

Equal Rights

Volume VI, Number 3

"Equal Rights for All, Not Special Privilege for Some"

Spring, 1975

Constitutional Amendment Urged For Colorado

The State of Colorado has been the scene of active campaigning by proponents of land value taxation since the early days of the Single Tax movement and has from time to time enlisted strong support, particularly in the major cities. Under the aggressive leadership of Dr. James L. Busey, of the University of Colorado, all members of the State Legislature are being urged to give serious attention to his latest proposal to amend the Colorado Constitution, Article X, Section 3, by addition of the short phrase, "No property tax shall be levied on improvements." In his letter to State Legislators, he says:

"Remove the burdens of the property tax that presently falls on the productive agricultural, business and industrial elements of Colorado, and impose the full weight of the property tax on unearned land values, and Colorado will see such a boom of industry, employment, and agricultural activity that its prosperity will be the wonder of the nation! In Colorado, a solution to the present recession need not wait for an improbable end to the interminable battle between the President and the Congress. Our recovery from recession, our definite answer to the problem of economic malaise, can begin right here, in Colorado, with us!

"Instead of waiting indefinitely for Washington to solve our problems, let our solution begin here! Let Colorado lead the nation!"

Already encouraging support has been offered by four legislators. Steven J. Durham (Rep.) says: "I am in agreement with your position. I hope that we can make some progress toward this important goal." William S. Flannery (Dem.) writes: "I feel that we ought to pursue your suggestion of a constitutional amendment in order to eliminate property taxes entirely on improvements and increase the tax on land values. Sam Zakhem (Rep.) writes: "I am in full agreement with your stand on property tax levy in the state of Colorado. We positively should not wait for Washington to solve our problems and I shall give full consideration for any bill that

HENRY GEORGE FOUNDATION SPONSORS REVITALIZATION RALLY

As the next step in our extraordinary effort to accelerate and expand the Georgist movement in America, our National Conference committee has selected Philadelphia, the birthplace of Henry George as a most desirable location and is planning for a large and representative attendance of active Georgists from all sections of the United States and Canada. The committee consists of Robert Clancy, chairman, John C. Weaver, co-chairman, John T. Tetley, Julian Hickock and Wylie Young. In response to resolutions adopted unanimously at the Consultation of Henry George Groups held in Pittsburgh last June, the Henry George Foundation has accepted the leadership as chief sponsor of this 1975 conference.

Harcum Junior College in Bryn Mawr (a Philadelphia suburb) has been engaged as the place for all regular conference sessions, and reservations have been made for the period from Thursday, July 17 to Sunday, July 20. The college is prepared to provide dormitory rooms, meals and all facilities for conferees at a total cost for the full period not to exceed \$60.

An attractive program is in process of preparation. Among the more prominent Georgists who have been invited to speak are Dr. Robert V. Andelson (Alabama), Dr. James L. Busey (Colorado), Judge James Clarkson (Michigan), Russel Conklin (Montana), Dr. Steven Cord (Indiana, Pa.), Dr. Mason Gaffney (British Columbia), John M. Kelly (Scranton, Pa.), Frank Nelson (Delaware), Floyd Morrow (San Diego, California), William W. Newcomb (Florida), Mitchell S. Lurio (Massachusetts), Perry Prentice (New York), Dr. Raymond Richman (Pittsburgh, Pa.) (and Rev. W. Wylie Young (Swarthmore, Pa.).

The conference will begin with an informal dinner and reception Thursday evening, July 17, and will close with a noon luncheon on Sunday, July 20. Entertainment will include a visit to the Single Tax enclave at nearby Arden, Delaware, and a reception at the birthplace of Henry George on South Tenth Street, Philadelphia, which was acquired by the Henry George Foundation on the occasion of its first Henry George Congress in Philadelphia in the year 1926 when the Foundation received its charter from Governor Gifford Pinchot of Pennsylvania.

An announcement and agenda, with fuller details, is being prepared to be mailed direct to a selected list of prospects including all who attended the 1974 conference. It is important to have advance reservations. Those interested in attending are urged to communicate promptly with Executive Secretary Percy R. Williams, Henry George Foundation, 336 Fourth Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222.

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Will be held at the
University of California in San Diego
June 30 through July 3

would amend the Colorado Constitution, particularly the addition of 'no property tax shall be levied on improvements.' We should remove the burdens of the property tax off of anything other than unearned land values."

