

HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

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EARTH DAY CELEBRATED AT HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL IN NEW YORK

Over forty people attended the third annual Earth Day Conference held at the Henry George School in New York on March 19. Speakers addressed the theme, "World Trade and the Economics of War and Peace," during the all-day session.

Don Hurford introduced a videotape of Dr. Helen Caldicott, who spoke on the realities of the arms race, emphasizing the "historic uniqueness" of the late twentieth century, a comment which sparked vigorous discussion and debate during the morning session.

Mark Sullivan, Secretary of the Council of Georgist Organizations, one of the event's sponsors, noted that "...The broader relevance of Georgism to the theme of world peace and international cooperation and development was brought home, particularly in the afternoon session, by Scott Suma of Global Education Associates, who felt that as Georgists, we have a real contribution to make to the efforts toward peace and cooperation, and that our message and ideas should be put into this arena."

HENRY GEORGE BIRTHPLACE RECEIVES STATE LANDMARK STATUS

The Pennsylvania Bureau of Historic Preservation National Register Review Commission has approved the application of the Henry George School in Philadelphia, also the birthplace of Henry George, to receive state landmark status. The application was forwarded to Washington and national status is still pending.

An interesting finding was reported by Commission researchers during the application process. The Commission needed to determine the uniqueness of George's birthplace, so that no other building of suitable relevance to George's life or work may supercede the birthplace. During this period, a researcher in Sullivan County, N.Y. found a deed issued to Henry George in 1891 for a lot in Merriewold, N.Y., on which a summer cottage was built. Although none of the "Georgist historians" who prepared the original application knew of the house, it does not stand to negatively affect the Commission's decision to give national landmark status. A update on this story will appear in the next Newsletter.

STAN RUBENSTEIN APPOINTED HEADQUARTERS DIRECTOR

At the April meeting of the Board of Trustees, Stan Rubenstein was appointed Director of the Henry George School in New York. Rubenstein has been serving as Interim Director since December, 1982 and is retiring from the teaching profession in June, after more than twenty years of teaching high school Social Studies on Long Island.

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THE FARMERS DILEMMA

Amidst the Great Depression of the 1930's, farmers, as well as other workers, were suffering the ravages of an unchecked economy. Knowing little about the causes of business cycles, government charged full speed ahead in dealing with the effects. Since prices were depressed and supply was plentiful, Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act. To curtail production, farmers were given cash subsidies in order to withdraw land from production, and parity was instituted to keep prices from falling below a certain minimum.

Fifty years after the passage of this Act, the gnawing problems of excessive supply, according to the conventional wisdom, and depressed prices, refuse to fade away. Decades of meddling with the agricultural economy have not alleviated the problem and, in some respects, have only caused it to become more aggravated. How, then, are we currently dealing with these inherited problems?

In 1982, farmers reported huge inventories in many of the major crops, causing prices to be depressed. In order for prices to sufficiently rise to standard market levels, it is necessary to reduce supply or production. To facilitate the rise, the Agricultural Department has requested farmers to agree to withdraw land from production in exchange for a payment-in-kind. This program will give free surplus quantities of some of the major crops to the farmers for keeping land idle. These crops are part of the tremendous surplus that is in government-stored warehouses, as a result of keeping prices up in the past.

In terms of acreage, over eighty million acres will be withdrawn. For the average suburbanite to realize the impact of idle land, it would be equivalent to every man, woman and child in this country owning land that is twice the size for the average home. In other words, over 86% of the land normally used for planting will be idle.

Recognizing that farmers are suffering from the effects of the latest recession, as well as others, it is well to take stock of the merits of fifty years of agricultural governmental policy. It is an economic contradiction for a nation to seek inflation control through its policies, and yet encourage higher prices. In a world where hundreds of millions of people are on the verge of starvation, curtailing production borders on economic insanity. More, not less production, is desirable. Land value taxation, properly administered, puts land to its best possible usage, favoring no sector, but favorable to all.

FIRST FOREIGN TRADE SEMINAR FOCUSES ON DENMARK

The first of a series of foreign trade seminars was held on Tuesday, April 19 at the Henry George School in New York. A representative from the Foreign Ministry Council of Denmark, Lars Benkert, spoke before a group of over forty people, on the current economic situation in his country. He also outlined the international trade scene and Denmark's trade relations with the United States. According to fact sheets supplied by Benkert, the Single-Tax Party is still active in Denmark, with 1.4% of the population voting for the ticket in the 1981 general elections.

