

Equal Rights

To The Earth's Resources

Spring 1981

HGFA coming up to bat in many places

Your Foundation has not been resting on past laurels. We have been in constant contact with the public officials in New Castle, Pennsylvania and a news item from the local newspaper (February 5, 1981) reads as follows:

"Mayor Angelo J. Sands will wait until warmer weather arrives to begin schooling residents about the merits of a land value tax.

"He said yesterday he plans to use his community meetings as the forum. However, he acknowledged that it is difficult to get good attendance at the meetings during the winter months and will wait until spring.

"Sands also plans to explain the tax in a newsletter he will send to residents.

"If all goes according to present plans, the tax will be instituted in 1982. The mayor and City Council wanted to establish the tax this year, but Sands felt the public did not have sufficient warning and could have confused the property tax increase with the land value tax. The property tax was increased by 13.5 percent for 1981."

President Steven Cord and Trustee Daniel Sullivan have just completed a study for the Harrisburg School Board in an effort to determine which type of land owners would pay more and which less if the building property tax were shifted to land. The study was performed at the behest and at the expense of the school district and involved an intensive two-day visit to Harrisburg.

City officials in Greensburg, Pennsylvania have written to the Foundation asking for a consultation on how to interest a land value tax there.

Cord will testify before a legislative committee session on alternatives to replacing the property tax for schools with an income tax.

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Foundation's new Center for the Study of Economics wins tax exempt status

It has taken many months of intense paper work, but our Foundation has recently established an off-shoot organization called the Center for the Study of Economics which will be handling all of our educational and non-political activities in the future. And now, we have just been informed that this organization has received 501 C (3) tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.

What this means is that any member or supporter can now leave a bequest to the HGFA's Center for the Study of Economics with the knowledge that the whole amount of money will go to the Foundation and none will go to the Internal Revenue Service in inheritance or income taxes. All the money will be invested and for years into the future it will go to finance various Georgist activities of an educational nature.

Heretofore, bequests to the Henry George Foundation have been subject to inheritance tax. Despite this, dedicated Georgists of previous generations have bequeathed tens of thousands of dollars to the Foundation, and their total bequests have grown to over \$120,000. The Center for the Study of Economics tax exemption should be an extra inducement to future bequestors. At the very least the Internal Revenue Service will not intervene between Georgists and the Foundation's educational work.

It should be pointed out that the Center for the Study of Economics is a totally independent organization with separate checkbook and assets. Edward H. Schoyer, Jacob Himmelstein and Marian Hahn and Steven Cord (all HGFA Trustees) will be Trustees of the new organization. Incidentally, it will be able to receive annual contributions from Georgists as well, and all contributions will be tax exempt.

Perhaps we can take this oppor-

tunity to remind our readers that they could have their Georgist influence live on beyond their own time by making bequests in their wills to the Center for the Study of Economics, 580 N. Sixth Street, Indiana, Pa., 15701. Such bequests have enabled our Foundation to last for these past 54 years, and we hope that our generation of Georgists will be as loyal to the ideas of Henry George as have past generations.

Newcomb solicits Georgist - Unitarians

Bill Newcomb, who has drawn good response through running editorial column-ads in four social commentary magazines, is putting on a campaign to win the national Unitarian membership to LVT at its annual Assembly meeting.

Among those joining him are: Mrs. Harry Gunnison Brown, Louis Freeman, Evelyn Friend, Len Huckabone, Mildred Loomis, and Polly Roberts.

All Georgist Unitarians are asked to send their names to Bill Newcomb, Media Foundation for Land Economics, 1225 So. Wickham Road, Melbourne, FL 32901. The resolution requires 250 signatures.

The campaign draws its inspiration from two sources: (1) A statement made by Frank Chodorov, director of the 29th St. Henry George School, who said one evening in the Coffee Hour: "Some day a minister will shout from the pulpits the philosophy of Henry George, as did Father Edward McGlynn, the multitude will follow him -- and then my work will be done." (2) More than any other religious body, the Unitarian-Universalist Church is in the vanguard of social reform -- and dozens of Georgists put their names on a bulletin board at the Henry George Centennial identifying themselves as Unitarians.

