

Henry George Newsletter

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AMERICAN HERITAGE — STORY OF THE LAND

American Heritage — Story of the Land is the title of a new videotape produced by the Henry George School for use in high school social studies classes. The tape consists of four segments, seventeen to twenty-two minutes in length, that each show how U.S. history has been affected and influenced by land and how it is controlled. The script was written by Stan Rubenstein, and narrated on camera by George Collins.

In order to capture historical accuracy, First Take productions, along with Mr. Collins and Mr. Rubenstein, visited numerous historic sites along the east coast from Virginia to Massachusetts. Guest professors and other experts are interviewed and pertinent historical concepts are explained in each section. The four themes treated are: *The English Are Coming — Early Colonization*; *Americans on the Move — From Wagons to Railroads*; *From Sea to Shining Sea — Westward Expansion*; and *Muckrakers and Reformers — The Age of Reform*.

The English Are Coming — Early Colonization depicts the founding of Jamestown, Virginia and the untold difficulties faced during its early years. Then, the story of the second successful settlement, Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts, is told by performers who play the roles of various Pilgrims who actually lived during the 1620s. Maps, interviews and relevant definitions are interspersed throughout the story. How to divide — or not divide — the land, was a decision both groups of colonists had to face from the start.

Americans on the Move — Wagons to Railroads, the second section of the tape, travels through time during early U.S. history. Starting with the Old Boston Post Road, we see the transportation scene advance to the early turnpikes and the heyday of canal building, culminating in that engineering marvel, the Erie Canal. We then see the canals eclipsed by another engineering triumph, the railroad. And it is the railroad that had the most lasting influence on the growth of the United States. Various land grants to railroads are explained in vivid detail to show how the increase in land value was distributed between government and railroads.

From Sea to Shining Sea — Westward Expansion traces the territorial growth of the United States from the Revolution to the Mexican War, culminating with Texas joining the Union in 1845. Included is the purchase from Napoleon of the Louisiana Territory, the acquisition of East and West Florida, the compromise with Great Britain on the northwest boundary with Canada, and the war with Mexico to gain most of what is now the southwestern portion of the United States.

Muckrakers and Reformers — The Age of Reform begins with the ascendancy of President Grant, his corrupt administration, and the impetus for reform. Touching upon some of the reforms during the 1880s, a short capsule history is included explaining the influence of Henry Demarest Lloyd, Edward Bellamy, and — of course — Henry George and the Single Tax movement.

Accompanying the tape is a twelve-page booklet highlighting each program, emphasizing important concepts, and detailing several activities that can be used by teachers to reinforce the concepts introduced on the tape. These activities include questions pertaining to the tape or analysis of a short text. One activity asks students to research and discuss popular slogans from U.S. history such as "Remember the Alamo", "Manifest destiny", "new deal", and others. At the same time, the students are advised in the words of James B. Conant: "Slogans are both exciting and comforting, but they are also powerful opiates for the conscience. . . . Some of mankind's most terrible misdeeds have been committed under the spell of certain magic words or phrases."

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FALL CLASSES IN NEW YORK

The Fall semester began on September 12th at the New York Henry George School with several introductory courses in economics offered free to the public. *Fundamental Economics*, using *Progress and Poverty* as a text, is being taught on Tuesday (6:30-8:30) and Thursday (5:30 to 7:30) by George Collins, and on Wednesday (6:00-8:00) by Mark Sullivan. On Tuesday (6:30-8:30) Mr. Sullivan is also teaching *Classical Analysis*, a restructured introduction to classical political economy with insights drawn from George's *Science of Political Economy* and other works, in which the students take an active role in the teaching process. Another introductory course, *Understanding Economics*, is being taught on Thursdays (12:30-1:30) by Lindy Davies, using the videotape of the same title. For those who speak and read Spanish, Manuel Felix is teaching *Progress and Poverty* on Wednesday (5:30-7:30).

Advanced courses, for those who have completed at least one introductory course, are also being held. *Great Decisions*, taught on Wednesdays (5:30-7:30) by Fryda Ossias, examines critical global issues such as Latin American debt and the international drug trade. *Practical Writing*, on Thursdays (5:30-7:30) is offered by Sydney A. Mayers to those who wish to hone their skills at getting a message across. All courses, introductory and advanced, are scheduled to run for ten weeks each.

