

# Equal Rights

Volume VI, Number 4

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

Summer, 1975

## PROGRESS IN COLORADO

On August 19 I appeared before the Legislative Council in Denver in what I regard as being a very successful appeal for adoption in Colorado of a constitutional amendment to remove that part of the property tax that falls on improvements. The Legislative Council considers possible legislation for the next session, to open in January.

All but one or two of the 15 representatives and senators were present, and there was an audience of 30 or 40 other individuals, including some assessors from around the state. They were considering legislation relating to assessment and property-tax reforms, and I spoke for about 20 minutes, followed by about 20 minutes for questions from the legislators which I answered. I explained about the two parts of the property tax, the effects of the one and the effects of the other, etc., and how if that part of the property tax that falls on improvements were removed, assessors would be compelled to increase their assessments of land values from their present minimal levels to something approximating 30% of market value as provided by Colorado law, but with mill levies not under any legal limitation at present.

My appearance was arranged by Rep. Bob Leon Kirscht, Democratic Majority Leader of the House, who is already with us 75% of the way, and asked me leading questions about the "ability to pay" vs. "benefits received" principles of taxation. Rep. William S. Flanery and Rep. Steven Durham of this district are ready to go with this; and Rep. Sam Zakhem of Denver tells me he will put his name behind any legislation I want to propose on the subject. This is a long way from final success, but is very encouraging.

The Taxpayers of El Paso County is on record as unanimously endorsing my proposed constitutional amendment which would simply say, "No property tax shall be levied on improvements."

—JAMES L. BUSEY

## REVITALIZATION RALLY INSPIRES AMERICAN GEORGISTS

With the active participation of many prominent Georgists, a truly inspiring National Conference assembled at Harcum Junior College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, from Thursday, July 17 to Sunday, July 20. This conference was sponsored by the Henry George Foundation of America in response to the urgent request of the Consultation of Henry George Groups held in Pittsburgh in June, 1974 with John Tetley serving as co-ordinator, but who unfortunately was not able to attend this conference. With the able assistance of Robert Clancy, a newly-elected trustee of the Foundation, who was drafted to serve as chairman of the conference committee, an impressive panel of speakers was provided and a significant step was taken toward stronger united action designed to accelerate and expand the Georgist movement in America.

The agenda embraced a variety of live topics, both educational and political, with special emphasis given to reports of legislative or political activity throughout the nation, and particularly in Pennsylvania where the Graded Tax League (a subsidiary of the Henry George Foundation) has been bringing strong influences to bear on the Pennsylvania League of Cities and more directly on the officials of several cities now interested in moving toward the adoption of a graded tax plan in their communities. Over 70 conferees attended representing Alabama, California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Canada.

Executive Secretary Percy R. Williams presided at the opening session on Thursday evening. At the conclusion of the conference, Robert Clancy conducted an evaluation session and there was a general feeling of appreciation for this conference, which produced much information and inspiration. Julian Hickok of Philadelphia proposed that the Henry George Foundation be requested again to initiate a national conference, and this was unanimously approved. It was proposed that the next conference be held in Chicago in July, 1976 and Mrs. Mina Olson, director of the Chicago Henry George School, indicated that Illinois Georgists would undertake this task if the responsibility were shared by a national Georgist conference committee to be appointed during the year.

## HENRY GEORGE FOUNDATION ELECTS OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

The annual business meeting of the Henry George Foundation of America was held at its Pittsburgh headquarters on September 2, in observance of the birthday of Henry George, with a substantial majority of its voting members participating either in person or proxy. Vice President Steven Cord presided and Executive Secretary Williams presented a report of growing financial support and expanding activities.

This year four new members were elected to the Board of Trustees: Perry Prentice, New York, Louis I. Weitzman, Massachusetts, John M. Kelly, Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Michael K. Curtis, Arden, Delaware.

Four present members were re-elected for another term of three years: Steven Cord, Marian S. Hahn, William E. Schoyer and William E. Walker.

William E. Schoyer of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, one of the original founders still surviving, who has been an active officer of the Foundation ever since it was chartered in 1926, was unanimously re-elected as President, Carl D. Smith as First Vice President; Steven Cord, Second Vice President, William W. Newcomb, Third Vice President; Agnes George deMille, Honorary Vice President; Percy R. Williams, Executive Secretary and Treasurer; John C. Weaver, Assistant Secretary; and Marion S. Hahn, Assistant Treasurer.

