

Henry George

NEWSLETTER

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PHILIP FINKELSTEIN 1931-1982

Philip Finkelstein, Director of the Henry George School of Social Science and the Center for Local Tax Research in New York City, died Saturday, November 20, of a heart attack at his home in Valley Stream, Long Island. He was 51 years old.

Finkelstein was born in Brooklyn and graduated from Yeshiva University. He studied at Hebrew University and worked as a newspaperman on the Jerusalem Post in Israel, and as a U.S. Army public information specialist in Europe. He returned to the U.S. to work for the Jersey Journal in Jersey City and the New York Journal-American. He received a degree from N.Y.U. Law School in 1961, and after practicing law for a year, became director of public information and research for the Liberal Party, a post he held until his appointment as executive assistant to Timothy Costello, a deputy to New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay. He was named Deputy City Administrator in 1968 and served until 1973. Finkelstein then taught at Brooklyn College and at Adelphi University, and in 1976, joined the Graduate School of Social Work there, where he remained until his death.

In 1975, he founded the Center for Local Tax Research and produced the first of a series of publications, "Effective Real Property Tax Rates in the Metropolitan Area of New York." He also produced a book, published by Praeger, "Real Property Taxation in New York City," which came out of a four-year study that called for reforms in the city's property tax assessment system.

In 1977 he was appointed Director of the Henry George School and appeared before civic, legislative and citizen's groups, was interviewed on television and radio, wrote for the New York Times, Newsday and other publications, taught courses and held seminars on Henry George and land value taxation during his five-year tenure. He was responsible for organizing many conferences, from a five-day meeting with officials from the Dominican Republic in Santo Domingo to a recent one-day seminar with Pennsylvania legislators in Valley Forge, PA.

He is survived by his wife Claire, his children, Elyssa, Jeffrey and Hope, and a sister, Mrs. Pearl Klein of Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Funeral services were held on Monday, November 22, at the I.G. Morris Home in Hempstead, N.Y., and he was buried at the Wellwood Cemetery in Farmingdale, N.Y.

RUBENSTEIN NAMED INTERIM DIRECTOR OF H.G.S. IN NEW YORK

Stanley Rubenstein, Director of the Long Island school, will serve as Interim Director of the Henry George School in New York, according to Paul S. Nix, Jr., President of the Board of Trustees. A Search Committee has been formed and all suggestions can be forwarded to Nix at the School.

IN MEMORY OF PHILIP FINKELSTEIN

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We would like to thank all those who have expressed their condolences to trustees, staff and friends of the Henry George School in New York on the occasion of Philip Finkelstein's death. It has been comforting to us to know that Phil was respected and admired by a large group in the metropolitan area, across the country and overseas.

Phil Finkelstein was a dynamic presence whose energy, intellectual capacity, self-expression and future-oriented thinking enabled him to be at ease in many disciplines. Whether he was addressing a group, teaching a class, writing an article or debating an issue, he always gave his audience something substantive to ponder.

As editor of the Henry George Newsletter, he sought to provide subscribers with current, relevant and interesting news, articles, and features on the Henry George Schools and other affiliated organizations. His editorials covered a wide range of subjects, from Social Security to world hunger to current property tax legislation. Under his guidance, the Newsletter reached a diverse group of people, nationally and internationally, on a monthly basis.

Rather than tread lightly into our ever-changing world, Phil fully immersed himself in the tasks at hand, radiating an aura of optimism throughout the school. Fearless of the future, he had visions for the School and the movement that enabled us to move to plateaus unthought of several years ago. It was this reaching, extending ourselves and making us aware of our potential, that is Phil's legacy. The unreachable became reachable, the impossible became possible.

We are reminded of a comment by Goethe concerning teachers:

"A teacher who can arouse a feeling for one single good action, for one single good poem, accomplishes more than he who fills our memory with rows on rows of natural objects, classified with name and form."

Phil aroused such feelings. He will be missed by all those who worked with him, argued with him, supported his ideas, listened to his dreams and shared in his belief that a better system, with justice, fairness and liberty for all, can be attained.