From the Editor

Many Georgists were saddened to learn of the recent death of Col. Edward C. Harwood, 80, founder and for nearly 50 years Director of the American Institute for Economic Research. A long-time Trustee of the Henry George School, Harwood was an ardent supporter of Henry George and his principles through the Institute's publications, which enjoy worldwide distribution. Undoubtedly, the Institute will continue to champion many of George's ideas as relevant, urgently needed remedies for today's ills.

Col. Harwood's personal Creed exemplified the essence of the Georgist spirit in that his purpose in life was to serve his fellow human beings. "What is worthwhile in life?" He wrote "I suggest that the answer is found not only in carrying your personal and family responsibilities as you should but also in the realization that in some small degree to the extent of your ability you have helped to foster a more just social order for those who will come after you."

Another Harwood legacy that will continue, and one that might be of benefit to readers personally and to our cause, will be AIER's affiliated investment and retirement advisor service. Harwood had a firm belief that the best hope for achieving sound public policies would be through the efforts of a substantial number of financially secure and independent citizens. His unique service is bearing fruit, for over many years thousands of individuals and institutions, even those of modest means, have found this financial advice safe, sound and truly golden. Those interested may obtain details from AIER, Great Barrington, Mass. 01230. All income from this service is used to support the educational work of the Institute.

Straws in the wind . . .

- Two Iowa state senators, Arne Waldstein and Rolf Craft, have introduced a bill calling for a graduated state land tax . . . the greater the amount of land owned the higher the tax rate. Their object is to help preserve small to medium-sized farms.

- A Wilmington (Del.) city councilman, with newspaper editorial support, is advocating higher taxes on "vacant houses" as a means of providing more usable housing for the poor . . .

F. E. Nelson

"COMPACT CITIES" — Congressional report a great boon for activists

Readers wanting excellent material (a government publication) for themselves and for distribution to public officials in promoting LVT should avail themselves with copies of "COMPACT CITIES: Energy Saving Strategies For The Eighties", an 86 page report by the Subcommittee On the City of the Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, July 1980, Congressman Henry S. Reuss, Chairman.

While Georgists may not agree with all aspects of this report, which primarily deals with urban energy savings by "in-filling" the now partly-vacant cities, it does explore very thoroughly the causes of why there are such large amounts of unused and misused land in our inner-cities, and why the related urban sprawl and vanishing farmland. The case for the adoption of LVT as a solution is most convincingly presented, complete with considerable documentation and charts illustrating Pittsburgh's recent impressive achievements.

Our own HGFA president, Steven Cord, presented testimony in this 3-year study, along with other noted land economists and urban specialists. This comprehensive report was prepared by Walter Rybeck, Special Assistant for the Urban Affairs Committee.

Copies are available from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), 5285 Port Royal Rd., Springfield, Va. 22161. Request publication No. PB-81-152019. Prices: microfiche \$3.50, (requires viewer); paper back copy \$9.50. (possibly free from Congressmen!)

Hanson

(Cont'd from pg. 4)

maintenance and repair, age and obsolescence. The only value needed for assessing land is market value. Go to any real estate office in any town and you can likely get a pretty fair estimate of the price of a lot in any part of the town, without leaving the office.

The building industry now is particularly hard hit by inflation and high interest rates. What better stimulant can there be for this industry than to have a drop in land prices and the incentive for ownership that would come with untaxed buildings, whether they be homes, apartments or the buildings of commerce and industry?

To blame a sick economy on uncontrollable conditions should not be the dismal answer to problems that can be remedied. We are a nation of problem solvers in areas outside of political economy. Why not put the same skills on the solution of political problems?

If there are no better solutions coming from the other 49 states than those proposed in the Utah Legislature, the economic future is not bright. More will be expected from Washington than Washington can deliver. It is incredible that proposals in Utah would consider an increase in sales taxes, which lower buying power; severance taxes, which penalize production; and further property tax exemptions,

which throw a greater burden on those who must pay the tax.

Over the years, by subtle means, the land value tax has been lowered, as a part of total taxes; land privilege enhanced and all oppressive taxes increased. The challenge of the eighties is to turn this trend around. The action to watch will be that of

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At Bat

(cont'd from page 1)

Mountains of mail from isolated Georgists across the continent have been flowing in to HGFA headquarters, and mountains of letters in reply have gone out.