The officers reported that a successful national conference was conducted at Bryn Mawr, Pa. in July. Intensive efforts had been directed to the promotion of local interest in Pennsylvania's optional graded tax plan. And through the medium of its quarterly periodical, EQUAL RIGHTS, the Foundation had sought to extend its influence throughout the nation as a co-ordinating center for information and advice.

## Equal Rights

A quarterly published by the  
Henry George Foundation of America  
336 Fourth Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222

William E. Schoyer, President  
Percy R. Williams, Editor  
James L. Bussey, Steven Cord, Associate Editors  
Yearly Subscription \$1.00

## Editorials

### Should Georgists Lead The Fight For Economic Freedom?

Many Americans are beginning to awaken to the realization that our economic system is constantly shifting from a private enterprise, free market economy to one that is centrally directed and under public control. Whether it be called managed capitalism, socialism, or a planned economy—the end result may prove to be the virtual elimination of the free market system because the opposition to free enterprise is well organized, effective and articulate.

When EQUAL RIGHTS was initiated in 1969, as our official organ, it marked the beginning of a new and broader policy espoused by the Henry George Foundation. We announced that the prime purpose of this quarterly journal would be to present the philosophy of Henry George as a major social reform aimed to achieve the ideal of equal rights to all and special privilege to none. And that to that end, we would not shrink from the task of interpreting the current issues of the day in the light of the Georgist philosophy. Though it may at times seem that they are concerned only with slight modifications of local property taxes that may not provoke much opposition, the fact is that most Georgists are very confident that they have a potent remedy for our major social and economic ills.

Land value taxation and free enterprise are the two basic essentials for the attainment of equal rights for all the people. But we have permitted special interest groups such as land speculators, organized labor, agriculture and much of business and industry, using government to impose legalized conditions that obstruct the natural operation of genuine free enterprise. As Henry George has well said, "we differ from the socialists in our diagnosis of the evil and we differ from them as to remedies. We have no fear of capital, regarding it as the natural handmaiden of labor. We see no evil in competition, but deem unrestricted competition to be necessary to the health of the industrial and social organization. All that is

## THE LURE OF SOCIALISM

### Socialism!

It has become a magic word. Among idealists and the destitute of the earth, it seems that socialism will end poverty, discrimination and social conflict.

The word "communism" is also heard. At one time, communism was thought to be a more idyllic, voluntaristic social condition than socialism, wherein the state would "wither away" to use Lenin's phrase, and people would "produce according to ability and share according to need." Today, however, we tend to think of "communism" and "communists" as denoting the utilization of violence and tyranny for the achievement of socialist ends. Even among communists, "socialism" is the favorite word. The countries of Eastern Europe claim they are "socialist," and the Russians call their country the "Union of Socialist Republics."

So-called "developing" countries of Africa talk about "building socialism." Among leadership elites in many parts of Latin America, socialism is a good word, denoting nice things. Innumerable intellectuals around the world pride themselves on being "socialists" of one kind or another. "Socialist" is the "in" thing to be.

What is this "socialism" that is so widely favored?

*Specifically, socialism is supposed to put the whole community in charge of the means of production and distribution. Under socialism, the whole people will "produce for use, not for profit" and will displace the present profiteering exploiters of the human race.*

*This all sounds very grand, but is also extremely vague. How will the "whole people" or the "community" come to own and operate the means of production and distribution?*

Long before the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, or other communist regimes revealed the inevitable tyranny that is inherent in the socialist idea, writers cautioned that if the "whole people" or "community" are to control economic affairs, they must have some instrumentality to do so. Somebody must manage, must administer, must coordinate, must make plans. If private owners are not to do these things, someone else must do so.

*The only visible instrumentality for transferring economic affairs from private owners to the "whole people" is the State, and the State is run by officials.*

The implications of this fact have been pointed out by numerous scholars, in-

needed to remedy the evils of our time is to do justice and give freedom." Let us not forget the admonition of our great social philosopher that "we must break down all monopolies and destroy all special privilege."

—PERCY R. WILLIAMS

cluding Theodore D. Woolsey in his two-volume work, *Political Science or the State* (1877) and Max Hirsch in *Democracy Versus Socialism* (1901) and *Socialism the Slave State* (1904).

In the name of "the people" or "the whole community" or "the working class" or some other such mythical concept, socialists would create the greatest monopoly over the society and human spirit ever devised by the mind of man. Not numerous individuals and companies, but rather one great, monolithic corporation of politicians, or cell of bureaucrats, or central committee, or political bureau, would come to own and operate the means of production and distribution, and therefore all the means of life of all people under their authority. In their wildest imaginations, the directors of the greatest private monopoly on earth could never dream of controlling so much economic and political power.