Stan Rubenstein and Louise R. Pulini

SCHOOL NOTES

NEW YORK

The Winter, 1983 Semester will begin January 25 at the Henry George School in New York. All classes will run from 5:30 to 7:30 PM one night a week for ten weeks. There will be three sections of the basic course, Fundamental Economics; Tuesdays with David Redman, Wednesdays, with Dr. Jules Zimmerman and Thursdays with Len Mednick. Redman will also teach an advanced course, Science of Political Economy, on Wednesdays, and a new member of the faculty, Barry Smith, will teach an advanced course, Contemporary Problems, on Thursdays. Oscar Johannsen once again teaches his Money and Banking course on Tuesdays. All classes are free and open to the public.

LONG ISLAND

October and November are budget months on Long Island for all townships and cities, as all local governing bodies increased taxes. Demonstrating how a land value tax could be used to defray additional governmental costs, Stan Rubenstein spoke before three budget hearings; Town of Oyster Bay, Town of Hempstead and Town of Huntington. All councilmen and supervisors were subsequently sent copies of position papers Rubenstein has prepared on the property tax, with two supervisors and two councilmen expressing interest in continuing the dialogue.

An excerpt from a letter Rubenstein sent to WPIX-TV, Channel 11 in New York, responding to a recent on-air editorial on unemployment, was used in a feedback segment aired the first week of December.

PHILADELPHIA

Five people from the Philadelphia school, Lu Cippolini, Jo and Debbie Jasner, Ed Dodson and Jack Himmelstein, staffed a booth at the Super Sunday event on October 10. A copy of Progress and Poverty was raffled, fifty-five people placed their names on the school's mailing list and many more took an economics quiz.

Frank E. Nelson of Newark, DE began an extension course in Fundamental Economics at Ovalton Middle School in Newark on October 14.

BOSTON

On November 23, Director Mitch Chanelis was a featured speaker at the Land Use Taxation Conference, co-sponsored by the Incentive Tax League and the Pittsfield, MA Planning Board. The audience included planners, assessors, real-estate developers, Pittsfield's Conservation Commissioner and the President of the Central Berkshire Chamber of Commerce.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Two classes are currently meeting in the Bay Area; a Fundamental Economics class being taught by Mike Trigg, and an advanced class, Economics for Activism, in which the students are developing their action projects, which include Media Outreach, Hunger Project, and Column Writing. In Sacramento, four students completed the basic course, and Leonard Nitz was named new President of the Board.

C.G.O. PUBLISHES PAMPHLET LISTING ORGANIZATIONS

Robert Clancy and Mark Sullivan of the Council of Georgist Organizations are co-authors of a thirteen-page pamphlet, "An Introduction to the Georgist Philosophy and Movement." The pamphlet contains two sections, one on Georgist philosophy and one listing more than thirty organizations associated with Henry George and his ideas. The pamphlet costs twenty-five cents and is available by writing to Clancy and Sullivan at the C.G.O. office in New York.

WHAT IS A GEORGIST? by Philip Finkelstein

In August, 1981, William C. Lucey of Fairhope, Alabama asked a group of people in the movement to answer the question, "What Is A Georgist?" Philip Finkelstein's response appears below in its entirety.

"What is a Georgist? One who follows the teachings of Henry George which are basically: 1) All humans should be free to pursue their own needs and enjoy the full products of their labors and 2) everyone must have equal access to the natural resources of the earth."

"It is this balanced commitment to both liberty and justice that distinguished Henry George from the unbridled monopolist of private enterprise and the socialist monopoly of government. A Georgist believes that the economic rent of natural resources, including the value of land, be collected and used for social benefit and not private gain. This would provide the revenue needed for public improvements. By freeing productive labor and capital from taxation and breaking the monopoly of natural resources, more people would produce more and distribute more wealth more equitably throughout society. Some Georgists are adherents of the single tax, believing that only the tax on land should be levied and no others at any level of government. Others support varying degrees of taxation of land values, particularly at the local level, to provide community services. Still others oppose all forms of taxation and would refer only to rent of land, or ground rent, as a legitimate payment for the use of a specific location. Some Georgists are most concerned about the monopoly role of governments which exercise authority over much of the resources of the earth. Others are most concerned with the exclusive access enjoyed by wealthy corporations and individuals which then can dictate the other factors of production. But all Georgists basically believe we should own everything that is ours, that is made by man, and that we must share all of our natural heritage."

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