

## *Echoes' from Philadelphia and St. Louis*

At a Henry George School graduation dinner in Philadelphia on December 11th celebrating that extension's thirtieth anniversary, Dr. Robert H. Coates of Philadelphia spoke, also Professor Steven B. Cord, Julian Hickok, founder of the extension spoke briefly, and Robert Clancy, New York director, gave a short history of the school.

Robert H. Coates, Director of Adult Education of the Philadelphia School District and President-elect of the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., congratulated the members of the graduating class and saluted Henry George as "a living presence among us," occupying a special place of honor in the hall of fame of adult education.

Though his formal schooling stopped before he was fourteen, George took advantage of every possible educational opportunity both in Philadelphia and San Francisco. He became one of the best-educated men of his time and is "an inspiration to us who look upon learning as a life-long activity."

He was not only a great student, but a great teacher — "among the best communicators of all times," celebrated for his clarity of expression which "speaks directly to us, today." He had great compassion for his fellow men and both wrote and spoke with imagination and passionate feeling, appealing always to reason. He was an affable person with a sense of humor and a warm, gentle personality.

The speaker estimated Henry George's influence as vast and far-reaching, over several continents, continuing into our present day. "Over two million copies of his books have been sold, and on the dusty plains of Kansas, in the slums of Liverpool, on the banks of the Ganges, poor men painfully spell out George's new vision of human society," said the adult educator. "What hope it holds for the future of the world and for the dignity of man!"

St. Louis held its annual homecoming dinner and graduation on December 7th, pleasantly enriched by a visit from Dr. and Mrs. Harry Gunnison Brown, both of whom were called on to speak. Dr. Brown is the author and professor remembered and respected by thousands of students who moved through the University of Missouri at Columbia during the 35 years he taught economics there. Now in a busy retirement life, he and Mrs. Brown are living in their own home in Columbia, Missouri, after several years doing research and lecturing with members of the Henry George Foundation in Pennsylvania.

Dr. Brown, pointing out the growing interest in the principles of land value taxation, said, "the American way of dealing with housing and 're-development' by federal subsidization, actually increases the tax burden on owners of real estate as well as on labor. The local real estate taxes are indeed not increased. But unless there is perpetual deficit financing, federal taxes — among which the income tax is certainly a principal source of revenue — must inevitably be higher; and a very considerable part of the income taxed is income from real estate. This is indeed a terrifically expensive pork barrel type of legislation."

Stating that the federal government in effect bribes the local governments to flout sane principles of capitalistic incentive, he continued, "the very purchase of land with money raised by taxation, tends to make land still more expensive than even the individual holding of millions of building lots speculatively vacant makes it! For this amounts to compulsory buying. Citizens who would not voluntarily spend their money to purchase land are compelled, via taxation, to provide the federal government with the money to buy it. Hence the demand for land is greater and its price is higher."

It was observed that local real estate tax policies punish with higher taxes any owner of slum property who tries to make his tenements less slum-like, and rewards him by reducing his taxes if he allows his slum buildings to become less habitable.

Dr. Brown in a final warning, said "unless any future federal subsidization of housing and of slum clearance is made conditional on the adoption of a local real estate tax policy that does not keep the cost of housing high and does not breed slums, such subsidiza-

tion will continue to be looked for in the future, always and forever at the expense of federal taxpayers."

"It's St. Louis in '66," says director Loral D. Swofford — the dates are July 20-24 for the Annual Conference of the Henry George School, and they've started swinging down there on the banks of Old Man River. If you're a Georgist camp follower you've visited the East Coast and the West Coast — make this your year for a midsummer, midcontinent festival in St. Looney...



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principle more closely than does the income tax, contrary to popular opinion! The ordinary salaried man can hardly expect to avoid his full income tax burden — but many loopholes, legal and otherwise, are available to the rich man. For instance it is possible to have an annual income in the millions of dollars and not pay a cent in income tax if your income is derived from tax-free municipal bonds; and that is only the most rudimentary of the legal loopholes.

My point, then, is this: not only can we say that "ability to pay" has no standing as a moral principle, but as a matter of expediency, our tax follows that principle more closely than any other tax in force today. And we should be glad of this, too, because the land value tax would be highly impractical if it tried to tax where the money wasn't.

2) Our critics think that landowners will suffer if land value taxation is instituted. We shouldn't be on the defensive here, either, for most landowners derive the greater part of their income from wages and interest rather than from land rent. Un-tax the greater

part of their income and they are sure to benefit. Experience in Australia and New Zealand, and surveys in the United States, show that the great majority of homeowners would pay less under LVT than under the present real estate tax, and the same would be true for apartment house owners, office building owners and most factory owners. Empty-lot owners, slum owners and most store building owners would pay higher taxes, unless they improved their properties. But they would not have to incur these heavier taxes and certainly they should appreciate the advantage of living in a rationally-taxed society.

As landowners *per se*, they would of course find their taxes increased, but few people are landowners *per se*. Their financial interests lie elsewhere. Most landowning people will benefit, both individually and socially, from LVT. *And because we can promise most voters that the introduction of LVT will mean immediate tax reductions for them, our program is politically feasible, if we can ever get the bandwagon rolling.*

**In articles to follow Professor Cord will explore further debatable aspects of Georgism.**