

# Equal Rights

*All Men and Women Have Equal Rights to the Use of the Earth.*

Winter

## HGFA Receives Bequest from the Will of Stephen Cronan

The final settlement of the will of the recently deceased Stephen Cronan, Chicago Georgist of long standing, has been made. The bequest amounts to \$31,992.15 and will be used to augment our endowment.

Mr. Cronan had taught Progress & Poverty classes and Bob Clancy, HGFA trustee, remembers meeting him while in the Army during World War II. Percy Williams has been in constant correspondence with Mr. Cronan over the years. Mr. Cronan believed that Georgists should actively engage in political action, either as candidates for election or as lobbyists.

We at the Foundation dedicate ourselves to use Mr. Cronan's money in ways that we think he would approve. We hope to prove ourselves worthy of his trust in us.

We will carry on the struggle for the right of all people to equal access to the resources of Nature via the full taxation of land values. We can be certain Mr. Cronan would approve of this.

If any members of the Foundation have information, reminiscences or anecdotes to pass on to us about Stephen Cronan, we would very much appreciate receiving same.

We may take this opportunity to remind other Georgists to include the Foundation in their wills. If you believe that the earth is the common birthright of all mankind, then this would be a most effective way to perpetuate that belief. The Foundation's income comes only from contributions from the living and bequests from those who have died.

## EARN ANNOUNCED

The Henry George Foundation of America has commissioned Dan Sullivan of Pittsburgh, Pa. to organize "Equal Access to the Resources of Nature." This will be a grass-roots organization that will be self-supporting within three months when the funding for Mr. Sullivan runs out. He will gather this group through the use of brochures, contacts with neighborhood groups and the media.

In the 1930's the Henry George Club had hundreds of members, the most notable was "Wild Bill" McNair, the first Democratic Mayor elected in Pittsburgh in the 20th century (1924). From this club the Foundation was born. There are some people still left from those days and certainly the spirit has survived, perhaps Dan Sullivan can bring about a rebirth of that wonderfully exciting time.

# Significant Victory in Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, Queen City of the Incentive Tax, will almost double its tax rate on land for 1979 without increasing its building tax rate at all.

In 1978, the tax rate on land assessments was 49.5 mills and on buildings it was 24.75 mills. A mill is \$1 tax for each \$1,000 assessed value; hence, 49.5 mills is equivalent to 4.9% or \$4.95 per \$100 of assessed value.

In 1979, the land tax rate will be increased by 48 mills to 97.5 mills, while the building tax rate will remain at 24.75 mills. A 48 mill increase on assessed value is equivalent to 16% of estimated market land rent (assuming an assessed to market ratio of 3:1). This is a significant enough increase so that its economic impact could be measurable, which opens up all sorts of possibilities for our movement. (The county tax is 21 mills and the school tax 29 mills on both land and buildings)

Ever since 1925, state law had mandated that both Pittsburgh and Scranton tax land at twice the rate of buildings, but in 1976 Pittsburgh voters approved a Home Rule Charter, giving the city government expanded powers, one of which could be interpreted to be that the city could change its property tax rates from the previously mandated 2:1 ratio.

Councilman Bill Coyne, the real hero of this story, has been a frequent visitor to our Graded Tax League meetings and was the first to notice this new possibility. Coyne is young, courtly in manner, and the councilman who has received the most votes in the recent council election; he was elected chairman of the Democratic Party in Pittsburgh this past summer.

The next ingredient needed was the startling news that a deficit of some \$29 million in the city budget was projected for 1979. The previous mayor, Pete Flaherty, has postponed many expenses and has put many city employees on federal C.E.T.A. funds, which was disallowed this past year.

When Bill Coyne said he wanted to fund the whole \$29 million by an 80 mill increase in the land tax, I replied: "But, Bill, will it go politically in this year of Proposition 13?" (I am accustomed to fighting hard for 4 or 5 mill increases). He replied with moral indignation, saying that the only major alternative was a tax on wages, and he was definitely opposed to putting the whole cost of the increase on the backs of the already over-burdened workingman. I was conscious of a certain impropriety in giving political advice to this successful politician while he quoted moral arguments to me, and so ceased my doubtings.

