

## Prentice Tells Conferees George's Reform is Gaining 'Respectability'

by Harlan Trott

San Francisco "I've got a shock for you," publisher Perry Prentice told the national conference of Henry George Schools in San Francisco in July. "You are becoming respectable."

This was his theme at the 1971 banquet honoring him for his monumental work in bringing Henry George's principles into the mainstream of academic recognition and public policy consideration.

Prentice pointed out many areas wherein the breakthrough has occurred, in the published hearings of the Muskie Committee, in policy declarations by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, in faculty pronouncements at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and in the prestigious Committee on Economic Development where one CED official told Mr. Prentice: "You don't have to sell me on land value taxation. How do we get something done about it?"

Delegates from places as far apart as Calgary and the island republic Dominica heard New York's Arnold A. Weinstein, President of the School, announce exciting new goals to build more effective teaching programs.

Weinstein said the Trustees are taking steps to make the course based on *Progress and Poverty* "more relevant in a modern industrial society." Part of the broad new program calls for experimental courses in the applied disciplines—anthropology, and psychology in particular, he said. The school will "draw on history," and there will be a special course focussing on "economics and urban problems" augmenting the Trustees' plan to offer college transfer credits.

Weinstein recalled the tentative offer of a university chair at Berkeley held out to Henry George, and how that prospect was dispelled by his forthright address to the Berkeley faculty with its harsh likening of professors to "monkeys with microscopes."

"Unfortunately," said the national president, "too many of his followers took on this bias when a professor didn't agree with them 110%. We must assess every professor on the basis of his own individuality. Instead, we alienated

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## Urge Site Tax To Save City

The American Institute of Architecture's critical commentary on the City Planning Commission's 1969 plan for New York City may provide the answer to New York's two most crushing problems: a lack of decent housing and an overabundance of automobiles.

The critique, recently released by the Institute's Design Subcommittee, recommends that land value taxation be implemented to provide private enterprise with an incentive to build housing. The 1969 Plan cited the need for increased housing, the report says, but proffered no suggestions regarding how or where to build it.

Under the committee's proposal, every parcel of land would be assessed and taxed by the "local" (presumably city) government according to its location value and relative to its planned usage. With taxes on improvements systematically waived or reduced when land is put to "better or higher" use, pressure would be on landowners to erect something more "socially desirable" than parking lots. Beyond housing, the report does not specify the characteristics of "higher or better" use.

Tax exemptions or reductions are also recommended for well-maintained buildings, removing the deterrent to improvements inherent in present taxes.

Land value taxation would also facilitate the assemblage of parcels of land for large projects by automatically eliminating land speculation, the report adds.

## New Course Notes African Site Levy

Henry George may have been the first to expound the ethics and economics of site value taxation in the Western world, but in Africa tribal societies have been practicing it for centuries.

"Of course it isn't taxation as we know it, but the ethics, and the effects, are the same," according to Barbara Rockefeller, who will teach "The African Experience" to New York City social science teachers this fall. The accredited course, offered as part of the city's "In-Service Training" program for teachers, will examine the geography, history, and culture of Africa.

"Most people know a few exotic facts about Africa, but few realize that African systems of thought are as sophisticated, complex, and rich in tradition and history as our own," Miss Rockefeller explains. Like many of the new courses offered this fall, "The African Experience" will present George's ideas in a new context for a wider audience.

"Although there are more than 2,000 tribes in Africa, some aspects of philosophy, social organization, and religion are universal," she says. "All African societies have a monotheistic cosmology so similar in concept to Christianity, that the success of Christian missionaries and the growth of African churches is hardly surprising."

Of particular interest, she notes, is the African tenet that each individual has a birthright to a plot of land on which to live and support himself. "The trend now is to talk of the 'natural socialism' of the African. This is a fallacy.

"It is true that all land is considered to 'belong to' God, who allocated some portions of it to the tribe. Each tribe has a myth of origin in which God gives land to its founder. Succeeding chiefs and elders are his fictional descendants and hold the land in trust for all the tribe, present and future."

## Conferees

scholars. We met a fate worse than death—silence.”

Weinstein then cited School gains in opening classes to social studies teachers in the New York educational system, and similar courses for college undergraduates. The School is supporting a doctoral candidate presently exploring land value taxation and new zoning. Weinstein said “he should be an ally” in an academic backfield where the University of Wisconsin’s Professors Mason Gaffney and Arthur Becker, and Dean Dick Netzer of New York University’s Graduate School of Public Administration are scoring points for land value taxation.

