

ANNUAL GEORGIST CONFERENCE IS HELD IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

by Louise Pulini

The 1981 Joint Georgist Conference attracted over one hundred people from the United States and Canada during the three day meeting held at Franklin Pierce College, in New Hampshire, the first conference ever held in the state.

The tax problem in New Hampshire was spotlighted in the opening session, with legislators and the audience debating the merits of imposing a sales and/or income tax on the states's voters, to generate additional revenues. New Hampshire is the only state in the union without an income or sales tax, and is heavily dependent on its property tax. It is also the fastest growing state on the Eastern seaboard.

Professor Jack Schwartzman spoke of the similarities between Henry David Thoreau and Henry George in their passionate discourses against the railroad monopolies and land speculation. Thoreau lived not far from the conference site, and often climbed nearby Monadnock Mountain.

Ed Dodson of CGO, John Burger, a management consultant, and David Asman of the International Center for Economic Policy Studies (ICEPS), presented their individual interpretations of the validity of the Reagan administration's economic policies in a morning session on Reagonomics or supply-side economics. The Money Question, concerning money supply and regulation, was covered by Oscar Johannsen of the Schalkenbach Foundation, Robert Swann of the Schumacher Society, and George Machen of the American Institute for Economic Research. Innovative ways to circulate and store money and possible solutions to the chronic dollar shrinkage problems were explored and debated.

Alanna Hartzok of the San Francisco HGS explained the Sagebrush Rebellion to the audience with the use of charts and land-use maps of the Western United States. She also pointed out the significance of the Appalachian study in exposing the concentration of ownership of much of America's land. The afternoon's program concluded with a talk by Gerald Shaw of the School of Economic Science in Calgary on Alberta. This western Canadian province has no retail sales tax, no gasoline tax, subsidized heating costs, and only 4% unemployment, due in particular to the Alberta Land Trust, which gives the ownership of natural resources (such as petroleum, discovered in 1947) to the people.

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CGO OFFICERS ARE REELECTED

The officers of the Council of Georgist Organizations were reelected to serve for a second one- year term at the meeting held at the Annual Joint Georgist Conference. Bob Clancy of the Henry George Institute is Chairman, Ed Dodson, a banker from Philadelphia is Deputy Chairman, and Mark Sullivan, current Secretary of the Council, remains in his position.

The main function of the Council, by agreement of those who attended the meeting, is to have a continuous role in coordinating and disseminating information and to serve as a communications center for Georgist groups and individuals not otherwise affiliated. One future aim of the Council is to set up its own organization status as a corporation, and to plan a series of materials indicating scope of activities and bylaws, including membership dues.

Four states, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New York were represented in the evening session on Developments in the Property Tax. Professor Steven Cord, a HGS trustee, pointed out the success of five cities in Pennsylvania with the graded tax, particularly the building boom in McKeesport, and the Pittsburgh Renaissance, where in both instances formerly undeveloped and underused urban areas have become revitalized with a higher tax on land. Philip Finkelstein, HGS Director in NYC, presented four alternative property tax plans for Nassau County in New York, which include a homestead exemption for one and two family dwellings and a tax on the full value of land and current assessed value of improvements. Arch Woodruff, President Emeritus of the University of Hartford, reported on the pressures for an income tax in Connecticut and Mitch Chanelis of the HGS in Boston presented the results of a program held in May at the school on Proposition 2 1/2. William Lucey of Fairhope, Alabama, a Georgist community, Mal McCarthy of Peterborough, Ontario, and Craig Cringan of Toronto briefly outlined property tax issues in their respective areas as well. Following this session, Ms. Hartzok presented a film, New Hope for Global Crisis, which prompted serious discussion on world problems, such as hunger, poverty, and the nuclear and arms race.

The second full day began with a panel of Georgist educators, including Fryda L. Ossias, a HGS Trustee, Stan Rubenstein, HGS of Long Island Director, George Collins, Philadelphia HGS Director, Harry Pollard, Los Angeles HGS Director, Mitch Chanelis and Bob Clancy of HGI, who presented their methods of teaching Fundamental Economics to adults and high school students. Richard Barbuto, Democratic candidate for a legislative seat in Westchester County, New York, spoke on the importance of reaching the "real power elite", those who are wealthy and politically active and would have the clout to put the Georgist fundamentals actively into use. Formal sessions were over by noon on the second day, when conferees gathered for a picnic lunch by the lake on the conference site, where Tillman and Eva Schafer played their guitars and sang for the group. Organizational meetings followed, including reelection of officers and a strategy planning session for the Council of Georgist Organizations.

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CENTER FOR LOCAL TAX RESEARCH RESPONDS TO LEGISLATION

Proposals to resolve the property tax issue in New York City and New York State have been analyzed by the Center for Local Tax Research at the request of the Governor's Office and legislative leaders.

The proposal drafted by the legislative leadership is criticized an attempt, probably unconstitutional, to legalize the admittedly unequitable status quo. The Center agrees, however, with the objectives of the Governor's proposed legislation, although simpler and better means are suggested to meet the goals of an equitable property tax system.

Some of the recommendations made in the responses include keeping the land portion out of the homestead exemption and retaining it throughout the state and a simpler classification system in which all land is assessed at full value and taxed with the highest class.

The analysis has been circulated throughout the city and state following the legislative session which postponed action on the issue at least until October.

Following a champagne reception and a lobster dinner, Richard Noyes, as MC, opened the proceedings at the Annual Banquet by introducing Jack Kelly, Schalkenbach Trustee, who spoke of the power of the press in informing or misinforming the public. Professor Robert Wood of MIT and a former Secretary of HUD, gave the keynote address on the successes and failures of legislators at the state, local and federal level in developing a coherent land use and property tax policy program for their constituents. Wood noted that according to a recent MIT report, affordable housing no longer matches what middle class families can afford. Following Wood's speech, Lancaster Greene, and Heman Chase entertained the audience and Jack Schwartzman acknowledged the contributions of Robert Clancy and Mark Sullivan, among others, for making the conference such a rousing success.

A two-hour morning session on the Land and the People featured the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for Massachusetts, Slow Turtle, who spoke of the symbiosis between the Georgist ideals and those of the modern Native American movement. He led the group in an outdoor circle ceremony of songs and chants.

Evaluation of program and schedule of this year's conference was discussed, with the unanimous agreement that the choice of a college campus as a conference setting is a good one and similar facilities should be checked out for future conferences, and the Council's plans to coordinate next year's conference with the International Conference in Holland were examined before the program came to an official close.

SANTO DOMINGO REPORTS GAINS

Lucy de Silfa reports nearly 700 graduates in five locations including special courses for employees of the Ministry of Finance and the Agrarian Reform Institute where Henry George is now part of the national training program. Support for land value taxation continues to grow in the Dominican Republic with serious discussions on radio and tv and newspaper analysis of the benefits of its application.

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