The Foundation has maintained a study of construction following the introduction of a higher land tax in Pittsburgh and McKeesport. The results are very gratifying and will be published in a forthcoming issue of Incentive Taxation.

We operate on the theory that if we come to bat often enough, we will on occasion hit a home run or two.

Equal Rights

A quarterly published by the
Center for the Study of Economics
Editors: Frank E. Nelson
Edward J. Dodson

Editorial Reagan Economics: Great Expectations

Backed by the free market and monetarist principles advocated by Milton Friedman and the "supply-side" projections put forth by Arthur Laffer, President Reagan has embarked upon an economic journey which is designed to return the nation toward classic "liberalism" and away from the "demand management" post-Keynesian era. Considerable doubt has been registered, particularly by the party in opposition, as to the impact of the Reagan plan. What, then, can be expected from the proposed tax rate reductions and cuts in Federal spending proposed by the Reagan administration?

American fiscal and monetary policy can be traced directly to the famed English economist, John Maynard Keynes, who, in a letter to Franklin Roosevelt during December 1933, dictated the plan for recovery:

"... as the prime mover in the first stage of the technique of recovery, I lay overwhelming emphasis on the increase of national purchasing power resulting from governmental expenditure... financed by loans and... not merely a transfer through taxation from existing incomes. Nothing else counts in comparison with this.

Actually, until 1938, Roosevelt chose to ignore this brilliant economists's advice and attempted to maintain a balanced budget by keeping a lid on expenditures and raising taxes. Economists generally agree that deficit spending after 1938 had only minor impact upon the Depression. Rearming for war created the jobs and increased purchasing power.

Most economists agreed with Keynes that the driving force in the economy was "effective demand" and that aggregate demand could be stimulated by either reducing taxes or increasing government spending. Experience in the 1950s and pre-Vietnam 1960s supported the theory that this could be done without serious inflationary consequences. Understandably, economists have been hard pressed to explain the stagflation (i.e., high unemployment/high inflation) of the last decade.

Milton Friedman, on the other hand, has largely credited the Federal Reserve System for turning recession into Depression by deliberate contraction of the money supply at precisely

the wrong time. Congress and President Hoover also deserve recognition for the passage in 1929 of the Smoot-Hawley tariff bill and an assortment of progressive tax legislation. America had truly entered the age of the managed economy.

The challenge to our generation, and the goal of the Reagan plan, is how we can get unemployed people back to work and increase aggregate demand without the government expenditures associated with war. And, at this point, the element of supply becomes the central issue -- along with terms such as "productivity" and "growth". Supply-side economists point out that demand management policies failed to produce stabilized economic growth and contributed to the inflationary rates of growth in wages and prices. Additionally, they state that the explosion of government redistributive programs prevented the achievement of demand management's primary stabilizer -- the cyclically balanced budget.

The Reagan program is designed to control aggregate private demand by urging the FED to follow a policy of "tight" money, increasing the money supply at a rate equal to the growth in real GNP. Monetary policy cannot alone control government demand, however, and Congressional spending has rendered fiscal policy to the level of inept rhetoric. Meaningful budget cuts will be extremely difficult to achieve in the environment of special interest. Finally, reductions in tax rates to business and individuals are expected to increase saving and investment in new plant and equipment. Economist Peter I. Bernstein recently expressed the view that:

"American corporations are in desperate need of more equity as a base for the additional debt financing that is in turn essential to finance economic growth."

Since American industry is dependent on international trade for essential natural resources, we must become more productive if we are to compete in the international market.

The one question I have not yet heard addressed by the supply-side economists is the method to be utilized for control over monopolistic appropriation of any increases in productivity achieved. I am quite positive

that the member nations of OPEC and our own domestic corporate resource owners do, indeed, have "great expectations" for the Reagan plan!

EDWARD J. DODSON

Reagan advisor a "closet" Georgist?

Supply-Side Economist Arthur Laffer, former professor at Univ. of Southern Calif., famous for the "Laffer Curve", and now a principal advisor to the President, is quoted as saying, "One of the great American economists was Henry George... one of George's most concise statements, which I always teach to my classes, is called Proposition to Try by the Cannons of Taxation... you see, that's the essence of what we are talking about (Supply-Side theory). And George wrote that more than one hundred years ago in Progress and Poverty."