Of course there are countries, such as Sweden and the United Kingdom, where governmental ownership and operation of a portion of the economy has not overturned democratic institutions and practices. This is because complete governmental monopoly over all facets of the economy has not been achieved; and, where popular government is of long standing over many past generations, it takes time for political monopoly of economic power to uproot ingrained democratic practices.

It must be confessed that in some countries such as China, formerly dominated by non-productive feudalistic exploitation devoid of any spark of social conscience, seizure of power by communist zealots may induce a certain improvement in material condition. Otherwise, there is not a shred of evidence that introduction of socialism into fairly developed politico-economic systems has brought anything but hardship, financial insolvency, rationing, shortages of everything, bureaucratic strangulation and ultimately political tyranny and terror. Nor, when one reflects on it, is there any reason why political monopolization over all the means of production and distribution should have any other effects; and the wonder is that anyone should have supposed that this would be the solution to human distress!

The single tax would socialize the unearned increment from the land, thus permitting government to collect for its needs the revenues arising from the efforts of the entire community and of government itself. Henry George, and no doubt some Georgists today, would also favor governmental ownership and operation of very basic natural monopolies such as transportation and communications. To this extent, Georgism may be said to have a "socialist" side to it.

There is, however, this profound difference—  
Continued on back page

## Influencing the Influencers

Francis Bacon wrote "Reading maketh a full man, writing maketh an exact man and conference maketh a ready man." I am sure that most of you have done your reading of what Henry George had to say or you wouldn't be here. My message to you today is about writing which I feel can and should spread our ideas with great efficiency. And this conference should make us ready to tackle the social and economic problems that so need correcting.

Most of us here, I believe, are convinced that we know the causes of the world problems and we also have the formula to solve these problems — thanks to the genius of Henry George. Well then, let's get ready to spread his economic philosophy in order to attain equality of opportunity for all mankind which could be equated with "Justice." Now what is the best way to spread our formula and whom do we want to influence? A little history of our movement may be enlightening.

In 1932, at the height of the great depression, Oscar Geiger started a small group of socially conscious individuals in the study of the economic philosophy of Henry George. From this modest beginning developed the Henry George School of Social Science where most of the emphasis was on education. I, myself, attended a series of classes starting in 1940 which culminated in teaching my first class in the fall of 1941. I have been hooked ever since. The fact that so many of us are here assembled from all parts of the United States shows a degree of success although neither you nor I have been satisfied with our progress to date. We can and should do more, and there is no doubt that we can — that's what this conference is all about. The opportunities today are similar to the situation in 1932 when almost everyone was asking questions, trying to lick the depression. Since then numerous classes for adults were held at school headquarters in New York and extensions were established all over the country graduating thousands of socially concerned citizens.

However, the climate for classes has not been propitious of late due to the insecurity in our cities. Therefore we have to now look for other ways to spread our philosophy. Uncle Sam's mail still runs and will actually take our message into all houses and offices at reasonable cost. Aren't we subsidizing it? The effectiveness will be determined, of course, by how well we prepare our message. Our Motto now should be "Use the mail." Agreed! But to whom?

When we ran classes it was rather difficult and undemocratic to screen out those who couldn't, didn't and never would understand our philosophy, but

by mail we are able to be more selective. The last two volumes of Marquis "Whose Who" contains, I would guess, 60,000 to 70,000 biographies of people who have made their mark in the world. They are what I would call "top drawer" or they wouldn't be in there. That's "our market" so to speak, to whom we would like to transmit our ideas. And it is possible that our program could even pay for itself. We can appeal to their fear of survival, fear of economic insecurity, and appeal to their social consciousness. In this program we can follow Ralph Nader and Common Cause. We can stress membership in an organization (to be formed), subscription to EQUAL RIGHTS, a correspondence course and books. We can even ask for donations to carry on our work.

A program can be worked out for discussion groups using sociability and recognition as a base. We have something to say — let's say it or rather let them say it among themselves. With this program we can copy from the "Great Books Foundation" who sponsor discussion groups nationally.

Although there are many Georgist publications, a new one is needed to analyze the news from the Georgist viewpoint. A letter writing department is also necessary to influence those who are now in positions to influence others such as editors, writers and politicians. "The pen is mightier than the sword."

First, however, we should organize our own Georgists by acquainting them with our program and ask their help by enlarging our mailing lists of Georgists — we'll do the rest. I feel sure there are many people who would be glad to help both financially and by participating in our activities if presented to them properly. I realize the above is a very ambitious program and will require a lot of money but I feel sure that funding can be obtained if we propose the proper program the right way. Any volunteers? Any ideas? What are we waiting for? The time is now!

