

206 Pearlcroft Road
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034

April 27, 1983

Steven B. Cord, President
Henry George Foundation of America
580 N. Sixth Street
Indiana, PA 15701

Dear Steve:

Your April "interim report" introduces a number of areas on which I would like to present comment, with the purpose of establishing ground for further discussion. The decision by the New York school to discontinue funding of Dan Sullivan's activities, the school's overall budgetary constraints and Stan's appointment to the Director's position each will play a role in our immediate future and scope of activities. The question is exactly what the role will be.

Not a few of us have hoped to see a Georgist educational program develop in Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, Dan -- as "the" local land value tax advocate -- could not be looked to for undertaking such an endeavor. I would be interested in your views as to the extent of damage, if any, the school's funding decision will have on the effort to maintain the momentum in Pittsburgh. Looking to the longer term, the possibility of initiating an active educational program in Pittsburgh requires recruitment (and training) of someone interested in taking on such a responsibility. Bypassing the obvious problem of funding, are there any students at Indiana in whom you recognize a particular interest in Henry George and who might be willing to apprentice themselves for a year or so of instruction in the Philadelphia program? A strong expression of interest by a student or other individual, partially supported by Foundation funds, might produce sufficient reason for funding an extension school in Pittsburgh.

George and I have discussed briefly the initiation of an "extension" program taught by me in the Cherry Hill adult education system. I am planning to submit a proposal to the school district for the entire three-course program as offered by Philadelphia. In this way, the initial group will hopefully be large enough to carry some of them through the second and third courses. The goal is to end up with one or two people interested in training to conduct classes themselves. Developing a growing pool of committed individuals is, I believe, an even more crucial goal than the localized political victories (which is not to downplay the importance of the activist role for land value taxation).

This leads to a final question on the educational program. To what extent do you feel the Foundation is in a position to fund, by itself, the start-up costs associated with conducting courses? A secondary issue is whether the Trustees of the school might construe such a program as competitive in nature, inasmuch as it would be outside their realm of control.

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Support by the Foundation of a strong, alternative educational program might just be the inducement needed to attract a significant level of bequests from individuals who, although dedicated to George's philosophy have lost faith in the school's guardianship in its designated role as the creator of future Georgists. The dissatisfaction expressed directly to me -- even by people who are virtual strangers -- is often deliberately pointed. Over time I have come to a more complete understanding of the emotions involved, frustrations ready for tapping by a group perceived to be open, democratic and purposeful. Within the school's structure, George has accomplished a great deal in Philadelphia; however, the historical decline of the New York school has obviously injured the financial commitment by Georgists to support the school, and therein the program in Philadelphia. I strongly recommend that before attempting to solicit bequests for the Foundation endowment, that the Foundation's organizational structure be thoroughly analyzed to determine whether there exists any objectionable by-laws. Thereafter, we can work together to develop specific program goals and their underlying financing requirements.

The Foundation also has need of a permanent research and editorial staff if its efforts are to expand. Doing so requires greater operating funds; and, again, I believe more significant levels of contribution can be obtained from Georgists through a membership program which attaches certain voting rights to members in return for a minimum financial responsibility. "Incentive" should, I believe, be built into such membership: a basic voting membership could require a \$100 annual contribution; however, additional voting rights could be given for further incremental contributions of \$150 up to a maximum of five votes. Thus, a membership would involve both sacrifice and reward. As an alternative to financial contributions, active involvement could be considered as a condition for voting membership rights where warranted.

Another subject I would like to address is "Equal Rights". Frank has been doing a credible job putting the material together, and I have tried to contribute articles and other items which present new information. A common reaction by many people to all the Georgist publications is that they are a constant rehashing of well-known Georgist perspectives. All too rarely do we in our publications attempt to address areas of topical concern. And, as you have indicated, a higher level of professionalism in our publishing should be looked to. Toward that end, I would like to propose a merger of Equal Rights and Incentive Taxation into one periodical -- with Equal Rights used as an insert for distribution to members of the movement. I am of the opinion that combining the two publications will prove cost effective and enhance our ability to produce quality issues more frequently and with greater regularity.

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As you and I have previously discussed, I strongly favor structuring of a scholarship program designed to develop future academicians well-versed in Georgist philosophy. The identification of subjects for research could thus be used as a mechanism for promoting competitive scholarship opportunities. As to specific research, my experience in the housing sector has brought to mind a number of issues properly the subject of research:

- The relationship between urban/suburban housing price changes and land value increases analyzed on the basis of component elements and compared with CPI and inflationary experience;
- The impact of interest rate changes on the median price of housing and construction site acquisition costs;
- The impact of FHA and private mortgage insurance on housing price inflation (such insurance directly responsible for minimum equity requirements for purchase and the resulting disequilibrium between consumer demand and housing availability);
- Land banking activities for future commercial and residential development;

Given the pro-capital, pro-labor emphasis of George's macroeconomic proposals, the movement has miserably failed to bring its message to the business community or to organized labor. Truly, you are absolutely correct that "we have a sales job to do". What is needed is a professionally-developed, integrated public relations campaign. Robert Chistester has moved rapidly (as you will see from the enclosed newsletter) after the success of their "Free to Choose" series. Could a similar program featuring Mason Gaffney or, preferably, a group of business and academic representatives be the catalyst we need for greater public recognition and debate? Note the long list of foundation and corporate contributions.

I hope this letter has produced some additional food for thought. A number of my proposals, I realize, involve quite sensitive issues and are expressed with obvious confidentiality. Perhaps we can discuss some of these things at length the next time we see each other.

Best personal regards.

Very truly yours,



Ed Dodson

EJD/ah

Enclosure