Finally, the Mayor, Richard Caliguiri, formally proposed to raise the bulk of the deficit with an additional wage tax of 1.5%; this tax has the distinctly un-euphemistic name of an earned income tax. He also proposed to raise some additional funds with a 7 mill tax increase on land only, plus some other business nuisance taxes.

The City Council cut his budget request to \$23 million, and with Coyne's leadership, they proposed to raise this by a 70 mill increase on land tax only; no other additional taxes! The measure passed 5-4 in council.

The ill-advised mayor threatened to veto this. A two-thirds override, meaning six votes, would have been required, so under this pressure Council voted 8-1 to increase the wage tax by 1/4% and to increase the land tax 48 mills. In effect, the land tax would have raised about 80% of the additional revenue needed.

In a surprise move, the mayor vetoed this compromise, but after much dickering, at 6 o'clock on Monday, December 31st, the City Council met and overrode his veto by a vote of 7-2. Finally, after an exhausting week of hope and despair—victory!

*Continued on page 2*

The Georgists in Pittsburgh were a few but active. We peppered the newspapers with letters to the editors. In this, John Weaver was our leader with three letters published (and it was he who had first made contact with Bill Coyne and who has been the moving force behind the Graded Tax League for nearly three decades). Among others were Robert Kennedy, William Schlenke, Marian Hahn, Daniel Sullivan and the Schoyer brothers. We also supported Bill Coyne at public meetings, and provided advice and statistics upon request.

The fact is that the only letter writers supporting the land tax were from us Georgists! In truth, there was not much public discussion of the huge tax increase but whatever public outcry there was came to the support of the wage tax over the land use tax! Never mind our arguments that a 1.5% wage tax would have cost the average wage-earner \$240 a year while a 70 mill land tax raising the same amount of revenue would have cost the average homeowner only \$80 (and some families have two wage-earners). Many taxpayers didn't really believe such cold facts and said that anyway they'd prefer to pay a higher wage tax than a land tax—it was more convenient since it rose and fell with income—while the land tax was a huge annual expense which had to be paid whether there was income on hand or not. In addition, it is payroll-deducted and so the worker is not very conscious of having paid the tax at all. (This points up an important moral for us: the land tax should be deductible from wages just like the wage or income tax it. Also, the land tax should be deferrable for poor people against the future sale of their property. These changes will make the land tax more convenient to pay and more politically acceptable.)

Then our opponents raised the poor widow issue: what about those poor elderly people on fixed incomes? They don't pay a wage tax but would pay a land tax, either as homeowners or as tenants.

To which we replied: there were many more poor wage-earners than poor on fixed incomes, and they would suffer more from a wage tax. We didn't even try to present the involved argument about how a land tax cannot be passed on to tenants. We merely pointed out that the 48 mill increase could result in a 2%-5% increase for apartment renters at the most, which is a much less onerous burden than a 1 1/2% tax on gross wages. We also pointed out that the elderly poor are entitled to a property tax refund of up to \$400 from the State Lottery Fund.

## REPORTS

(William Newcomb of the Media Foundation for Land Economics and First Vice-President of HGFA has suggested that one service Equal Rights can render the Movement is to publish reports of successful activities by Georgist organizations throughout the country. Each issue, he suggests, would include a column (or more when needed) briefly summarizing actions as submitted by Georgists. If you are a member of or know members of Georgist organizations, please pass the word along and encourage them to send the editor (Penny Colgan, 1701 Green Lane, Arden, Del. 19810) typed reports of successes or innovative ideas.)

MICHAEL CURTIS reports from Arden, Del. that he has been maintaining his high level of involvement. Successes include: appearing with Councilman Ben Howells of Allentown on the TV show "Issues Under

Our opponents also claimed that the tax would hurt business in town and burden real estate developers with a sudden heavy tax burden. To which we replied that it was just the reverse. A tax on land is not a tax on productive business enterprise and it would make uneconomic the inefficient use of land, since an inefficient land user would not make enough income to pay the tax plus earn a fair profit on his building.

