

SCHOOL NOTES

Close to 250 students enrolled in Fall Semester classes at New York Headquarters. Joining 120 Basic Course students were 24 enrolled for "The Many Faces of Fascism"; 28 for "Urban Politics in the United States"; 21 for "A History of Social Reforms" — from Henry George to F.D.R."; 32 in "Money and Banking"; and 15 for "A History of Economic Thought". Twenty-five additional students from Hunter College of City University enrolled for college credit in "Urban Politics".

Long Island Director, **Stan Rubenstein**, reports excellent enrollment. At four High Schools, Basic Courses have enrolled 135 students. Thirty-five are enrolled in Seaford; 45 at Valley Stream; 30 at Massapequa; and 25 at Westbury.

The Henry George Schools' affiliate in Toronto, the School of Economic Science, has a new manager of operations. He is **Laire Teich**, who will be remembered for his fruitful contributions to the Bryn Mawr Conference this year.

On the west coast, San Francisco's Director, **Wendell Fitzgerald**, spent a busy pre-election day weekend. After a morning exhibiting Interstudent High School materials at the annual East Bay Social Studies Teachers Conference, he changed hats to become Treasurer for Eric Moncur, Assessor candidate with strong Georgist views, and worked hard throughout the rest of the day. Moncur has been hitting at underassessment of city land, particularly pointing to the 'Pier 39' scandal where a piece of land is assessed at one fourteenth the value of its neighbor.

Collins of Philadelphia

by **MARTIN HIRSCH**

A free, 10 week course in Fundamental Economics begins this week at the Henry George School of Social Science, 413 S. 10th st. Classes, which meet one night a week from 7 to 9 p.m., are held in the house where the American economist and social philosopher Henry George was born almost 150 years ago.

The irony is that George, who was as well known in his time as Ralph Nader is today — and whom some still recognize as the most original economic theorist this nation has ever produced — has become a forgotten man in his native Philadelphia. Few Philadelphians, it seems, have ever heard of Henry George, though many have probably passed his birthplace on the east side of 10th st. a hundred times without realizing its historical significance.

HOWEVER, according to George L. Collins, 43, director of the Henry George School of Social Science, if Proposition 13 and other property tax reform measures continue to engage the public consciousness as it appears they will, the name of Henry George will be resurrected from undeserved obscurity.

Collins is an uncommonly handsome West Indian whose mesmerizing manner and glistening shaved head are reminiscent of Geoffrey Holder, the mysterious deep-voiced black actor/choreographer who captured America's imagination a few years ago as the guardian of 7-Up's mythical "Un-Cola Nuts."

After a 4 year stint in the U.S. Air Force, Collins moved to New York City in the late 1950s "to find some direction for my life" and it was then that he first learned about Henry George. Collins' ambition at the time was to become a social worker. But a newspaper advertisement which referred to George "as America's most original economic thinker" and announced a free course at the Henry George School proved provocative enough to alter his career path.

COLLINS HAD NOT heard of Henry George before he attended the free course. But by the time he was half way through the course, he recalled, "I found myself defending George's theories whenever other students attacked them. "After taking several more advanced courses, Collins was invited to join the faculty of the New York school in 1961, and then moved to the Philadelphia extension of the Henry George School of Social

Science in 1964.

Since then, he has been spreading the gospel according to Henry George—a philosophy he says that has been drawing more and more followers in recent years.

Why the sudden surge of interest in a forgotten economist of the Industrial Revolution? Because, Collins explained, George's thesis is based on the belief that land, like the air we breathe, is a gift of God which should not be hoarded by the rich and powerful. It is a point of view which could, understandably, become very popular at a time when middle America is crying out for relief from soaring property taxes.

AS COLLINS explained it, George's economic theory is based on the assumption that the utilization of land is the primary determinant of economic conditions. He believed that underlying the wage-price spiral is a continual land price spiral that traditional economics ignored.

"George believed that our treatment of land as private property, which allows the owner to use it productively or not productively, is the basic cause of poverty in the world," Collins said.

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Hirsch is a journalist with the Center City Welcomat, from which this article was taken.

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value will not increase their tax liability. In fact, the attached study of a suburban school district in Long Island shows that four out of five homeowners would have a tax decrease under full value assessment of their land. Of the twenty percent who have increases, the majority are not typical homeowners but those sitting on multi-acre parcels with minimal residential improvements. We need not characterize this minority as speculators to recognize them as nevertheless a very privileged class of taxpayer who have long been able to enjoy more while paying less.

Opponents of reassessment like to cite the fearful costs in time and manpower as a means of delaying or even deterring the dreaded day. By moving on land assessments we can knock out perhaps ninety percent of cost, as much of the time, and most of the uncertainty. Decent maps, current sales data and access to a computer are the basic requirements for the job. No need for an army of busybodies trying to learn how many bathrooms have been added or attics finished. The probability of an accurate valuation of land alone, given modern methods including those recommended by the IAAO itself, is at least as great

as the results of the arcane calculations of probable and potential income, capital investment and replacement costs. And the results can be kept as current as any jurisdiction requires, at least annually, in most cases.

The administrative and fiscal, economic and political arguments for assessing land at full value, persuasive as they may be, still pale before the equitable and yes, if you will, moral ones. Is it fair, is it right, for those who invest in their property by improving it to pay for the benefit of those who do not? Or, in the reverse, shall we continue to subsidize the profit in increased land values, while penalizing the development of new improvements? Shall those who claim to own natural resources be dealt with more kindly be the taxing authority than those who live by their labor or man-made wealth?

Assessors need not be crusaders for reform. Neither should they stand in its way, defending the methods and practices of the past, even their own. Alternatives, especially those combining fundamental justice with sound fiscal administration, should not be disregarded or dismissed.

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To reduce poverty and bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth, Collins said, George advocated the taxing of land alone, and not buildings or improvements on them. The goal of the so-called "single tax" system is to discourage speculation by removing profit from landholding.

ACCORDING TO Collins, here's

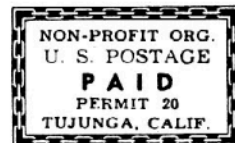
how George's system would work: Land owners would be taxed at an assessment level based on the optimum use of their property; this would discourage the rich from holding unused land, and encourage developers to utilize land in the most strategic locations before resorting to outlying areas; thus "land value taxation" would stimulate uniform urban development and promote the fullest and most efficient use of land.

If you're interested in finding out more about Henry George and his answers to America's current economic crises, his historic birthplace at 413 S. 10th st is open to the public Mondays through Fridays from 2 to 5 p.m.

For more information about the free courses, which are approved by the Adult Education Council of Philadelphia, call George Collins at WA2-4278.

Henry George News: Volume 42 — Number 7. Published by the Henry George School of Social Science; Lancaster M. Green, chairman of the Publications Committee. Subscriptions (\$2 a year — \$5 for 3 years) to: The Henry George News, 50 East 69th Street, New York NY 10021. Editorial and letters to HGN Box 655 Tujunga CA 91042.

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