

Henry George

NEWSLETTER

JAN. 1984

1984 GEORGIST CONFERENCE SET

The Council of Georgist Organizations has announced plans for the 1984 Annual Georgist Conference of North America. It will be the Council's fourth.

The conference will be held at the Holiday Hills Conference Center in Pawling, New York. The center is located on 550 acres in New York's Hudson Valley, and offers "complete facilities at reasonable rates," according to Council President Robert Clancy.

The conference will run from Thursday, July 26th, to Sunday, July 29th. There will also be a one-day session on Wednesday, July 25th, for special interest groups within the movement. These dates have been selected to accomodate those who also want to attend the International Conference in Cambridge, England beginning August 4th.

Programs during the conference will reflect progress made during the year as well as plans for the future. They will be assembled with "active participation" from Georgist groups in the U.S. and Canada, according to Clancy. Suggestions by interested persons are welcome.

Conference notices will be mailed in the Spring. For further information, write to the Council of Georgist Organizations, 5 East 44th Street, New York, NY 10017.

LVT HEARINGS IN ALLENTOWN

Philadelphia Director George Collins and other Pennsylvania Georgists lent their support to the reintroduction of Allentown's Land Value Taxation proposal last month.

City Council President Ben Howells announced the bill's ressurection at a December 5th press conference. This marks the fifth time the LVT concept has been introduced. Last session, Mr. Howells succeeded in getting the bill approved by the Council, only to have it vetoed by Mayor Joseph Daddona.

Mayor Daddona has vowed to veto the bill again. However, Councilman Howells is confident that he now has the five Council votes needed to override the veto.

In his statement on December 5th, George Collins urged Allentown to "sensibly use its own tax tools," by taxing land at a higher rate than improvements.

Citing follow-up studies conducted in Pittsburgh, Scranton and McKeesport, Collins called the concept "a solid foundation for continued economic strength that can be achieved in any city, even in bad economic times."

"The extent of the change currently proposed for Allentown is not terribly ambitious," Collins said. "It is ambitious as a first halting step toward progress and equity....The average homeowner would pay somewhat less, the underuser marginally more....It is a minimal change but a necessary start. Mild enough to allay any fears of economic dislocation, hopefully strong enough to have some measurable effects."

Joining Collins at the press conference were Georgists Jack Kelly and Ed Dodson. Coverage of the session appeared in the Morning Call and Globe Times newspapers and on radio station WSAN.

The Council began public hearings on the bill December 8th.

Henry George Newsletter
published by
Henry George School
of Social Science

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Subscription: \$5 yr
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Whether by accident or design, the International Georgist Conference will meet this summer in Cambridge, England. Exactly 100 years ago, the seeds of an international movement were planted as Henry George embarked on a lecture series in the British Isles. A different world than today's, George's charisma, matched with a relevant philosophy, made him the most famous of Americans.

Travelling the circuit from city to city in England, Scotland and Ireland, he packed auditoriums and received attention which marvelled him. "I can't begin to send you the papers in which I am discussed, attacked and commented on," an excited George wrote in 1884, "for I would have to send all the English, Scotch and Irish papers."

This was a period when the land question was in the forefront of economic ideas as the English began to perceive the relationship between land ownership and poverty.

It was in Glasgow, Scotland that Georgism took on an international flavor. After one public appearance by George, 500 people remained to form a group to propogate his ideas. The Scottish Land Restoration League was formed, and it spread rapidly to other cities and towns. Its counterpart in England was called the English League for the Taxation of Land Values.

George's whirlwind lecture series attracted its share of antagonists. One critic, the Duke of Argyll, blasted his theories in a magazine called Nineteenth Century. George's response, "Reduction to Iniquity," appeared in the same magazine. The verbal sparring was billed as the controversy between the Peer and the Prophet. Throughout the period, magazines and newspapers freely printed the Georgist view — a phenomenon somewhat limited today.

Eighteen eighty-four also found George at the center of controversy at Oxford University, pitting him against his most unfriendly audience and challenging him with Alfred Marshall, later to become one of England's most famous economists. Cambridge University was a different matter, as George was warmly received and discovered a most receptive audience.

It is in this setting that Georgists will meet -- a university and nation that opened its mind to views we endorse. If from this conference we can rekindle the fervor generated 100 years ago, justice to the international movement will be served.