School of Living Seminar

The School of Living, founded in 1936, for adult education in major problems of living, is offering a Seminar on Completing the American Revolution at Freeland, Maryland, July 5-10, 1975. Six day-long sessions will deal with: The American Dream, the Land Problem, the Money Problem, Government, Ends and Means, and Education of Adults. Eminent resource authorities will join Mrs. Mildred Loomis in discussions. Our readers are invited to participate. (Total cost \$50. Address: School of Living, Freeland, Maryland 21053.)

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Editorials

STATE AND NATIONAL ACTION

How are we ever going to secure adoption of the single tax?

First, as has been said repeatedly in these columns, the great social reform proposed by Henry George will only be adopted if its proponents take political action to bring it into effect. Adoption of the single-tax plan requires that legislation be passed. In some states, it is possible for citizens to circulate petitions and get proposed legislation on the ballot by the initiative process. The other way to get legislation passed is to persuade legislators to introduce and support it. In either case, there must be politically active pressure groups which will either circulate petitions and persuade citizens to sign them, or will secure legislative support for Georgist measures.

All the thousands of Georgists in the world will have no effect on the course of political events if they do not put their shoulders to the wheel of political action and build up the kinds of legislative pressure that are essential if any kind of action is to be achieved. In several states, there are undoubtedly many people who have taken courses on *Progress and Poverty* and are firm supporters of the Georgist philosophy; but until they organize for political action, the results of their aspirations will be absolutely nil.

But what about national action? May it not be advisable to concentrate on the U.S. Congress with proposals for land-value taxation, removal of impositions from productive labor and capital, and the freeing of international trade?

If Georgists are unable to persuade one state to adopt anything more radical than the Pennsylvania graded-tax plan, it is extremely unlikely that they will make any inroads at all at the national level. There is no need to stress the fact that it is vastly more difficult to influence a majority of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate than it would be to affect legislation in a state. It is perfectly true, as Richard Pensack has so ably pointed out, that the single tax is much more than mere property-tax reform; but it is also true that the single tax has to do with the taxation of a cer-

tain type of property. It relates, in other words, to a sort of taxation which until now is strictly within the domain of the states. It would achieve the great ends of social reform by substituting a certain type of property tax — i.e., the public collection of land values — for all other taxes now in existence.

As things now stand, the bureaucratically entrenched tax system of the national government of the United States could not possibly be rearranged to accommodate itself to the single tax. It would be highly desirable if some one state, and then other states, would shift to the single-tax plan. Then, at some time in the distant future, it is conceivable that there could be a plan for national-state collaboration wherein an allotment of proceeds from such taxation could occur between the two levels. When or if a few states ever adopt something like the single-tax plan, they may encourage the national government to undertake studies and adopt policies which could lead to adoption of the single-tax for the entire United States.

But for now, to propose such things is to dream wildly about reforms that will not occur in our lifetimes. In the meantime, the conclusion is inescapable: It is at the state and state-local levels that the major effort for legislative implementation of the Georgist philosophy must be undertaken.

Therefore, it is essential that Georgists build effective pressure groups or associations at their state levels, as they are already attempting to do in California, Delaware, Florida, Missouri, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and elsewhere.

The Henry George Foundation, if used and supported adequately by Georgists, can play a valuable role, by serving as a clearing house for information, news, addresses, and exchange of information and ideas around the country. Likewise, the Schalkenbach Foundation provides the publishing services so essential if efforts at any level are to succeed.

In other words, Georgists must utilize the clearing-house and publishing services of national organizations; but they must also know that their first successes, if any, will occur in their state legislatures or by petition at the state level. To achieve any such successes, it is essential that they establish Georgist associations for action within their several states.

JAMES L. BUSEY

SELECTED QUOTATIONS

As an economic panacea, gradual inflation has serious shortcomings, of course. It soon develops into galloping inflation, destroying the savings and sense of thrift of millions, and finally bankrupting the nation. It cannot eradicate poverty. It can only avert a depression for a short time.

— Steven Cord

No Victory Without Political Action

Henry George was a firm believer in practical politics as an essential means for the advancement of his great social reform. He maintained that "The chief agency in promoting thought is discussion. And to secure the most general and most effective discussion of a principle it must be embodied in concrete form and presented in *practical politics*, so that men, being called to vote on it, shall be forced to think and talk about it."

Obviously, there can be no real victory for the Georgist cause without political action. Furthermore, there can be no effective political action without organization. Only through the development of strongly supported organization can effective pressure be exercised to obtain necessary legislation or to defeat unsound proposals. Only through such organization can public opinion be developed to demand any sort of political action, and this is especially true with regard to controversial issues.

