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CONSIDERATIONS MADE IN THE CHOICE TO DEVELOP ONE DAY INTENSIVES
FOR THE HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

by Alanna Hartzok, Sept. 1989

This is a short report on the efforts made by our School to develop an educational approach that is appropriate to our times, cost and time efficient, and effective in communicating our important economic ideas in such a way as to maximize the possibility of continuing student involvement and activism.

From the 1970's into the 1980's the cost/benefits of mass mailings to the public at large, with the address labeled "Resident", was becoming increasingly unsatisfactory. Classes would rarely have more than ten people to begin with, often much less if any at all. The drop-out rate was 20 - 60% so the numbers who actually completed the course were usually considerably less than those who began. We calculated the cost per graduate at around \$250 - \$300, NOT including the costs of staff time, just printing and postage.

Additionally, those few precious graduates had little or no opportunity or reason to continue their association with the School. At most they could become teachers, a rare event, or passive members on the mailing roster.

Several years ago as students dwindled and costs mounted, the School designed a series of public forums with well known people lecturing on topics of current concern. While these forums were generally successful in terms of audience size, they did not result in enough interest and understanding about fundamental land economics to warrant their continuation.

After this experiment our then board president, George Amberg, urged us to continue once again with classes. Our directors, not wanting to waste time and money in doing what was not working in the past, redesigned the approach to getting students.

We said, it would be cheaper to pay people to take this course! Give each graduate \$100 or so. That would be more cost effective! Two years ago we decided on a modification of this idea. We would offer grants of up to \$500 to non-profit organizations who would sponsor the course.

Sponsorship meant that the organization would provide the meeting space and get the students, at least ten for the full \$500 grant, \$450 for nine graduates, and so on.

This had some advantages. The School had no printing and postage costs, students would be motivated to complete the course so that their organization would get the maximum grant, since they belonged to the same organization

they would meet each other again and perhaps continue the discussion of the ideas presented to them, and the School reduced its cost per graduate to just \$50!

We felt we were on the right track. We conducted about eight classes on this basis to the "greens" in the East Bay and San Francisco, an Episcopal church group, the Ecumenical Peace Institute, and a Democratic club.

We appreciated the cohesiveness of the groups, the fairly low number of drop-outs, and they appreciated the grant money. Some grads did go on to become committed board members of the Henry George School and the newly formed Bay Area Common Ground. More progress than we had seen in years!

However, in my capacity of associate director, I still felt something was missing and that we could do better. This was particularly brought home to me in teaching the eight week course to the high powered activists of the Ecumenical Peace Institute. I gave it the best and the most, my blood sweat and tears. If only these people would "get it" our movement would be on a roll!

About twelve people stuck with it, but because of their many activist activities, now and then they would miss a class and I would have to spend even more time in make-up sessions. Because of the sequential nature of the course, if you miss one or two key sessions you basically have missed the thing entirely.

Another frustration: Progress and Poverty seemed so outdated! These people were dealing with current problems of the potential of nuclear holocaust, environmental destruction, racism, and social justice issues. Our educational material just did not seem to be relevant enough to the world as it is today. They did the readings, the discussion, the "law of rent", and they still did not **really** get it. While a couple did attend a few Bay Area Common Ground meetings, the general response was lukewarm. I was distraught. My high hopes were crushed. I was once again on the front lines of something that still wasn't quite working.

An opportunity emerged in June to try yet a different approach. A young man, Anders Corr, nineteen years old had independently started seeing the problem with our land tenure system. We came in contact with each other and he offered to organize a one day seminar in Santa Cruz. He put together a crude flyer with several misspelled words (for instance, Pennsylvania was spelled "Transylvania"), put an announcement in the bulletin of the Center for Non-Violence where the class was to be held, and posted a few flyers. We had fifteen (yes, 15!) people attend the course that day and nearly all of them GOT IT. I used slides of statistics that I'd put together for GEODATA, videotapes, short talks, group discussion, and a packet of materials. Many people wanted to continue on to work for the implementation of a land value tax system.

Finally, an educational product that really worked! I produced a more professional looking flyer that could be easily used to announce the course and it was determined that the School would offer \$100 grants to non-profit groups who would sponsor it.

The cost/benefit ratio is much improved. Since there must be at least 10 participants to receive the full grant, each graduate now only costs us \$10! The sponsor is motivated to get at least the 10 participants, so the teacher's time is most likely to be well spent. Instead of over twenty hours spent in preparation, travelling to and fro, and teaching the course, it now takes just 7 hours - an easier commitment for people to make both as teachers and students.

Also, once there we have a guarantee that they will complete the course. No missing of important steps in the sequence! No drop-outs!

The information is impactful, presented in a variety of interesting way, **current**, and relevant to immediate concerns of our times.

There are several opportunities for follow-through - a packet for further reading is included, they can get other organizations they belong to to sponsor another intensive, they can become active lobbyists for the implementation of LVT by joining Common Ground, and can become HGS members or teachers themselves, as much of the information is pre-packaged in slides and videotapes.

The intensive was recently presented a second time in Oakland at St. Paul's Church, organized by two active members of Bay Area Common Ground. Twelve people attended. Their comments are on the next page. As you read them, I'm sure you will become as enthusiastic as I am that we have finally found a much more effective way of "packaging" ol' Henry's brilliant insight!

IN CLOSING, here are some of the comments from the **Economic Justice and Land Rights** intensive held in Oakland September 19.

Sister Vickie Dempf, Oakland: Good interchange among the group. Progression of teaching input was excellent, introducing global issues to possibilities of solving problems in the Bay Area.

Liz Edwards, Oakland: A lot more practical than the longer Henry George School course which I took recently. Very clear how the theory was working, instead of trying to make the connections myself, as I struggled to do with P&P.

Sister Michaeline Falvey, San Francisco: The day was an eye-opener and very informative. You are a GOOD teacher! I'd like to stay in touch with the movement. Thank you!

Ver Forbes, San Jose : I liked: its dynamic educational aspect; your wonderful teaching skills; using videos and slide shows; it had a possible solution!!; raised my awareness. A Tremendous, Wonderful, Day!! I loved it all! Viva!! Thank you all!

Otto Grimm, Oakland: I'll try to get a workshop going with you. I'm going to write a short story in our Trinity Voice.

Lydia Hernandez, San Jose: Great info. Do you have any speakers who are bilingual Spanish??? I would like to have this presented in San Jose. Keep me in touch! Thanks.

Sister Elise Marie Lawlor, Oakland: This was a very valuable day. I like your excellent way of presenting the materials. Best wishes for success. Keep me informed.

Father Patrick Leehan, Oakland: Terrific. Excellent. Not enough time! Great.

Helen Perry, San Jose: 1. Multiplicity of methods of presentation 2. Chances for group participation 3. Packet valuable for "putting it together after" 4. Good direction for further study. Well worthwhile.

Duanne Welsch, Oakland: Very enlightening world-view and bringing it to local problems with possible solution. I want to help organize a seminar for my peace group.