—Stan Rubenstein

SCHOOL NOTES

NEW YORK

Winter classes begin on January 30th. The basic course, Progress and Poverty, will be offered on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. In addition, two advanced courses, Protection or Free Trade and Contemporary Issues: 1984, will be offered on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, respectively.

A film program was held on December 6th for graduates and the general public. "For the Land is Mine," a 30-minute documentary on Henry George's philosophy, brought 45 people to the school. Of eleven newcomers, eight registered for P&P.

LONG ISLAND

"You and the Property Tax," offered in over 13 school districts in both Nassau and Suffolk County in recent years, will be offered again this term. The two-hour seminar will be held in the Bellmore - Merrick, Westbury, East Meadow, Central Islip, Hauppauge, Middle Island and Islip public schools.

Contemporary Issues is scheduled for the Oyster Bay School District, with classes starting in February.

An all-day workshop is scheduled for Saturday, January 7th, at the Plainview - Old Bethpage Library. Topics include "Our Staggering National Debt", "Those Imports -- Keep Them Out?", "Is Deregulation Moving Too Quickly?", and "The Grand Plan: A Georgist Solution".

PHILADELPHIA

Winter classes begin Tuesday, January 24th. Fundamental Economics, Applied Economics, Economic Science and Great Decisions '84 will be offered. Classes will be held at Philadelphia, Arden, Delaware, Smyrna and Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

LOS ANGELES

A Christmas program was held at the Los Angeles Press Club on December 16th. Jackie Sherman, the History Professor whose unorthodox theories continue to startle her audiences, spoke on "The Development of American Political Institutions as a Function of the Esophagus." The program included presentation of the Fall '83 Graduation Awards.

CHICAGO GEORGISTS SHOW LVT FILM FOR LEGISLATORS

"One Way to Better Cities," the classic documentary on land value taxation, reached a new audience of Illinois legislators and public officials last month.

The film was part of a public meeting which took place in Chicago's Church of the Assension on December 3rd. Organized by Georgists Sam Venturella, Harry Tiedeman, W. O. Ranky, Robert Jene and James Fredericksen, the program included a panel discussion on the implications of LVT in Illinois.

Among those who attended were State Senator Bob Kustra and State Representative Larry Bullock. Mr. Bullock said after the meeting that he would re-introduce a bill during the 1984 legislative session which would allow any limited jurisdiction to institute LVT. Mr. Kustra said he will be one of the bill's sponsors in the State Senate, where it was defeated in 1982.

Also attending were Billie Lipe, who has been assigned by the Cook County Assessor's Office to study the concept, and John Kelly, a member of the Peoria Community Development Commission. The Assessor's office was one of the opponents of the 1982 version of the Bullock LVT bill.

TRANSIT COMMITTEES HEAR LVT PROPOSALS

Felice Gruskin, president of the New York City Incentive Taxation League and founder of Transit Riders In Pursuit (TRIP), proposed a land value tax surcharge as a means of paying for mass transit service at two December hearings on proposed fare increases.

Ms. Gruskin testified at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's public hearings and also spoke before the Permanent Citizen's Advisory Committee to the MTA.

She called for the imposition of a land value surcharge of "no greater than six percent" which would raise revenues of \$840 million.

"Compare this to the 18 percent general Corporate Tax Surcharge which currently nets less than \$180 million," she said at the MTA hearing on December 6. "The current surcharge impacts badly on the economy, whereas the land value tax is economically sound, equitable and easy to administer."

The same message was delivered to the PCAC, a 35-member board of advisors appointed by the governor. The committee was "intrigued" by the idea, according to a staff member and planned to "explore the feasibility of such a plan."

TRIP is a consumer activist organization which is "dedicated to the improvement of mass transit," according to Ms. Gruskin. "Chief among our concerns is that the cost of improving service ought to be absorbed by those who would benefit the most from improved service — the landowners."

NEW SOURCEBOOK ON TRANSIT FINANCING

Mary Rawson has just completed an annotated bibliography called, "Transit: The Nature and Role of Localized Benefits." Available from The Centre for Transportation Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada V6T 1W5 for \$5, the guide provides a wealth of literature on value-capture mechanisms to fund mass transit systems through LVT.

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