Realizing this fact, many Georgists are now directing more earnest attention to the support of the work of the Henry George Foundation of America because it is the only national organization that is dedicated primarily to the great task of reviving and promoting aggressive organized political action, and because it is free from the sort of legal restrictions that have confined other worthy Georgist agencies exclusively to academic education and the publication of economic works.

For the past five years it has been the editorial policy of *EQUAL RIGHTS*, the official organ of the Henry George Foundation, to conduct an open forum for the discussion of all relevant issues, and particularly to encourage Georgists everywhere to exert their best influence to support or oppose legislation of concern to our cause in the broad field of social, economic and fiscal affairs, though particularly to use every opportunity to defend and extend land value taxation, to which purpose much of our campaign efforts have been directed.

As realists, we know from much experience and observation that the road to victory is not an easy one. We must contend with both the opposition and the rivalry of powerful competing interests and also with apathy of those who should be alert. For these reasons and because of the critical economic situation, very generous financial support for the political arm of our movement is most essential. — PERCY R. WILLIAMS

ECONOMIC FREEDOM

We would secure the largest production and the fairest distribution of wealth by leaving men free to produce and exchange as they please. — Henry George

How Poverty Might Be Abolished

Henry George's burning dream that land value taxation could abolish poverty need not be given up by his followers of today. The possibility is still as real as ever, for these two reasons:

(1) *Expansion of Opportunity* — Once we tax away the artificial speculative barriers that obstruct the active producers, labor and capital, from efficiently using land, then shall opportunity and production expand.

Once we end the land cause of depressions, and the land causes of inflation, then shall poverty be diminished. Not ended, though, since there would still be those who could not take advantage of the expanded opportunities — e.g., the physically handicapped, the mentally deficient, the very young and the elderly, the sick, and the culturally deprived (who lack the habits and skills of work). It is altogether possible that this number might still exceed the resources of private charity. But —

(2) *Provision of a Natural Welfare Fund* — Estimates by competent land economists indicate that the land rent in the U.S. economy today comes to about \$200 billion annually (probably more). If that much money was collected by the government in taxation, it would provide a fund that would be more than ample to bring all the deserving poor above the poverty line! Is it possible for any reasoning person to doubt it? This would truly be the final victory of justice over poverty.

All taxation on wealth and income for the purpose of funding a welfare state could then be abolished. There would still be a need for the government to levy taxes as charges for certain services rendered which only it could most effectively provide — as for defense and police, for instance. Since these are services to the whole community, then all should be required to pay.

Just as the government provides postal service which should be paid for by the users (and not subsidized by the taxpayers), so should it pay for highways by a charge to users — as by a gas tax, for instance.

Is such taxation — robbery? Most assuredly, if it is spent on unnecessary or undesirable projects.

But the main point is: *poverty is not necessary*. We need only heed fully the decree of justice (or call it Liberty or Reason, if you will) and collect the full rent from land, with which to inundate poverty.

— STEVEN CORD

Without economic freedom, no other freedom can endure. — Benjamin Franklin

I hold that land belongs equally to all, and that land values should be shared by all.
— Henry George

Political Action in Florida

Vice President Bill Newcomb entered the hospital January 1 with congestive influenza. When he was released he wondered how to keep a promise to the Melbourne Area Chamber of Commerce, Melbourne Area Board of Realtors, South Brevard County Common Cause and League of Women Voters, Federation of Home Owners, the South Brevard Democratic Club and the Republican Council of 100 of Brevard County to not only bring Perry Prentice to Melbourne on March 20, but also to handle the various details of research for State data on Florida for Prentice, the promotion for Prentice's appearance, the selection of a hall not too far from North and Central Brevard — so that the Central and Northern Brevard government officials would come to the Prentice speech.

Weak from his sickness, his first move was to make Col. Allen Pappas, former Mayor of Indian Harbour Beach, co-coordinator. His next move was to put a card table outside his home and an extension line on his telephone so that, stripped down to casual shorts, he could work in the warm Florida sun — while recuperating.

Each one of the above organizations (except the Chamber of Commerce, which dropped out as a sponsor several days before March 20, with the excuse "a matter of priorities") designed its own letter, and mailed copies to all 150 politicians in and of Brevard as well as to their membership.

The Committee of Eight (later seven) hoped for 300 auditors. Unhappily, a week before the 20th, it was learned that an official from Florida Health and Rehabilitative Services would be speaking to Brevard County government personnel that same evening in Cocoa, 20 miles north of Melbourne — and presence was obligatory. Despite this, 200 people attended the Prentice talk, and 30 people left their names and addresses for followup. This coupled with several hundred names and addresses as a result of Newcomb's Florida TV appearances constitute a nucleus for Florida political action.