The remaining schedule for the seminar series, which is free and open to the public, is as follows:

April 26	Mr. Hagestadt, British Trade Dev. Office
May 3	Mr. Moriga, Consulate Gen. Office of Japan
May 10	Mr. Biu, Consulate of Nigeria
May 17	Dr. Hans Joachim Dunken, Consulate General's Office, Fed. Republic of Germany
May 24	Mr. Som, Consulate of India
May 31	Dr. Aidan Kirwan, Consulate of Ireland

1983 ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN GOLETA, CA IN JULY

"Social Problems Today: Commemorating the Centenary of Henry George's Social Problems," is the theme of the 1983 Annual Conference of Georgist Organizations, to be held July 12-17 in Goleta, California. The event is being cosponsored by the Henry George Schools of Northern and Southern California and the Council of Georgist Organizations. The program will examine the issues of tax, land and government reform, underscoring their significance both one hundred years ago and their current importance in economics.

The conference begins on a Tuesday evening and runs until Sunday afternoon, a departure from the events of the past, which are normally structured around a weekend. Concurrent workshops and meetings for extension directors and officials from affiliated organizations will be held on the first two full days, featuring model briefings, hands-on audio-visual workshops, leadership skills seminars, and discussions on various teaching methods and formats.

Panels on the aftermath of Proposition 13, Democracy vs. Socialism in Russia, Human Rights and Freedom and Towards a Good Society will round out the other day's activities. At the banquet, scheduled for Saturday, July 16, Walter Rybeck will speak on Churches and the Land Question and Mason Gaffney will give an economist's view of Social Problems.

The Francisco Torres Conference Center, the site for the conference, is located not far from the beaches of Santa Barbara, with a full range of activities available. A package including accommodations and meals will be available to all participants. For further information, contact the C.G.O. offices in New York.

SAN FRANCISCO H.G.S. PUBLISHES "ECONOMICS FOR A PEACEFUL PLANET" BROCHURE

The Henry George School in San Francisco has released a brochure of a keynote speech prepared by Director Robert Scrofani entitled "Economics for a Peaceful Planet," originally delivered in June, 1982 at Westminster, CA. The brochure was used at Earth Day events in S.F. and other areas. Excerpts of the speech are reprinted below:

"Peace is that human condition of trust between men, that human capability to share the earth's bounty, that human desire to cooperate for the common good. Peace permits man to enjoy his brief existence on this planet."

"We know from reading Henry George that human reach their greatest potential when numbers of people come together in cooperation. If peace is that special condition within which man can grow and prosper, a close examination of economics and its role in achieving this condition is essential."

"'Economics' comes from the Greek word 'eco,' for house; 'ecology' means the study of the home, or environment; and 'economy' means the management of the house. Our house is this planet."

"In a well-managed house:

--no one kills another.

--there is trust.

--everyone eats.

--everyone who can work and wants to work can find it.

--land is accessible for life, with labor at decent wages and capital at a decent return.

--the productive members of society are allowed to produce."

"But this house of ours is not a well-managed house:

--millions go hungry.

--vital forests are stripped for firewood or for ecologically disastrous development schemes.

--the poor are flocking to cities where there are no jobs."

"To solve these problems, some say we must take from the rich and give to the poor nations. Others espouse family planning programs to cut down on population growth. Still others argue that we must feed the hungry from our bounty."

"In order to have a well managed house, we must have priorities. First, and foremost, we should recognize that we are all land animals and without land we cannot exist. As Henry George said:

"If you realize what land is, think of what men would be without land. If there were no land, where would be the people? Land is not merely a place to graze cows or sheep upon, to raise corn or raise cabbage. It is the indispensable element necessary to the life of every human being. We are all land animals, our very bodies come from the land and to the land then return again."

"Therefore we must focus on the key problem of mismanagement of land tenure. To achieve economic equality, we cannot divide the resources of the earth equally among the billions who will be here in the twenty-first century and beyond. But we can divide up the wealth of the land more equitably. Significant studies have shown that improvements in social and economic conditions can reduce much of the pressures on the land."

"If we retain the paradigm that land tenure systems must gratify ownership without productive effort, then our hopes for the future will be dashed on the record of the past. Inequitable land tenure systems allow the monopoly of nature's resources and deny labor access to the land. From poverty and the accelerated population growth we see in all undeveloped countries, a cease-fire on the economic front, like a cease-fire on the political front, is the first step in the cooperative effort for peace and justice. Let us take the first step, for without economic justice, we cannot have peace. Without access to land, we cannot have economic justice."