Two Saturday one-day seminars are also being offered this semester. *How Wall Street Works*, on September 24th (10 AM-3 PM) is a beginner's guide to stock market investing, and is presented by Sam Gray, and expert in the field. *Economics Simplified* is an introduction to "economics as if people mattered" (i.e., the economics of Henry George) and is presented by George Collins. Like the ten-week classes, both seminars are offered free to the public.

FALL CLASSES IN PHILADELPHIA

On the week of September 25th, classes begin once again in Philadelphia at the Birthplace of Henry George — but for the first time in its newly renovated and rededicated form (see our September and January issues). New Director Mike Curtis is teaching a six-week introduction to *Economics Simplified* on Wednesdays (7:00-9:00) and a ten-week course in *Fundamental Economics* [Part I of *Principles of Political Economy*] using *Progress and Poverty*, on Thursdays (7:00-9:00). Mr. Curtis is also teaching *Applied Economics* [Part II of *Principles of Political Economy*] on Tuesdays (7:00-9:30), and a one-session seminar on *The Law of Rent* on Monday, September 25th, (7:00-9:00). School President Edward Dodson is leading a ten-week discussion seminar, with the U.S. Constitution as a backdrop, called *Liberty and the Just Society* on Mondays (6:00-8:00). There are assigned reading from various sources which examine the role of government, the relationship of individual and state, and historical and philosophical differences between political systems. *Great Decisions '89* is also offered as an introductory course, using the *Great Decisions Briefing Book*, and is led by Alfonse S. Bayo.

A PERSONAL NOTE

It is with a great sense of loss that we acknowledge the passing of Mr. Cyril Harvey, for many years a teacher at the New York School. Cyril taught *Classical Analysis* until December 1988. Due to illness, he was unable to continue in 1989, and so the task fell to the editor of this Newsletter. We will remember Cyril for his impassioned speeches at our end-of-semester ceremonies — urging us to open our eyes to the great injustices around us... and for that occasional lift home on cold wintry nights. —The Editor.

AMERICAN HERITAGE [continued from front page.]

American Heritage — Story of the Land was unveiled at the recent International Henry George Conference in Philadelphia to an appreciative audience (see our September issue). Judging from the reception of high school teachers to the Henry George School's previous videotape, *Understanding Economics*, this one will also be well received and widely used. The School now has contact with more than 2500 high school social studies teachers in over 30 states. This new tape will be offered to them to use as part of their 11th grade American Studies program in conjunction with the School's printed material on *Land and Freedom in American History*.

LONG ISLAND ACTIVITIES

Stan Rubenstein, Director of the Long Island extension, appeared on *Contact*, a half-hour program on WLIW, Channel 21, Long Island's educational station. The topic was the fact that a Nassau County judge had just declared Nassau County's method of assessing real property to be unconstitutional. According to Mr. Rubenstein: "What is most interesting is that the judge stated that the single most important factor in the appraisal of real estate is location. Unless this factor is dealt with, assessments will not only be illegal but unfair. About 40 % of the value of residential homes is tied up in land value, yet the underassessed land portion does not reflect this increase."

Progress and Poverty classes are being held in three locations this fall in Long Island: Hicksville High School, beginning Wednesday, September 13th; Middle County, New Field High School, beginning Tuesday, October 3rd; and Smithtown East High School, beginning Tuesday, October 3rd. All classes begin at 7:30 PM and are offered free to the public. Teachers for this semester are Dave Norflus, Al Fink, and Charles Ellinger. Mr. Ellinger recently attended the International Conference in Philadelphia (see our September issue).

Property Tax Relief — For Whom? is the subject of a public panel discussion sponsored by the L.I. extension in response to the recent decision on the unconstitutionality of Nassau County's system of assessment. Speakers will be: Honorable Abe Seldin, Chairman, Nassau County Board of Assessors; Donald Leistman, attorney, representing clients in the tax assessment case; and Thomas Mulcahey, attorney and HGS board member. The discussion will take place on Wednesday, November 1st, 7:45-9:30 PM, at Syosset Public Library, 226 South Oyster Bay Road, Syosset. For further details, call the Long Island extension at (516) 734-7543.