We can only live in hope that the closet door might soon swing completely open!

Notes:

C.N. "Kelly" Nelson sends news of a newly-formed group in Rochester, N.Y. with a most imaginative name... COMMITTEE FOR SITE-VALUE REVENUE... That certainly accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative, namely that word "taxation"... at least from their banner. Let's hope it proves helpful.

The group was formed by long-time Georgist, Marvin Morris.

They already have a lot going for them. Their one-page flyer (Message No. 1 1981) is a very readable explanation of why subsidies for urban renewal will likely continue to be inadequate and how renewal can be made more attractive to private enterprise through LVT.

Copies have been distributed to city and county councils, and to influential people in the community. A lawyer in their group is working with the Ways and Means Committee of the N.Y. State Legislature to draft a bill proposing gradual introduction of LVT.

Readers interested in further details may write to "Kelly", c/o PO Box 17001, Rochester, NY 14617.

**Once You've Seen
the Cat...**

CATALYST! being
used in I U P Classes

Last year the Henry George Foundation published *Catalyst!*, a 115 page book on all aspects of land value taxation, written by our President, Steven Cord. It contains ten chapters on such subjects as:

- how the land value tax would benefit homeowner - voters, politicians, downtown retailers, factory owners and even farmers;

- how to accomplish a significant redistribution of wealth to poor people without penalizing the wealth producers one iota;

- extensive evidence conclusively proving that the tax on land values is more based on the ability-to-pay principle than is the income tax or any other tax;

- land-rent is now exceeding one-fifth of the national income (based on extensive evidence);

- what the Bible says about taxing land values;

- the successful results achieved by Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and Denmark with the taxation of land values;

- a brief recounting of the long history of land value taxation plus a description of the leading organizations currently promoting the idea.

Half of the book collects the best articles from *Incentive Taxation* while the other half contains articles not printed yet in that publication and material written especially for the book. It is available to Equal Rights readers from the Center for the Study of Economics, 580 N. 6th Street, Indiana, Pa., 15701, and the price is \$5.

Cord, who is a Professor of recent American History at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, is using *Catalyst!* in his classes. One course he teaches, called *Reform in America Today*, devotes ten weeks to a detailed discussion of the issues raised in *Catalyst!* The book is used as the main text. In his other classes the book is used for extra credit purposes. The book is proving to be quite useful for these purposes and a number of students have become quite interested in the single tax as a result.

*Earl Hanson's L V T proposal wins
Utah newspaper's support*

Let us examine land-based tax

**Iron County
Record** Feb. 5, 1981

Today's editorial is by Earl A. Hanson of Cedar City, who favors a land-based property tax.

From what we've been able to see, we feel this basis for taxation should be given a much closer look on Capital Hill than it now is.

Hanson presents arguments that a land-based property tax would make the assessment process much easier. Considering Utah's recent disastrous experience in this aspect, they should be eager to embrace such a proposal, if this were true.

Secondly, Hanson asserts a land-based tax would provide more incentive for building improvement and maintenance than the present system. From the facts we have been made aware of, we would tend to agree.

If this were true, it would be especially significant for Cedar City's efforts to rehabilitate its downtown area.

We would like to see a full examination of the land-based property tax on this editorial page. Mr. Hanson's editorial today starts this process. We would like to receive responses, either in favor of, or opposing his stance, from our readers.

For now, this approach to taxing seems to be one of the best-kept secrets in this state. We would like to see it come out of the closet and receive complete public discussion.

Hanson's editorial

An opinion poll asks voter preference between the property tax, income tax or sales tax. To the economist, or at least to the land economist, the question is absurd.

The property tax is two taxes. It is the worst of all taxes and it is the best of all taxes. It is not levied by Congress so it doesn't come in for too much national media attention. But for state and local governments, the right property tax can make a bigger contribution to supply side economics

than we dare to hope for in the reduction of federal income taxes.

