and Poverty*, on the other hand, is used in the course of same name, taught again by Dr. Harry Fornari. Dr. Fornari points out the gap between social and technological progress, and will lead his "colloquium" in discussions of ethical and political trends.

**Investing in Securities**, presented by Richard Friedlander, and **Small Business Management**, by Renato Bellu, are designed along the same lines as in past semesters. These courses are \$25 each, while **Reform for Our Time** and **Progress and Poverty** have no tuition, but a registration fee of \$10 allows students to take as many courses as they wish.

### Spring Calendar

Reform for Our Time	Mon., Feb. 5
	Tues., Feb. 6
	Wed., Feb. 7
	Thurs., Feb. 8
Progress and Poverty	Thurs., Feb. 8
Investing in Securities	Mon., Feb. 5
Small Business Management	Tues., Feb. 6