The Henry George Foundation with help from others can become the central

## Equal Rights vs. Special Privilege

A reign of justice necessarily implies that every man in the world shall at some future time be put in possession of all his rights. The progression of mankind in a political aspect is from a diversity of privilege toward an equality of rights.

One can have a privilege only by depriving another man or many other men of a portion of their rights. Consequently a reign of justice will consist in the destruction of every privilege and the restitution of every right.

— PATRICK DORVE, 1850

rallying organization for Georgism in this country and even the world. United we can accomplish a great deal more than we have been. The time is now — send us your ideas and give us your cooperation.

— LOUIS I. WEITZMAN

## The Emotional Appeal of the Henry George Movement

I have read the discussion on a new name for the International Union for Land Value Taxation and Free Trade with a great deal of interest and not without a measure of despair.

The ghastly failure of Socialism, including the Labor, Liberal and Conservative brands, is making people grope for something new in a way that would not have been possible 20 years ago.

The use of obscure names that no doubt apply to us in a theoretical sense but also to other groups with totally different aims and objectives, would be dangerous and ineffective. Unless the name "Henry George" is used, there would always be the possibility of infiltration by opposing forces. The Communists have had spectacular successes by such methods.

There must be a feeling of action and urgency implied. The name should be suitable for the application of modern Public Relations "selling" with full use of the media. In the past, our main appeal has been rational or scientific. Both reason and feeling are important. The life of Henry George — what a bonanza for an appeal to emotion and the human heart!

— Graham Hart,  
Wembly, Western Australia  
The Georgists Journal, 1975

## Prentice Address Christian Leadership Conference

Perry Prentice, president of Schalkenbach Foundation, whose invitations to speak for audiences of "influencers" frequently make news, sent us copies of his talk on August 14 to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference at Anniston, Alabama. Speaking on "Why Black People Have More to Gain by Property Tax Reform Than Anybody Else," he emphasized that those who own little property are those most in need of jobs and earnings such as would be created by land-tax pressure on owners of ill-improved land, plus the untaxing of buildings. (More copies are available.)

By an interesting coincidence, the talk arrived just at the moment of an invitation to John Weaver for a discussion of the Pittsburgh Graded Tax idea on Radio WYEP-FM in Pittsburgh, August 27. It was one of the Wednesday morning "Pot-pourri" programs led by Florence Bridges of Homewood, and her questions as to what would be the effect of more tax graduation on ghetto neighborhoods gave an opportunity to stress the same points as the Prentice talk.

## Inflation Out of Control

When invited to speak at this conference I was asked to provide the title. I chose; "Inflation out of control." For some reason it was put down as: "What causes inflation?". This does not change the message I want to present. Inflation and deflation are imbalances in the amount of money in circulation and the amount of goods and services available in the market. Inflation is an excess of money causing prices to rise. Deflation is an excess of goods, causing prices to fall. Both cause unemployment. The ideal condition is an even balance. Recession is a state of warning calling for adjustment.

In the days of Henry George, and in recent decades, our economy has been plagued with "Boom and Bust" cycles. He proposed land value taxation as the remedy. In recent years the politicians have been resorting to liberal spending programs, calling for the issue of more money, only to add to inflation.

Henry George did not use the terms of inflation, recession and deflation but he treated the subject in a very clear and comprehensive manner. In "Progress and Poverty," Book V, under the heading, "The primary cause of renewing paroxysms of industrial depressions," he wrote, "The speculative advances in rent cuts down the earnings of labor and capital and . . . cause these periodical industrial depressions."

On page 265 he wrote: "The period of depression thus ensuing would continue until (1) the speculative advance in rent has been lost; or (2) the increased efficiency of labor . . . and the progress of improvements has enabled the normal rent line to overtake the speculative rent line; or (3) labor and capital has been reconciled to engage in production for smaller returns . . . to provide a new equilibrium at which all forces of production would again engage . . . the speculative advance again takes place . . . and the same round gone over." Today land prices are not coming down.

In more recent terms we can restate the phenomenon: The immediate cause of inflation is high land prices, which enter into the cost of production resulting in higher prices for goods. The ultimate cause is land speculation. The remedy is to stop land speculation by imposing land value taxation sufficient to discourage land speculation and to reduce all other taxes sufficient to encourage increased production. In "Progress and Poverty" Henry George revealed his confidence in "Free Enterprise." One outstanding example is his "Ode to Liberty" (pages 546 to 548). His remedy would work best in a free economy and free economy would be strengthened by his remedy.