NEWS FROM CHICAGO

Fall classes began the week of September 11th with the following offerings: *Fundamental Economics and Social Philosophy*, Mondays (2:30) and Tuesdays (7:00); *Understanding Economics*, Mondays (7:00), Tuesdays (2:30), and Saturdays (11 AM); *Science of Political Economy*, Wednesdays (2:00); movies and discussions, Fridays (7:00).

Adam Monroe, Jr. has been commissioned to interview Chicago area Georgists for the School's oral history project. Adam's grandfather, John Lawrence Monroe, was director of the Chicago School from the mid-1930s to the mid-1960s.

Chicago HGS now has tax exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. A letter of determination, issued by the IRS of June 20, 1989, declared the exemption effective as of January 30, 1970, the date of incorporation of the reorganized School in Chicago.

IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

For the past two years, Director Lucy de Silfa has been concentrating efforts to reach specific groups, as well as the general population. In conjunction with the Association of Lawyers, she began, in August, a twelve-week *Progress and Poverty* course with a group of lawyers. Meanwhile, Ms. Waleska Ruiz has been meeting with agronomists at the State University of Santo Domingo.

Of special interest is the Master's Degree Program, also at the State University. Forty students are studying Georgist philosophy once a week for six months. The course began this September as part of their Master's Degree Program.

In addition to *Progress and Poverty*, one course in *Protection or Free Trade* is being given this Fall at the Santo Domingo Public Library, and is being taught by Mr. Puella Marcellus.

NOTES FROM NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

A potluck picnic on June 30th at the home of Gayle Voeller was the setting for a discussion with Robert Tideman on Henry George's philosophy and its practical application today. Mr. Tideman served as Director of the Northern California HGS from 1949 to 1973, and now serves as Administrator of the Big City Montessori School of San Francisco.

The Spring 1989 issue of *The Mercury*, newsletter of the Northern California School, featured several items of interest, including a report that the San Francisco Greens have endorsed a resolution urging the reduction of urban sprawl through land value taxation. The resolution was sponsored by Paul Johnson, a Green who recently attended a Progress and Poverty class taught by Wendell Fitzgerald. The resolution calls for an action plan to educate the public by making the land value tax part of the political agenda at local, state, and federal levels. Another article, by Fred Foldvary, chronicles the life of Ralph Borsodi (1883-1977), founder of the School of Living and proponent of the community land trust and other reforms along Georgist, individualist, and decentralist lines.

Fred Foldvary, a past President of the Northern California School now doing graduate studies in economics at George Mason University, also reports: "Everything only confirms the wisdom of Henry George. I was delighted to learn that such great thinkers as Lysander Spooner, 19th century American natural law writer and Knut Wicksell, turn of the century Swedish economist and father of public finance theory knew about the land question. Spooner wrote about how in Medieval England, freemen had a right to land, conditional on payment of rent, as a source of state revenues. Wicksell advocated a tax on land values to capture windfall gains. Modern avante garde economic public choice rent-seeking theory derives from Wicksell!"

Another recent letter to *The Mercury* is from Robert Gilman, Editor of *In Context* (PO Box 11470, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110): "I would be delighted for (my) articles (on land ownership) to be better known among Georgists. It is an issue I care deeply about, and I appreciate the work that you and others in the Georgist movement are doing." Xerox copies of these excellent articles are available for \$3.50 from *In Context*.

One final note: Alanna Hartzok recently gave a ninety-minute slide presentation on Ricardo's "Law of Rent" to fifteen Fremont high school teachers "to indicate the immediacy and the current dimensions of the problems that Henry George was addressing." This was one in a series of workshops to introduce Bay Area teachers to George's ideas and to improve the quality of the teaching with regard to land issues. Reactions ranged from "interesting" and "clear" to "scary" and "thank goodness I have my home." Other contrasts included: "a way to provide alternatives to students" and "over the heads of most high school students." Several echoed sentiments of one teacher: "important to the curriculum." Our favorite: "George deserves a place in our traditional economics courses."

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