In the economic analysis of taxes, they fall either on earning, savings, trade or land. The portion of the property tax levied on land, which includes natural resources, is the only tax that creates an incentive for production. Its increase does not change the product price paid by the consumer, therefore it does not contribute to inflation. When the return for land (economic rent) is not taken in taxes, it accrues to land owners. On the other hand, the property tax on improvements is oppressive, having the same adverse affect on the economy as the income tax and the sales tax.

A tax increase of any kind is not in order -- the mood is rather for tax reductions. But the need for reform is at least a century overdue. The initial objective in reforming the property tax is only to increase the land value tax to the extent that is required to totally phase out the tax on improvements. This may call for taking four or five times the land value tax that is now collected.

Fortunately, the land value tax is not a new tax. There would not be a new cost of administration, unless greatly improved assessment work is needed.

The administrative cost saving by removing the property tax from improvements will be enormous. For every assessor that is required to assess urban land, about four assessors are required to assess improvements, and that number would likely not achieve the same precision for improvement values that would be attained for land values. Improvement value assessment requires knowledge of investment cost, additions and betterments, quality of

(Cont'd on page 2)

Readers' Forum

What are the natural rights of man?

The phrase "human rights", first espoused and championed by President Carter, was a take-off from the phrase "civil rights." For "natural rights" we have to go back to the writings of Thomas Jefferson, chief framer of the Declaration of Independence. This document stated: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

As great as Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues were, they made no mention that man had equal rights to the use of the Earth, without which the previously mentioned rights were largely nullified.

Dr. Carl Sagan, astronomer and commentator of the television series "Cosmos", has shown us dramatically our place in the Universe. On the screen you see billions and billions of Stars. From this vastness, he takes us down to Galaxies, of which there are millions, and then down to our own galaxy, the Milky Way, which has billions of stars in it.

Then Dr. Carl Sagan focuses down on Earth, a lush, rich planet, endowed with the most providential ranges of temperatures, solids, liquids, and gases.

The surface of the Earth has 196,938,800 square miles of area, containing 4,100,000,000 people. The land area alone is 57,500,000 square miles. This extrapolates to 9 acres of land per person, or 36 acres of land per family of four (40 acres in the U.S.)

"You mean that I own 36 acres of land?" the reader might ask.

I would answer: "Yes. This was your natural inheritance given you by God upon birth."

"Then why don't I have it?"

"You've been disinherited from your natural birthright. Instead, your birthright is your share of the national debt.

After a pause, the reader might say, "I have two questions. First, how did this state of affairs come about? Second, how can you practically divide the Earth up into equal shares?"

To the first question, throughout history, as man progressed from the simple, isolated family to the tribe

or clan, the common and equal rights to land were obvious and universally recognized, since man was directly dependent upon land for his livelihood.

It is only as Society develops beyond this crude stage, when people trade with each other, and manufacture, specialize and perform services, that this direct link to land is broken.

People have become so distant and alienated from the land that they have forgotten the basic fact that all we have on Earth is land and people, and that no matter how many intermediaries there may be that it is the latter utilizing the former that produces all the wealth on Earth.

To the second question, how can you implement this idea of equality in the land, let us think it out. Obviously, there are different grades of land, some more productive than others in fertility and location. Some have gold, silver, uranium, oil, timber, etc.; some produce high land rents, as in New York City. How to produce equality? Quite simple. If government whether national, state, or local, collected all the land rents and used them for legitimate government services, we would have essential equality in the use of the Earth. Those who owned more and better land would pay more to the government for this privilege. Those who owned less or none at all would pay less or nothing. No one could own land unless he used it, as the cost would be prohibitive. Land speculation and unemployment would cease to exist, for how could there be unemployment when natural opportunities were free to all for the asking? Taxes could be lessened and eventually eliminated.

Other than this basic reform, no reform will work for nothing else would get at the basic thing that is wrong with our economy.

Let everyone recognize his heritage, his natural right to his share of Earth, which is, actuarially, 36 acres per family. Let standard bearers arise, let banners unfurl, proclaiming: "36 acres and No Taxation."

a condensation of
"The Heritage of Earth"
by Dr. Samuel Scheck
Woodbury, NY

"Whoever becomes imbued with a noble idea kindles a flame from which other torches are lit, and influences those with whom he comes in contact — be they few or many.