There are about 15 long-time dedicated Georgists living in Florida in retirement. Newcomb hopes that they will join together in producing an audio-visual program strictly related to Florida, using slides and cassettes, such as Rep. Bill Onweiler has done so successfully in Idaho.

The Florida Georgists have the promise by the Brevard Committee of Seven (for Prentice's appearance) to remain intact for developing this Florida political program.

The South Brevard Democratic Club was represented by Dave Barrett, a first-time Representative to the Florida legislature.

It is also hoped that former Speaker of the House, Hon. Fred Schultz, now a banker in Jacksonville, will again appeal to the Governor to appoint a legislative committee to explore the validity of land value taxation, as espoused by Henry George.

Representative Bill Onweiler states that his 86 processed slides cost \$43. The audio-visual equipment costs between \$300 and \$500, according to Newcomb's research. If each of the 50 states had at least one audio-visual projector, that would be an outlay of \$20,000 for reasonable coverage of the entire country.

Passing the hat among Georgists in each state would finance the slides and tape. Most colleges and libraries and often the Bell Telephone Company local office will lend the audio-visual equipment for a few first showings.

Attention!

Members and Subscribers

Our thanks to you for many generous contributions from both new and old friends. To maintain and expand our work, we must depend on your voluntary annual contributions.

Have you subscribed or renewed your contribution for 1975?

Arden Generates Political Action

Not too many years ago, knowledge about the ideas of Henry George was nearly extinct in Arden, Delaware, the well-known single tax enclave.

Then two students of George Collins (Philadelphia HGS Director) started classes of their own in Arden. They were Penny Colgan and Michael Curtis, both of them Arden residents. The going was tough at first, as might be imagined, but gradually some momentum was developed and now there are three active classes in *P&P* being held in Arden. Writes Ms. Colgan: "Henry George has been brought back to Arden! It is exciting to see more and more people become interested, instructed and then convinced!"

But the Arden Georgists are not content with education only. Some previous graduates of the Colgan-Curtis courses have formed the Land Value Tax Committee of Delaware (and have also joined HGFA), and are writing letters, making speeches, button-holing politicians — in short, they are putting their ideals to work.

We are surrounded by a wall of apathy, yes, but the wall is pierceable, as the Arden experience shows.

— STEVEN CORD

Income and Taxes —

The Distinction

Here are two men of equal incomes — that of the one derived from the exertion of his labor, that of the other from the rent of land. Is it just that they should equally contribute to the expenses of the State? Evidently not. The income of the one represents wealth he creates and adds to the general wealth of the State; the income of the other represents merely wealth that he takes from the general stock, returning nothing.

— Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*

Bill Newcomb has shown the marvelous film *ONE WAY TO BETTER CITIES* to 50 Florida audiences, and while it is a beautiful and effective salesman, still the viewer says: "That doesn't tell sufficiently how land value taxation will affect us in our own community."

The slide-and-tape method is a low-budget project which land value tax foundations should look into.

— William W. Newcomb

Reliance on Land Tax Urged For Scranton

Commercially, downtown Scranton is engaged in a constant competitive battle with the modern-day suburban shopping center, in Scranton's case the Viewmont Mall, a huge modern merchandising complex sitting astride the Scranton-Dickson City line. Acre for acre, and including improvement values, downtown carries a tax load over ten times as great as the shopping center. However, it must be pointed out that the economics of downtown are delicate, indeed precarious; and ill-advised measures such as "privilege taxes," could well prove to be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

We must not allow nostalgia to blind us to reality. Years ago downtown was a healthier animal. It was the center. Day or night downtown was "action." Space was at a premium, and rents and profits seemed to have no ceiling. Properties rarely stayed on the market for long and sold at high prices. Today it takes the city's redevelopment authority years to sell parcels of downtown land at prices that are substantially below the assessed values.

Years ago downtown was the hub; the street cars and buses were the spokes; they all came downtown. But millions, billions of highway dollars and the mass distribution of automobiles bled downtown white. Between 1960 and 1970 Lackawanna County declined in population by 3,098 persons. During the same period motor vehicles registration in the county increased by 25,497. For every person we lost, we gained 8.23 motor vehicles! This expanded mobility has been the greatest destructive force affecting downtown. Yet downtown persists. Weak, anemic, and kicked regularly by every soap-box orator who discovers that there are few voters registered downtown; it hangs on precariously. Is there no solution? Yes, there is, but it requires a rethinking of the issue; it requires that the political power structure learn and abide by a few fundamental concepts.