Nearly 100 years ago, when George wrote "Progress and Poverty," depressions were considered inevitable and necessary as the remedy for the "Boom and Bust" cycles. Up to 1907, when we had the "Money Panic," caused by the banks loss of confidence in the system under which local banks were allowed to issue their own money to meet the fluctuating demands of commerce, there was no government interference. Then the government withdrew the authority of local banks to issue money and the Federal Reserve System was established. Previously the local banks were careful not to let land speculation get too much out of control. Today the Federal Reserve is unable to do that, and land prices continue to increase. In attempts to conciliate the masses the politicians are resorting to liberal spending. We have various forms of the welfare state in price control, welfare programs, make work projects, subsidies, guaranteed incomes, etc. all of which call for the issuance of more and more money only to add to the inflation.

The resulting hardships of former depressions were suffered by many, although a few made fortunes out of them. Those who had suffered resolved not to let it happen to them again and those who profited resolved to continue the practice. Thus we have an ever increasing number of land speculators which helps to explain why we have such a resistance to the introduction of land value taxation. They all are engaged in a great lottery, in which the more glamorous the prizes the more numerous the blanks. They are caught like the monkeys in Frank Buck's story. One would put his fist into a hole in a coconut to get food. The hole was large enough to take its empty fist but too small to permit withdrawal, when full of food. Until caught by man it would hold on to that which could not profit it. The speculators fail to recognize the greater loss of profit caused by our faulty tax structure.

With inflation out of control, we can only look for the ultimate collapse of our economy. We should consider the current plight of New York City. We may note the historic fall of the great Roman Empire. The then middle classes were kept quiet by the policy of "Bread and Circus." When that failed, the barbarians took over.

We must take the necessary steps before it is too late. The land speculative line must be brought down to the normal rent line. With the promotion of increased land value taxation, land prices would fall, inducing the return of good land to productive uses, decreasing unemployment, increasing effective wages and obviate the need for welfare programs. Urban land would be used for the construction of better cities. Farm

land would be used for more effective and profitable farming and open spaces would be available for more parks and recreation.

The first steps for reform should be taken in two fields. Local real-estate tax bureaus should be compelled to assess all land equitably regardless of the value of improvements and not to assess improvements at more than the cost of production with allowance for depreciation. The Federal Reserve System should be prohibited from issuing money on speculative advances in rent. Finally all taxes should be levied upon land values only and all other taxes should be removed.

— JULIAN P. HICKOK

## THE LURE OF SOCIALISM

Continued

ference between Georgism and Marxism or kindred ideologies: Whereas Georgism conceives of the governmental collection of land values as providing the basis for distributed private proprietorship, as liberating individual owners from the fetters of taxation over labor and capital, as offering a social solution that will reduce the necessity for further governmental interventions or impositions, the socialist ideologies seek total political monopolization and control over all the facets of collective and individual life.

Though Georgists are not "libertarians" in the contemporary, right-wing, socially unconscious, semi-anarchist sense, there is also a libertarian side to them. They hold to the view that the governmental collection of unearned economic increment will create the basis for uncontrolled, individualistic improvement of the general social condition. Their writings, including *Progress and Poverty*, fairly bristle with expressions in support of individual freedom from political control and meddling.

*Georgists might even be called "social libertarians." This phrase describes the two sides of Georgism—a combination that may be incomprehensible either to extreme anarchist-type libertarians or to socialists but that could provide the alternative most needed to heal the wounds of social distress.*

JAMES L. BUSEY

## AGGRESSIVE ACTION ESSENTIAL

Continued

handicapped by very inadequate financial support, it has demonstrated that some minor victories can be won. The time has now arrived for Georgists to find ways and means of raising and spending much more substantial campaign funds in order to engage speakers, writers, organizers and lobbyists as all other effective organizations do, with whom we must compete if we are to really influence the course of events.

— PERCY R. WILLIAMS

# Impressions of the Henry George Foundation Conference, 1975

## "Across-the-Board" Themes, But Emphasis on Action

As always, the getting together of Georgists is inspiring, and this second of two conferences for which the Henry George Foundation has been (1974) the host, and (1975) the arranging sponsor, restores a tradition of the 1920's and 1930's, before the prominence of the Henry George Schools. This year's increased attendance showed a will for what Robert Clancy, program chairman and keynote speaker, called "joining forces in some way" to counterbalance the naturally diverse ways of action and organization. In the crowded talks and discussions of three days, July 17-20, at Harcum Junior College, Bryn Mawr, Pa., could be discerned a broad representation of these independent ways—from Gaston Haxo's Free Land League with its uncompromising insistence on the collection of all land value created by the people as a whole, through the varied reports of "step-by-step" progress, along with much practical advice on tactics.