SCHOOL NOTES

NEW YORK

A religious network for Georgists is being established at the N.Y. school. A letter inviting Georgists to join the network is being sent nationwide, and respondents will be placed on a master mailing list. They will also receive a newsletter which will give the how-tos on contacting religious groups and other important information on integrating the Georgist message with current religious ideas and doctrines.

LONG ISLAND

Periodically, about every two months, key personnel in the media profession will receive a "Media Newsletter," put out by members of the Long Island extension. The newsletter explains how current applications of Georgist ideas can be used as the basis for articles, interviews, panel shows, and feature news stories. Exposing media personnel to the various facets of Georgism will hopefully trigger a dialogue. The first newsletter was mailed recently to over three hundred individuals, and results will be reported in future issues. Copies can be obtained by writing to the L.I. extension.

PHILADELPHIA

The Spring Term began the week of April 25 at the birthplace, with classes in Fundamental Economics (F.E.) and two advanced courses, Applied Economics (A.E.) and Economic Science (E.S.). An F.E. Lecture series continues on Monday evenings at Plummer Hall in Wilmington, DE and an F.E. course is underway at Ogleton Middle School in Newark, DE as well. Pat Aller, Assistant Director of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, Rev. Wylie Young of the Incentive Tax League of Delaware Valley and Birthplace Director George Collins were speakers at the graduation ceremony of Georgist courses, chaired by Michael Curtis, at Smyrna, DE Correctional Center. There were nineteen F.E., eight A.E., and six E.S. graduates. Teachers were Cecil Hall, Lawrence Williams and Walter Tate, with Don Crawford assisting Curtis with the program.

SAN FRANCISCO

Four Wednesday sessions at the Paulist Center at Old St. Mary's Church in downtown San Francisco were conducted by H.G.S. Ed. Director Alanna Hartzok and Americ Azevedo. The themes addressed were 1) Psychology and Compassion, 2) Economics and Compassion, 3) Politics and Compassion and 4) The Earth, Our Home. Spirtuality Named Compassion and the Healing of the Planetary Village, by Matthew Fox, was the text used, which contains a section on Georgist economics.

LOS ANGELES

Two recent Final Friday events, sponsored by the H.G.S. of L.A., were held at the L.A. Press Club. On March 25, George H. Smith, a Research Fellow at the Institute for Humane Studies, spoke on "Life Without the State: The Completely Voluntary Community." Three academicians, Mason Gaffney, Virginia Reittinger and Marion Sapiro responded to Mr. Smith. On April 29, Wendy McElroy addressed the group on "Freedom, Feminism and the State." Ms. McElroy has recently completed an index to Liberty, the publication of Benjamin Tucker, and she is author of an anthology which bears the same name as her talk above. Joan Jordan, a former coordinator for N.O.W., Walter Bodle, a H.S. teacher and H.G.S. Director Harry Pollard responded to Ms. McElroy.

GEORGE IN THE NEWS...

The following article, "El Salvador's Land Problems," by Professor William S. Peirce of the Economics Department of Case Western Reserve University, appeared in the March 9, 1983 issue of the Chicago Tribune. Excerpts of the article are being reprinted with permission of the paper, c 1983.

"President Reagan has defended the new government of El Salvador against charges that it was not implementing 'land reform' fast enough. It would be more appropriate to question whether the U.S. should coerce other countries to expropriate and redistribute land. Our State Department pressured the previous government of El Salvador to redistribute land as part of the defense against the threat of a leftist takeover. Changing the ownership and management of land is not just a political matter, however; it also has profound economic effects."

"The specific alternative that should be considered to reform land ownership without expropriation is a tax on the value of land of the sort advocated by Henry George. The price of agricultural land in a free market depends on the economic rent that prospective buyers expect to obtain from the land. Economic rent is defined as the net income from the land after deducting the value of other inputs including labor, seeds, fertilizer and a market return on the tools and other capital investment. A tax on the value of land can also be treated as a tax on the highest rent expected from the land. If such a tax is levied at a high enough rate, it will force owners to use land in the most profitable way."

"Although a tax on land values nudges the land tenure system in a favorable direction, it avoids the coercion and disruption that always accompany the expropriation and redistribution of land. It also places more manageable burdens on the administrative apparatus than does a wholesale redistribution of land titles with inevitable controversies over who is forced to sell and who is entitled to buy. Even the indirect effects of a tax on land are favorable, moreover, because the revenue could be used as a substitute for some of the more burdensome conventional taxes."

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