

Henry George Newsletter

VOLUME 51, Number 7

July-August, 1987

NORTH AMERICAN GEORGIST CONFERENCE, 1987

Advocates of the Georgist philosophy from the United States, Canada and Latin America gathered at San Diego's Point Loma College from July 21-26 for the 7th Annual CGO Conference. Speeches, workshops and informal meetings centered around an exchange of information between Georgist groups, and proposed methods for strengthening the organization as a whole. The conventioners strove for a clarity of purpose, exploring topics including the intentions of the founders of the Constitution, alternatives in Nicaragua, the impact of new tax laws, a discussion of money, and various land reforms in practice today.

The Conference opened on Tuesday with a reception at the new BEE-owned Henry George Center in San Diego. After informal, pre-conference meetings, the first dinner meeting began Wednesday evening with a three-speaker discussion of "What the Founding Fathers Intended." Al Anderson, author of several books on the Constitution, discussed the motivating influences on the makers of the Constitution. Dick Noyes focused on James Madison and the Lockian Proviso as the basis of constitutional process. Ed Dodson maintained that the founders of the Constitution never differentiated between personal wealth and wealth created by society. This lack of separation, he felt, made it difficult to follow an objective means for measuring justice.

On Thursday, many Georgist groups gave progress reports on their schools, groups or special projects. Bob Clancy discussed the present state of correspondence courses and issuance of the Georgist Journal. George Collins highlighted courses from the Philadelphia School curriculum, including the popular Saturday Seminar courses "How Wall Street Works," and "The Property Tax and You." Stan Frederiksen spoke on recent legislative activities toward a site value taxation in Missouri.

Other speakers gave more proof that the Georgist movement is alive and well today. Oscar Johannsen reported on recent activities of the Schalkenbach Foundation, including reprintings of *Progress and Poverty*, *The Perplexed Philosopher* and an abridgement of *Progress and Poverty* in Portuguese. More reports of progress came from Sam Venturella, Felice Gruskin, President of T.R.I.P., on her membership drive, and Stan Rubenstein, who showed a demo videotape from his new high school video series, "Understanding Economics."

(Continued on page 3.)

School Notes

In the evening, Bob Clancy gave a brief history of U.S. public lands and emphasized the impact of the Northwest Ordinance. Floyd Morrow moved the discussion into the present day with “Four Ways to a Georgist Society.” The ‘ways’ involved public ownership of land, trusts, leases, and the property tax. John Burger got down to the basics of maximizing group effectiveness with his workshop system called M.O.S.T.

M.O.S.T. explores the Mission, Objective, Strategy and Tactics of Georgist organizations as individuals, and as part of a whole concerted effort. The first step is to define the mission or blanket goal of the group. Having put the larger goal into words, the next step is to set specific objectives toward that larger goal. Strategy involves brainstorming for ways to meet objectives. Tactics are most specific plans—the ‘who, why, when, where, and how’ of effective group planning. Burger presented his M.O.S.T. illustrating its effectiveness with examples from Common Ground and other groups.

Thursday dinner speakers opened a panel discussion on Nicaragua with Jeff Smith, Nick Tideman and feature speaker, Bismarck Leyton. Tideman recounted his personal experiences and observations of the Georgist’s recent fact-finding trip to Nicaragua. Leyton, Vice Director of INIES, the Nicaraguan Institute for Economic and Social Research, gave evidence of the Nicaraguan government’s wartime economic suffering.

“Capital, Money and Interest” was the topic offered on Friday morning. Moderator Don Hurford introduced Jack O’Donnell, Oscar Johannsen, who gave a definition of money, revealing current myths about money and interest, and Mike Curtis, who gave a straight Georgist analysis of the money question.

The international scope of the evening session included Arlo Woolery’s speech on land reform in Taiwan. Woolery presented this as the best example of land reform in the world today. Along with a history of land value taxation in Argentina, of particular importance to Georgists are the suggestions of the World Bank to Argentina concerning its economy. The World Bank suggests Argentina: abolish export taxes on wheat and grain; abolish import taxes on fertility and farm machinery; and institute a pure land value tax on agricultural products. It is interesting to note how particularly Georgist these solutions seem to be.

Bob Scrofani reported on his Philippine project. Both the Henry George School and Common Ground encourage a letter-writing campaign to U.S. officials concerning the recent Aquino land reform program. The campaign focuses on important legislative committees dealing with the nomination of an Ambassador to the Philippines. Scrofani also discussed how the 100-year-old Wright Act (concerning taxing in California irrigation districts) might serve as a model for third world countries.

On Saturday, Floyd Morrow and Bill Filante each claimed George as, respectively, a liberal and a conservative. Their discussion, "Bridging Left and Right," showed how Georgism spans both liberal and conservative attitudes. Lunch speakers Mason Gaffney and George Babilot from San Diego State University capped off their talk "Collecting and Spending Economic Rent" with an afternoon bussed rent tour of San Diego.

Former Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin was Master of Ceremonies at the Kona Kai Club banquet Saturday night. Bob Scrofani introduced Homer Marcum, editor and publisher of *The Mountain Countian*, and presented him with the Bill Newcomb Award for editing in Kentucky. Marcum helped expose the activities of local land coal monopolists. Large coal landholders there pay almost no property tax, yet have access to the area's vast coal resources.

George Collins, keynote speaker, told how the U.S. Constitution enabled our country to achieve political liberty two centuries ago. Now, two hundred years after the signing of the Constitution, Collins suggests that Georgists at the Conference have a unique opportunity to help take this one step farther—toward economic liberty. As Collins said, perhaps the School in Philadelphia, birthplace of George, might become a foundation for economic liberty just as Independence Hall serves as a foundation for political liberty today. The challenge goes out to us all to make it happen.

Henry George School of Social Science
5 East 44th Street
New York, NY 10017

Address correction requested

Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID New York, N.Y. Permit No. 7759