Louis Weitzman of Massachusetts gave a comprehensive summary of ways to "Influence the Influencers"—by which he meant mailing lists of persons selected as capable of understanding statements from a substantial, unified organization of believers in Georgist principles. Jack Tetley, unable to attend and much missed after his previous leadership, sent a post-conference suggestion that other states emulate what Pennsylvanians were announced to do at the Saturday morning session, discuss ways to "Work for Political Action," by their organization, the Graded Tax League. He wrote to John Weaver who had chaired that session, speaking on "spontaneous winds that blow our way," and recommending cooperation with legislators and civic leaders who make proposals having something in common with our ideas—a bill, for example (Senate 29), for temporary exemption of new (as well as rehabilitated) construction in deteriorated housing areas, with uninterrupted land taxes.

Others at the Pennsylvania session were Dr. Raymond Richman, on assessments, and Gladys Lindes, on land trusts (see below) and Dr. Steven Cord who has changed, for wider appeal, his "New Towns" monthly to "Incentive Taxation," (a much-praised title). He is advising mayors to use their home-rule powers for a quiet and moderate first step before arousing opposition. Those who find their taxes increased will then be more readily outvoted by the homeowners who begin to see their prospective advantage. Frank Nelson of Delaware corroborated by telling of pitfalls from earlier, ill-planned publicity, now hopefully being corrected in a revived organization.

Russell Conklin of Montana, a winner and holder of many public offices, recommended frank, direct campaigning, becoming known for his land-tax views, but never as a "one-issue man." He shared in achieving constitutional amendments for state assessment, with optional local separation of land and buildings. He believes this should first be implemented in small, less complex towns.

He was one of several urging that we base arguments on the self-interest of property owners, notably Perry Prentice telling of Idaho State Senator Onweiler with his local option measures and factual approaches to town dwellers. Prentice, as always, brought a wide perspective on tokens of progress:

appointment of a Georgist on a North Carolina Governor's tax committee; voters' rejection of a Washington state income tax, with publicity for a land alternative; and his own numerous invitations to join boards or speak for bodies such as the National Tax Association; U.S. Chamber of Commerce committees; top national officials of the Urban Land Institute; of Home Builders; and of Architects; and very recently with Treasury Secretary Simon. The Schalkenbach Foundation answers requests for information from every part of the country, and prints much up-to-date literature, such as copies of the article on property tax reform by Dr. C. Lowell Harriss in the 1974 Encyclopedia Britannica.

Commenting on Rhoda Hellman's appeal for continuing taxes on those with great "ability to pay," especially when derived from special privileges such as tariffs, utilities and other monopolies which seem inevitable with large industrialization, Prentice gave figures on the startling increases of income needed to match the rising cost of living, and the present large totals of income tax; also the government expenditures which make land highly saleable—so that nothing has more "ability to pay" than land. He joined in a chorus of replies to the fear expressed by Gilbert Cope of Philadelphia, "Aren't we all going to be cliff-dwellers in the high-rise apartments stimulated by land taxes?"—citing both a popular demand for high-floor dwellings, suburban and downtown, and a natural limit to such demand—not more than 25 square miles space in all buildings over 10 stories, and 3 square miles in those over 400 stories.

The success of constitution-amending in Illinois was attributed by William Ranky largely to good organization—the Better Cities Committee which brought ten witnesses and the "Better Cities" film to the revenue committee of the 1970 constitutional convention. The amendment merely permits a variety of classifications, with tax-rate grading at ratios not wider than 5 to 2, fixed by county assessors. Current efforts are centered on securing better methods by these officials.

Samuel Sheck told of assembling facts concerning fractional and inequitable assessments in the two Long Island counties just east of New York City—Nassau and Suffolk—bringing these to the attention of the public and the state board of equalization and securing some improvements, but aiming to "win them all." A court suit against fractional assessment by a land-owner professor has led to the "Islip decision" which may be part of a chain of precedents.

