

HENRY GEORGE NEWSLETTER

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ANNUAL JOINT GEORGIST CONFERENCE IS HELD IN GOLETA, CA

The 1983 Joint Georgist Conference attracted over one hundred people from the U.S. and Canada, at the Francisco Torres Conference Center in Goleta, CA, from July 14-17.

The theme of the conference was the commemoration of the centenary of Henry George's Social Problems, published in 1883. The conference focused on the relevancy of the ideas expressed by George on major social problems of his time, which still exist today.

For the first time, pre-conference workshops were held for Directors and members of the Council of Georgist Organizations, sponsors of the conference, from July 12-14. Extension directors met for two sessions, and the major development from the meetings was the determination of specific areas, such as education, outreach, A-V and media, that each school could be involved in, acting as a clearinghouse for that area. In addition, other areas of cooperation were discussed, such as mailing lists, so that each extension could have available a mailing list emanating from a computerized master list prepared by the office in New York City.

Workshops on Wednesday were held for Directors on leadership effectiveness training, presented by Dan Sullivan and A-V materials, given by Bob Scrofani. On Wednesday evening, the progress of the various chapters of the Incentive Tax League was delineated by Stan Rubenstein on Long Island, Stan Fredericksen in Missouri, Mitch Chanelis in Boston, and George Collins in Philadelphia.

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GEORGIST MEETING IN ALBANY FOCUSES ON LEGISLATION

On Friday, July 29, at the Thruway House in Albany, NY, a group of Georgists, including Don Marcellus, Vernon Saunders, Seymour Rauch, Al Fink, Stan Rubenstein, Al Hartheimer, Felice Gruskin, Richard Barbuto, Matt and Fryda Ossias and Mike Gavaghen met in order to coordinate their activities for the passage of a NY state law granting home rule and enabling each assessing district to have a two-rate system.

The purposes of this intended legislation, comparable to legislation which has occurred in PA, and for which hearings were held in MO, was to give any community the option of taxing land values more than improvements. Others in attendance included the legislative aide to State Senator Johnson, the Assessor from Mt. Vernon, a staff member from Assemblyman Dan Feldman's office and several other interested parties, including a staff person from the NYS Board of Equalization and Assessment.

The day-long conference also focused on the creation of new chapters of the Incentive Tax League. In addition to the ones on Long Island, and the New York City and Westchester areas, new chapters will be formed in Rochester, Buffalo and Albany. Coordination among the various chapters was also discussed.

Emerging from the meeting, and this has been in the developing stages for the past several months, was the extraordinary news that Senator Johnson is considering the possibilities of introducing, at the 1984 legislative session, a bill granting localities to shift the taxes from one area to another. Although there are many obstacles, mostly political, a rough draft of the bill will be ready very shortly.

REACHING OUT

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Lying dormant for many yesteryears, the ideas of religion, ethics and morality emerged as major themes at the 1983 Georgist Conference in Goleta, CA. During the pre-conference and plenary sessions, these topics permeated the spirit of the various workshops. Then, spontaneously, during the banquet speeches, the moral bases of the Georgist philosophy echoed throughout the halls, which was a welcome reminder of years past, when George reached the souls of his listeners as he expressed an eternal moral philosophy. Rather than detract from a focus on the political scene, this important emphasis adds another dimension to our over-all approach. And why not?

Throughout the magnum opus of George are the ever inspiring phrases of the need for moral justice:

"It springs from a law of the human mind; it rests upon a vague and instinctive recognition of what is probably the deepest truth we can grasp. That alone is wise which is just; that alone is enduring which is right."

As George integrated these concepts with land ownership, these tenets of ethics in Western civilization have been amalgamated with the essence of the Bible, which served as a valuable source for George when he contemplated the ideas of moral justice and equity in regard to land ownership. The Georgist philosophy is interspersed with ideas comparable to those articulated in the major sections of the Old and New Testaments. Who can escape the Biblical references to Leviticus and the Psalms:

"The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods."

Blending the precepts of Biblical writings with the powerful message of George is but only natural. Both roots stem from a common source--the eternal truths of justice and morality. Without this source, the philosophy that many Georgists espouse is limited by pragmatism; but with this source our message has no bounds.

Since the issues of hunger, poverty, world peace, land reform and environmental concerns are important to many of the Judeo-Christian groups of the world, then the time may be right for Georgists to focus their attention in establishing dialogues with all denominations that are seeking solutions to today's social ills and crying out for social and economic justice.

CONFERENCE continued from page 1

Speakers on Thursday afternoon included Mildred Loomis, Frank Goble of the Thomas Jefferson Research Center and Morgan Harris, a trustee of the LA school.

The first plenary session, open to all conference attendees on Thursday evening, focused on current tax reform efforts in PA, MO, and CA, with Steve Cord, Stan Fredericksen, Bill Filante and Harry Pollard as panelists.