— Henry George

READERS — PLEASE WRITE!

We want to hear from our readers interested in a forward movement. We solicit your advice and any new ideas for the benefit of our common cause. And since some of the articles we will print may present controversial viewpoints, we invite your comments pro and con.

We will try to print as many letters as possible within the limits of the space available. At the very least we will summarize all letters received, if addressed to —

The Editor, EQUAL RIGHTS, 580 North Sixth Street, Indiana, Pa. 15701

Thoughts of the 30's

Henry George was a strange and significant phenomenon in the midst of an age of acquisitiveness and materialism. He sought and found fundamental moralities as the basis of an economic philosophy, and nobody who has read "Progress and Poverty" is ever the same in his thinking as he was before he saw those eloquent and impressive pages. Much that Mr. George taught has now become a part of the every day philosophy of our political life and much more will become a part of it. I do not, however, believe that there will ever be any sudden application of Mr. George's principles. Sound political development is a matter of growth and not a matter of revolution, and even a fundamentally right economic doctrine, if it involves a radical departure from accepted practices, has to be absorbed little by little to avoid consequences too severe to endure which would follow a nation-wide attempt to go back to the beginnings of things to correct an ancient error.

Newton D. Baker

Pittsburgh, Pa.

December 3, 1931

"Unless we acknowledge the equal rights of all to land, our free institutions will be in vain." Henry George

Hanson (Cont'd from pg. 2)

state legislatures. Congress can support the reform (and help reduce the deficit) by a faster removal of revenue sharing and grants. To help our Legislature the media can help by bringing about a better understanding of the two property taxes, the one that should be removed and the other one that should be very substantially increased.

THE EARTH IS THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL MANKIND

The Rent of Land Belongs to the People. The First Duty of Government is to Collect It for Public Expenses, and to Abolish All Taxes.

Yesteryear . . .

Commonwealth Land Party
National Committee

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1934

HENRY GEORGE CLUB OUTRANKS POLITICAL GROUPS IN CITY JOBS



HEADQUARTERS

3 EAST 14 STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y.

TEL. STUYVESANT 0470

September 29, 1926.

David Lawrence Belongs

Other members of the club include such well-knowns as Democratic State Chairman David L. Lawrence, Joseph F. Gaffey, Democratic candidate for United States Senator; Charles R. Eckert, of Beaver, Democratic nominee for Congress; Carl D. Smith and William E. Schover, Democratic luminaries; Sidney A. Teller, director of Irene Kaufmann Settlement; Dr. William J. Van Essen, Socialist leader; County Elections Director John M. Henry, State Legislator John L. Powers, and Frank C. Harper, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to the three assessors dismissed by the Mayor, fired Henry George Club members include former Solicitor Cornelius D. Scully and B. D. McGinnis, ex-member of the Civil Service Commission.

Mayor McNair's Organization Enjoys Rapid 200 Per Cent Growth, While Members Draw Down \$100,000 Annually From Appointee Municipal Posts

Henry George Club members outdo all political faiths when it comes to landing on the city payroll.

Made famous by Mayor William M. McNair, a charter member, the club's popularity has grown more than 200 per cent since its best-known exponent was elected last fall.

Due to the Mayor's new appointments and the initiation of payrollers retained in office by Mr. McNair, Henry Georgelites now draw down a combined annual salary of more than \$100,000 from the City Treasury.

This figure does not include three members of City Council, elected independently of the Mayor, and three other single-taxers Mr. McNair is trying to get on the payroll.

Club Packs Dining Room

The Henry George Club, meeting at luncheon every Friday for the avowed purpose of perpetuating the famous Henry George tax theories, often nowadays packs the Chamber of Commerce dining room.

Before Mr. McNair became Mayor McNair, the club's weekly luncheons were attended by as few as 25.

Its membership, while numbering 100 when it was organized 10 years ago, dwindled to less than 50 active members. Mr. McNair's election, however, boosted the membership lists to a record number of 150.

Twenty-three of this number have city jobs under the jurisdiction of the Mayor. Three others have been appointed by Mr. McNair but so far not confirmed by City Council. Three are members of Council. Five others have been hired and fired by the Mayor.

Equal Rights

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