Dr. Raymond Richman, who makes similar studies in the Pittsburgh district, stated familiar principles concerning land which has been "leapfrogged" in pushing out beyond a central city. It should generally be assessed as for its highest and best potential use—but, he added, it will not all have the same potential—stirring lively criticism by his assertion that much of it is probably not "ripe" for quick development, and should not be so assessed. Possibly the controversy could have ended with agreement that assessments should be promptly updated as sales give fresh facts on market trends.

Clyde Arnold, speaking for the historic land-leasing community at Fairhope, Alabama, and Mike Curtis, showing an hour's film of Arden, Delaware (where many visited on Sunday), told of live issues in keeping the full valuation of sites up to date, against uncooperative occupants. These communities

are a reminder that land can be kept accessible to seekers, without awaiting tax legislation, and Mildred Loomis from the School of Living in Maryland, reported that this is becoming a multiplied reality, through more than a hundred "land trusts," where group ownership guarantees the land will never again be sold—future occupants paying no purchase price, and any government taxes on property other than land being paid from the common rent fund. Unexpectedly a speaker was heard, telling of a new such community, close at hand, Gladys Lindes of the Delaware Valley Land Policy Association.

Mildred Loomis, like Vie Peterson who urged commemoration of **Progress and Poverty** and its 100th anniversary by issuance of a stamp, advocated "moving into the front ranks" of Americans by joining with the unofficial "People's Bi-Centennial Commission," a group who seek to keep alive a true revolutionary spirit. A hero whose memory we could honor together is Tom Paine, who declared the earth is the common property of the human race.

Woodrow Williams of Ohio demonstrated his vigor in campaigning among farmers, pointing out their costly investments in machinery, buildings, and other equipment which should be untaxed, as compared with rural land, which would tend to go down in price if taxes rose.

Weld Carter told of his service with Schalkenbach Foundation since 1957, as director of the Committee on Taxation, Resources and Economic Development, TRED, bringing together outstanding social scientists from the universities, for studies and seminars related to Georgist principles. Steven Cord reported on his connection with LEAF, Land, Equality and Freedom, an organization generously endowed through bequests by Sidney Evans and Louise McLean. It may make grants through its chapters, which can be organized anywhere by twelve persons each paying \$15 dues. It is nationwide in object, but now concentrating chiefly in California.

Other report of persistent educational efforts and specific governmental propositions, with general audiences and public officials, came from Geoffrey Esty of New Jersey, Leonard Huckabone of Michigan, and Richard Noyes of New Hampshire. Wylie Young, recalling previous Pennsylvania campaigns, called for greater simplicity and clearness in presentation. John Kelly of Pennsylvania and Mitchell Lurio of Massachusetts gave historical reviews of the transition from manorial tenure to private land titles and resultant unemployment: the former reading a long and popular paper on this subject plus a warning against federal intervention in local land planning; the latter reaching a climax in warning that land-rent collection can be a risky investment. Julian Hickok, also of Pennsylvania, re-enforced the Georgist arguments, defining inflation as the issuance of money out of proportion to production of goods, which tends toward speculative advances in rent and cutting the earnings of labor and capital.

Percy Williams climaxed the sessions with a call for "aggressive action," and concrete political propositions, since these stir discussion and compel thought. The time is always ripe for action, though there is no quick road to victory. Any issue that lends itself should be seized upon; open primaries give opportunities for candidates to enter or be supported, and campaigning will in itself be educational.

—JOHN C. WEAVER



## Aggressive Action Essential for Victory

Georgism is unique in character. There is perhaps no type of social, economic or political reform that presents greater problems or difficulties. Ours is truly a hard nut to crack; hence the need for the strongest possible organized support. Our movement is essentially of a political nature. In the broader sense, the time is always ripe for political action and political activity must not be too long neglected by Georgists. But whether the time is yet ripe for any truly great victory is open to serious question. We might as well realize, if we do not already, that as yet we are not on the road to any quick or easy victory. It is quite obvious that we still lack the strong support that is necessary for the achievement of any major social reform such as ours.

In a democracy, it may be assumed that on most controversial issues, majority support is necessary to obtain the desired legislation, or to defeat undesirable legislative proposals. Consequently opposition or indifference to Georgist legislation must in some manner be met and overcome if we are to attain substantial progress in any issue of fundamental importance.

There are different theories related to the problem of organizing for political action. One reason for favoring geographical concentration is that we are obviously not strong enough, either in numbers or in financial support, to attempt now to sweep the whole nation, though there are always national issues of economic significance where we may exert some influence. Furthermore, many Georgists have argued persuasively that the most pressing need is to achieve somehow an actual demonstration of the value of land value taxation in operation somewhere to an extent much more adequate for the purpose than any yet attained. Many believe that a more radical or fundamental approach is best in the long run, and furthermore contend that popular support can more readily be enlisted for basic reform than for the more timid approaches attempted in the hope of avoiding opposition.