The 48 mill tax could not possibly be onerous to business: Kaufmann's Department Store, for example, would pay only about \$6,900 additional land tax from gross annual sales of \$88 million (.000009%)! Besides, taxes particularly on business are even higher in the surrounding suburbs and also much of the land value in Pittsburgh is owned by out-of-towners: why not tax them? (This last argument can be used in most every city and his political pow.)

And so the Georgists in Pittsburgh, so few in number (and only a minority of them have ever attended national conferences) can legitimately claim that our presence made a difference, although to be sure without Bill Coyne we would still be howling in the wilderness.

About ten years ago, we were able to stop a rescinding of the 2:1 Incentive Tax. Without us now, there would have been no land tax increase to 3.94:1. But we must hold classes in Pittsburgh to strengthen our flagging forces.

Maybe we'll get our bandwagon moving yet, if we can only ascertain what the exact impact of the 48 mill tax will have been after a year or so.

We now have a great opportunity to measure the impact of a land tax increase; 48 mills is a big enough jump for that. If the study shows what we expect it to show—an increase in building permits—maybe then city governments across the nation will sit up and take notice. The figures from Australia very clearly show that land taxation brings economic development, but similar figures from an American city may seem more real to American politicians.

Steven Cord

Fire" discussing Land Value Taxation, a speech about Henry George and LVT delivered to the Haverford Democratic Committee as well as to London Grove Meeting, Pa. from which was recruited a Fundamentals Economics course. At both speeches Mike showed the LEAF film "For the Land is Mine." Mike has also recruited and taught two other classes, one in Fundamental Economics in Arden and one in Applied Economics in West Chester, Pa. Mike Curtis is a Trustee of the HGFA. This Spring he has scheduled three Fundamentals courses, one course in Applied Economics and the Teacher Training Seminar.

Nadine Stoner another HGFA Trustee, reports several exciting activities of the Beloit Chapter — Wisconsin Property Owners League including an appearance by her on radio station WBEL talk show about property assessments and a paper she prepared for a blue ribbon committee on tax reform in that state's capitol entitled "The Property Tax and Need for its Reform." Finally, the Pros and Cons of Land Value Taxation were discussed at the Wisconsin Association of Assessing Office's annual Institute on September 12-15!

Friends of NOAH ALPER announce a reception and dinner in his honor to celebrate Mr. Alper's retirement in St. Louis, Missouri. The Honorable Robert Snyder will be the featured speaker and well-wishers are encouraged to contact Mr. Alper through Donald Killoree, 4130 Hartford Ave., St. Louis, Missouri, 63116.

In an interview with Penthouse Magazine, Mtshuko Joshua Nkomo, head of the ZAPU - Zimbabwe African People's Union — was quoted as saying.

"Capitalism is one thing I cannot compromise on, whether our people accept its principles or not, but I know they agree with me, because we come from the same way of life. We don't believe in trading land or selling land-no. And in any government that I lead, you can be certain that those practices must go. That does not mean we will be taking people's land. It means that other people who haven't got money will have a chance to use land, which is the common property of everybody. And if they have to pay some rates or rents, that will go to a general fund of the people. In this way citizens can use as much land as they want; no one can take it away from them. Our system is this: once you use the land, that land belongs to you. But you have not bought it, you cannot sell it to someone. The land belongs to the people, but everything on that land is yours." (Penthouse Magazine, January, 1979).

In the article it said that Mr. Nkomo had enrolled in the John Hofmeyr School of Social Science in Johannesburg in 1947; it sounds as if this school might have taught economics closely akin to Henry George!

## TAX ACTION — NOW

That was the theme of the conference, and it was successful! Thirty Georgists from the Delaware Valley invited by the HGFA & HGS gathered at the Henry George Birthplace December 2 to share ideas and plan action — both political and educational — with the aim to mount an intensive campaign for the adoption of land value taxation in their communities. What came out were two major decisions — the formation of a Georgist group of the Delaware Valley that would serve as a support group and generator of ideas for people interested in political action and the announcement of a teacher training program to raise the expertise of teachers of "Fundamental Economics" and to devise innovative adult educational techniques under the direction of experienced teachers from the Arden Activities group of the Henry George School.

