

# HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

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## SPECIAL EDITION:

### ANNUAL GEORGIST CONFERENCE

The 1985 Annual Georgist Conference of North America was held July 17th - July 21st on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

The site was appropriate on several counts:

- having met in Goleta, California in 1983 and Pawling, New York in 1984, a midwestern location was "due";

- Missouri has been coming closer by the legislative session to adopting legislation supporting a land value tax referendum;

- this is a Mark Twain anniversary year (150th of his birth, 100th of his masterpiece, Huckleberry Finn, and 75th of his death). According to several scholars, Twain was supportive of George's theories.

More than 80 Georgists attended the conference, which was longer and, in the opinion of many participants, more productive than any in recent years.

### "HENRY GEORGE WEEK IN ST. LOUIS"

The conference got underway with an official presentation designating the week of July 15 - 21 "Henry George Week" in St. Louis. George Collins (Henry George School of Philadelphia) chaired the first session, which consisted of progress reports from Georgist organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada. His keynote address derided the defeatist attitude which dogs much of the movement and, through the use of recent press accounts of Georgist accomplishments, refuted the notion that "nothing much is going on." The subsequent reports provided additional evidence.

### STRATEGIES & QUESTIONS

Thursday consisted of a series of presentations which probed avenues of advance for Georgist activists. Taken together, they amounted to a marathon strategy session. Taken separately, they pointed out the extraordinary diversity of thought within the movement.

Colin Bonner (Prosperity Action Committee of Canada) spoke on the "Power of Public Opinion", pointing out that opinion polls show that people are far more concerned with unemployment than tax reform, and arguing that a sensible Georgist approach ought to emphasize that concern.

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#### STRATEGIES & QUESTIONS (Cont.)

Jeff Smith (Basic Economic Education) discussed "Geo-ists and Other Earth Groups", advocating Georgist outreach to environmental organizations and the international Green Movement. He also related his recent experiences in Nicaragua and suggested the formation of a Georgist delegation to visit that nation.

Steve Cord (Center for the Study of Economics and most other Georgist organizations) delivered what was advertised as an economics quiz, but what was actually a demonstration of the various approaches Georgists can take to convince public officials to try LVT.

Bob Clancy (Council of Georgist Organizations) moderated a discussion on planning a response to President Reagan's tax reform proposal.

John Burger (state representative from Minnesota) offered a list of Do's and Don't's for Georgists in the public arena.

Stan Rubenstein (NY Henry George School) presented a TV program from the new series "Issues and Alternatives", produced by the Henry George School and based on George's books *Social Problems* and *Protection or Free Trade*.

Lancaster M. Greene (Schalkenbach Foundation) proposed that Georgists make use of Fred Harrison's book *The Power in the Land* in seeking to explain the business cycle to professionals.

Ed Dodson (NY and Philadelphia HGS) reported that Common Ground, the new activist membership organization, got off the ground during pre-conference meetings and urged Georgists to join.

#### ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Thursday night was devoted to presentations marked by the depth of their analysis and insight -- they were intellectually challenging and forced conference participants to focus on basic questions of Georgist thought.

Clay Berling (Henry George School of Northern California) spoke on "Self-Interest as the Programmer". He argued that people always do what's best for themselves and their families, and that the challenge for Georgists is to convince people that a) the long-run is more important than short-term benefits, and b) Georgism is in their own best long-term interest.