Robert Schalkenbach Foundation’s Executive Secretary V. G. Peterson termed the instructive film **One Way to Better Cities** a “useful tool” in helping to explain land value taxation. Over 300 showings (13 telecasts included) to an estimated 1 million viewers sparked panel discussions among tax officials and university groups.

Of 21 prints of this film sold, one was bought by a home loan bank, triggering local assessment reform. The film is slated for a second lease on life this fall when it is turned over to a professional distribution agency.

Schalkenbach is planning a film titled **What happens to Government Subsidies?** Good results followed support of Round Tables with some 40 urban experts focusing on “What More Can Our Cities Do to Help Themselves?” Look for findings, possibly in October publication by *Nation’s Cities*.

Other highlights of the Schalkenbach year: the Committee on Taxation, Resources and Economic Development (TRED) published five books by outstanding professors; Dr. Arthur Becker at Wisconsin, helping to “sweeten the academic climate,” is opening new windows on the land question; funding of a New York City study based on proposed land value taxation embracing 80,000 property samplings and the making of a land-value map.

Regional reports:

San Francisco—Robert Tideman: “We are stressing involvement. What are grads

doing? We have a large board of directors—not a paper board. We discovered graduates don’t really subscribe until they come on the board. A school board of 30-plus directors limited to single four-year terms in an important element in our fund raising.”

St. Louis—Noah Alper: “The Public Revenue Education Council has been teaching since 1950 that economics is a science dealing with land, labor and capital. We teach that you control prices by how you tax.”

Philadelphia—George Collins: “Classes are being extended to evening high schools with encouraging results from our best evening series. We were asked to testify at public hearings in support of legislative proposals patterned after the Southfield, Michigan, tax plan. Some 37 students completed our Parkway Program and we are invited back to this high school in the fall. A local medical college invited us to take part in its lecture series.”

Toronto—Neal McCarthy: “The TRED books are great. Municipal officers are reading them in Ontario.”

Alberta—Donald Freeland: “The School of Economic Science holds classes in Calgary, Edmonton, Peace River and Barhead. **One Way to Better Cities** is impressing provincial officials, and political candidates favoring land value taxation are asking for our active campaign support. We are declining because active politicking invites charges that the School is the bag of party hacks.”

Pennsylvania—William Newcomb: “The HG Foundation is sponsoring a \$5000 prize competition for a prize novel with a land value taxation theme good enough to attract a willing trade publisher.”

Statewide Homeowners, San Diego—John Nagy: What would happen if California voted to collect an additional \$1 billion by assessments on land only. We have compiled five volumes with computerized data covering San Diego County’s \$35 million share of such a tax bill. We plan to display these land value assessment rolls in public libraries with newspaper publicity that should make people want to look up their property listing and see how they would benefit under land value taxation. We are

also supporting a bill to put a constitutional amendment (ACA49) on the state ballot for statewide land value taxation. Sponsors have asked us to testify in support at public hearings.”

New Jersey—John Tetley: “We’re the third smallest state and the most densely populated. Our East Orange headquarters stresses political action and publishing educational literature.”

Los Angeles—Chairman Margil W. Wadley, PhD: “Main thrust is in basic economic teaching of high school students, freeing President Harry Pollard to devote almost full time to boys and girls rather than adult programs. Tustin School System requires one semester of economic study. Some 900 seniors and 12 teachers were graduated with credits this year in course conducted by Pollard.”

Dominican Republic—Mrs. Lucy De-Silfa: The HG School is conducting a very large and enthusiastic program of classes in economics, using *Progress and Poverty* as discussion springboard. The U.S. Ambassador was a guest at HG School commencement this year. Graduates included three congressmen.

Lincoln Foundation—Mrs. Lillian Howell: A new grant provides two professorships at the University of Hartford. Support is continuing for the Land Reform Training Institute in Taiwan.

This year’s HG School conference focused on economic causes of war, city problems and the economics of ecology. Earlier in a press conference publicizing the convention, Prof. Mason Gaffney, visiting research associate with Resources for the Future, Washington, D.C., told reporters from five media outlets there is no shortage of water or minerals, it is just an artificial scarcity created by resource “imperialists.” He lumped oil and mineral monopolists among the most powerful lobbies in Washington and said they are “part of a systematic bias for overseas expansion which puts us in conflict with foreign countries. They want the military to expand power in other lands.” Gaffney urged “full use of resources closer to home” and called for higher density zoning and city high rises to “maximize the aggregate use of resources. Conservationists should be in favor of this.”