But Georgists are not restricted from engaging in political activity anywhere that free elections are available for the participation of any qualified citizen. But it seems clear that it is neither necessary or desirable to attempt to organize an independent Single Tax party such as the Commonwealth Land Party experiment in the years from 1916 to 1928. In the United States we have two great national parties, Republican and Democratic.

Perhaps the most significant fact is that the open primaries provided by the parties, afford an opportunity for Georg-

## WHAT CAN ANY ONE OF US DO?

What the Georgist movement needs now is some adoptions of L.V.T. in particular places. This will revive interest in our basic philosophy as nothing else will, and nothing else will bring in students to our schools as much as that.

But what can we as individuals do to bring about a specific adoption of L.V.T.? Here are some suggestions:

(a) Find out the legal status of L.V.T. in your state. Don't depend on your own reading of the state constitution, or even on the opinion of the average lawyer. This is a matter for a specialist, since the constitutional provisions are almost always vague and there are many listed and unlisted exceptions.

Fortunately, the best source of information is free: ask either your state's Attorney General's office or the legislative counsel office of your state legislature. A phone call is better than a letter, and a visit is best of all. They'll probably give you an answer after repeated pressure. Even better, go see your state representative or state senator and ask them to ask these people.

Remember, the essential questions are: does your state constitution allow cities to tax land values at a higher property tax millage than buildings? Can land and buildings be assessed at a different percentage of market value? Or can all improvements be exempted partially or wholly for special purposes such as funding transportation improvements?

(b) If a constitutional amendment is required, you have a problem—but in only a few states will this be required, *many fewer than most Georgists believe* (there are many constitutional exceptions and the courts are very permissive these days).

But if you must get a constitutional

ists to enter themselves as candidates or to help nominate Georgists or sympathizers to various political offices. The actual nomination and election of such Georgist candidates may prove difficult or impossible at this time. Nonetheless such political campaigning can have real value as an educational exercise and help significantly to popularize Georgist ideas or specific proposals.

We may continue for some time to be a minority but is it not true that the minority is quite often found to be more nearly right on many issues than the prevailing majority? The one great essential is to promote more aggressive campaigning.

The Henry George Foundation of America from its inception has exerted its best efforts to the expansion of political activity as contrasted with purely academic types of education. Though

Continued on back page

amendment, then find out what it takes to get one passed. Frame a suitable amendment and ask your state representative or senator to introduce it (the worst he'll say is "Well, maybe next year"). In Pennsylvania, the local option Graded Tax bill passed the legislature with much more than a two-thirds margin, and most voters will vote for a local option bill in a referendum.

Also, see some of the organizations listed below to get support for your local option amendment. Or try again next year. But individual Georgists can do something even in these states:

(c) If the state constitution permits the legislature to grant local option to city councils to tax land values more heavily or grant higher assessment ratios to land, or exemptions to improvements), then see your state representative or senator, visit the Local Govt. Committee chairmen of both houses, see the organizations listed below, or write or see your state dept. of urban affairs. And do it next year also, if necessary.

And remember that the school property tax is often bigger than the city or county property tax, so get local option for school districts also.

In all cases, stress the practical advantages, not our total philosophy. Don't argue—we'll never convince; tell them how the land tax will accomplish whatever fairly reasonable goal they are interested in. Berate not the land speculators or landowners—they have more political power at the local level than we do. Pass out the invaluable Schalkenbach-Perry Prentice literature, or *Incentive Taxation*. Concentrate on the politicians, and let them take care of local and state-wide publicity; we have only a limited fund of energy, and we don't want to arouse the opposition.

Stress that most homeowner-voters will get lower taxes from the switch (don't say who will pay more). Maybe ask only that next year's property tax increase come from an increased tax rate on land only. Let's get our toe in the door, then next year our foot, leg, etc.

Avoid making surveys of what the impact of L.V.T. would be on different types of property owners—they only arouse the opposition. If a mayor wants one, take a sampling for his private edification only.

Try to interest organizations with similar interests and many lobbyists to push our specific L.V.T. proposals (whatever is needed); for instance, the state school board, construction trade associations and unions, League of Women Voters, your state's league of cities, Ralph Nader groups, state education association, etc.

It's enjoyable talking L.V.T. with the already converted, but it's exhilarating to talk L.V.T. with politicians who can put it into practice. — STEVEN B. CORD