With respect to downtown, a land value tax would increase downtown taxes by \$798,473 a year. Would this drive people away in the fashion of a business privilege tax? Not at all, and quite the contrary. What it would do is stimulate private downtown development. Unused or poorly used sites would be great economic pressure to improve their revenue position, but in making the improvements the owners would be encouraged to do so by virtue of the fact that the buildings themselves would not be taxed. The tenants would have a much greater choice of better accommodations; architecturally we could build much finer structures, for no longer would grace

Harry Gunnison Brown

The Henry George Foundation and the Land Value Tax movement in America have sustained a very great loss in the death of Dr. Harry Gunnison Brown on March 18 at the age of 95. He had served as an active member of the Board of Trustees of this Foundation since his election in 1961 and was a leader in the Pennsylvania campaign, engaged in several lecture tours advocating land value taxation before numerous civic and commercial organizations throughout the state, and was closely associated with Wylie Young who directed campaigns in Erie and other cities.

Dr. Brown was a professor of economics from 1909 to 1960, having taught at Yale University until 1915, then at the University of Missouri until 1950. He was the most outstanding academic proponent of land value taxation and virtually all his published works expounded this principle, including *Basic Principles of Economics*, *The Economic Basis of Tax Reform and Fiscal Policy*, *Taxation and Free Enterprise*. He also prepared an abridged version of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, and wrote many articles which appeared in periodicals and pamphlets.

Has The Land Boom Crested?

The land boom is a major victim of hard times. It's finished—for now. Developers and speculators are scrambling to unload tracts they bought for housing, business locations, factories, recreation areas. Only farmland is holding up in value, and even that shows signs of leveling off.

— U.S. News, March 17, 1975

and beauty (which cost money) be discouraged by an annual tax that runs forever.

A great renaissance would be started. The building trades would be busy for years. Our community could attract industry from far and wide. "Come to Scranton and build your plant. Our land prices are low, our land taxes are high, but that's it! Build the finest buildings you wish, they will not be taxed. You pay one tax: a tax on the value of your location. If you wish a strategic, well located position (a busy downtown corner) the tax will be high, but it will be fair, for you are paying for the community generated benefits of that location. How well you use this site is up to you, and we hope you make a fortune. If you don't need, or feel you can't afford the best location in town, select a less valuable site; the tax will be lower but your building will not be taxed. The tax on the value of the land is acceptable or unacceptable. You know what it is in advance; there is no secret about it. Beyond that, all we want to prove is that Scranton is truly the "Friendly City."

— JOHN M. KELLY, Scranton, Pa.

California Georgists Launch Land Equality and Freedom

The new Georgist organization, Land Equality and Freedom, Inc., the formation of which was announced at our National Conference in Pittsburgh last summer, was formally organized at a founding meeting held in San Diego on December 28, and has just reported the results of its first national election for its Board of Directors: Dr. Steven Cord, Dr. William Filante, Councilman Floyd Morrow, Harry Pollard, Everett Seeley, Robert Tideman, and Dr. William Truehart. Cord and Filante are also trustees of the Henry George Foundation of America.

Dr. Truehart is President and Robert Tideman has been appointed to serve as National Organizer. The purpose of LEAF, Inc., is "to take up the ancient challenge of land equality and freedom, and to work for equitable access to natural resources and for equality of natural opportunities."

Progress in Illinois

Bill 2083 was introduced in the Illinois State Legislature April 23, which if passed would enable counties to separate land and building values and probably tax them at a 2½ to 4 ratio. Joseph Venturella, one of Chicago's hardest working advocates of land value taxation, interested Representatives Walter McAvoy and John Fary who drafted the bill and had three colleagues sign with them.

According to Illinois' 1970 Constitution, differential tax rates are permissible, but cannot exceed a 2½ to 4 ratio, so that an opportunity is afforded to tax land higher. Chicago Georgists are writing all representatives in a concentrated effort to win their support for bill 2083. Hearings have started in committee. Several Georgists will attend and testify at Springfield on April 28 and later in other cities.

Latest Report From Delaware Campaign

The Land Value Tax Committee of Delaware, headed by Frank E. Nelson and Michael K. Curtis, reports that on the invitation of the Wilmington City Council, a presentation was made of the advantages of "Incentive Taxation" and property tax reform. George Collins, Director of the Philadelphia Henry George School and Walter Rybeck, Editorial Director of the Urban Institute, presented the film, "One Way to Better Cities" and cited particularly the 60-year experience of the revitalized city of Pittsburgh, with its Graded Tax plan, and also the adoption last year of a graded tax plan in the city of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.