Friday's program began with a panel on Russia and the Land Question. Three people who have been to Russia, Pat Aller, Floyd Morrow and Jack Schwartzman recounted their experiences in that country. Stan Rubenstein served as moderator. Also, as a part of the morning session, Craig Cringan discussed The Great Tax Shift: Its Effect on Land Prices. His major thesis was that there may well be an increase in land prices even though taxes on land become heavier and heavier. These conclusions are tentative, but with the use of the computer, he will go further into this study. The afternoon was devoted to reports from various organizations and some of the results of the pre-conference workshops. Reports emanated from the Henry George School, the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, Basic Economic Education, Henry George Institute, Henry George Foundation, Fairhope and other areas where Georgist activities are going on. The Friday evening discussion focused on Freedom and Human Rights, moderated by Mark Sullivan with Harry Pollard and Tibor Machan presenting their views.

The first session on Saturday centered on "The Good Society," in which various speakers discussed how Georgist ideas and reform can improve the quality of human life. Alanna Hartzok, Tony Meis, Mike Curtis and Clay Berling gave short presentations on how this could be accomplished. The second session was on outreach programs, in which various interest groups were formed and strategies were developed and methods discussed on how Georgists can work with other groups having similar interests, such as educators, churches, peace and ecology groups and world order groups. Mildred Loomis, Mitch Chanelis, Jerry Schleicher and others led the groups.

On Saturday afternoon, there were several concurrent workshops. One, conducted by Bob Scrofani, was on Appalachia, which followed up on last year's presentation at the conference in Pittsburgh. In another workshop, Harry Pollard demonstrated his Classical Analysis program, which he has perfected over the past ten years in high schools throughout CA. He also demonstrated how this methodology is being used with adult groups.

During the evening, the Annual Banquet was held with Bob Scrofani as the MC. Walt Rybeck of the Center for Public Dialogue spoke on Churches and the Land Question. He stated that since there is a spiritual base in George, it should facilitate the dissemination of that message with various religious groups. Therefore, there should be a common linkage with the Georgist message and with religious groups, since we already have much in common. Mike Mc Manus, a syndicated columnist, was presented with the Newcomb Incentive Award for his several articles advocating LVT and telling what was being done in the PA area. He also felt that George's message is spiritual and that we are missing the boat unless we bring this message to various church or religious groups. In addition to the Newcomb Incentive Award that was received earlier by Mc Manus, Mitch Chanelis and Tillman Shaefer also received awards for their activities with the Unitarian Church in trying to get a resolution passed and adopted by the Universalist group. The last speaker, Mason Gaffney, Prof. at the Univ. of CA at Riverside, spoke on the centenary of Social Problems. Using specific quotes, Gaffney showed how the areas George spoke to one hundred years ago were just as relevant today. Chapters on unemployment, deficit spending and the concern for social problems were extrapolated.

On Sunday morning, the CGO met as the last official session of the 1983 conference. Bob Clancy reviewed the progress of the CGO during the 1982-83 year and various members stated what they felt should be the goals for 1983-84. The conference was evaluated and the great majority of the comments were favorable. The pre-conference workshops were given high marks and many commented that it was a worthwhile venture. Next year's conference location was discussed, and it was felt, because of the International Conference in Cambridge, England in August, 1984, that next year's annual Georgist conference should be held on the East Coast, anywhere from Williamsburg, VA to the Boston area.

ARTICLE PROMOTING LAND VALUE TAXATION APPEARS IN FORTUNE MAGAZINE

The August 8, 1983 issues of Fortune magazine features a five-page article written by Gurney Breckenfeld, "Higher Taxes that Promote Development."

The focus of the piece is on the progress made by five cities in Pennsylvania that are now using a graded tax system, with the results so far "...promising enough to raise hope that more localities will use similar antidotes for the economic poison hidden in conventional property taxation."

Calling them "a band of organized and dedicated advocates," Breckenfeld singled out Dan Sullivan, Steven Cord, Congressman William Coyne and Jack Kelly of Scranton as individuals who have promoted the land tax.

In conclusion, Breckenfeld notes that "...Higher land taxes, especially when accompanied by reduced taxes on structures, look like an idea businessmen ought to embrace and promote."

An interesting sidebar to the article, entitled "An Idea that Refused to Die," outlines Henry George's life.

MICHAEL GAVAGHEN JOINS STAFF OF HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL IN NEW YORK

Michael Gavaghen has joined the staff of the Henry George School in New York as an assistant to Stan Rubenstein. His duties will include coordinating public relations, setting up adult education programs and seminars, and contacting legislators in promoting land value taxation.

His background includes stints as a reporter for the Elizabeth, N.J. Daily Journal, and for Brooklyn community newspapers.

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