Energy was high, enthusiasm flowed freely, and people who had long been active were able to meet with "newer-comers" to share ideas and plan strategies. The evaluation period at the end of the conference was perhaps the most positive part of the day with many requests for more such conferences which would be longer in duration.

Why the success? Perhaps the biggest reason was the excellent structure Donald Hurford of West Chester, Pa., George Collins of Philadelphia and the other conference conveners had planned. Workshops were the order of the day, no one dominated everyone's attention, rather people shared their expertise, answered questions from less-experienced participants and heard new and refreshing ideas brought out. There were choices of what to do, whom to hear and plenty of time for reports from workshops and coffee breaks for informal discussions. There was little chance for boring speeches and long, drawn-out sessions — a true turn off to new-comers to the movement. And one was left with the idea finally that this IS a movement with skilled people, innovative ideas and energy to implement them!

### PROFESSOR CORD SPEAKS

The day began with an enlightening and motivating address by HGFA President Prof. Steven Cord who outlined current events in Pittsburgh (see President's Corner, back page) and then shared the steps he follows when contacting politicians (see: The How To's of Political Action, ). The remainder of the morning session consisted of three workshops with the common theme of political action with such resource people as John Daniels, Director of Public Works for the city of Camden, N.J.; Patricia Lowe and David Zwanetz both Philadelphia attorneys, and Jack Himmelstein of Montgomery Co., Pa. The topic of the morning workshops was "Implementing Land Value Tax: Local and Legislative Requirements and Positive Individual Action" during which resource people outlined certain relevant information and participants from particular regions discussed special needs. (For reports of these sessions, see How To's . . . )

After a lunch break Penny Colgan, Editor of "Equal Rights" and Arthur Yeatman of London Grove, Pa. outlined the history of the Land Trust movement in this country and discussed the possibilities open to Georgist reform through such groups. The remainder of the afternoon was devoted to educational action divided into three workshops: "Innovations in Adult Education" with Marjorie van Gulick and Michael Curtis of Arden, Del.; "Using the Educational Community" with Don Hurford and Cathy Covell Orloff of Baltimore, MD.; and "Using The Media" with George Collins and Jack Himmelstein. Each workshop involved participants in feedback of their experiences and in developing new approaches to old problems. (For a report of these workshops, see Educational Action, )

The final session was for developing goals and ongoing programs during which every participant was asked to share what he or she would do or would like to do to further the message of Henry George. Each goal was recorded and will be used as the agenda of the first meeting of the fledgling Georgist group when it meets the third week in January.

So, it can be done; it HAS been done; a Georgist conference small in number but big in scope and capable of producing people who will DO something in the movement. Ideas have never been the problem within our movement; action has. Action — Georgist action — is alive and well in the Delaware Valley thanks to the Tax Action — NOW! Conference sponsored by your organization and the Henry George School!

## THE HOW TO'S OF POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL ACTION

In his keynote address to the Tax Action Now! conference held in Philadelphia December 2, Professor Steven Cord, President of the Henry George Foundation of America outlined the following steps for a successful political campaign:

- 1) Identify politicians or city administrators to whom you want to direct your campaign and begin sending them "Incentive Taxation (available from HGFA)
- 2) Contact by a letter asking for an appointment with the person and follow up with a telephone call. (Often Dr. Cord has been able to just walk in and wait for an opportunity to speak with the politician). Identify yourself as an associate of "Incentive Taxation" and

remind him or her that you have been sending it to the office.

- 3) Avoid discussing morality with politicians; they are used to dealing in specifics and bringing up large issues like inflation or depressions will only fog the main reason you are there.

- 4) present some program (whether it be a proposed shift from improvements to Land or a suggestion for a more reasonable assessment policy). This gives the politician something to work with and you something to discuss that he/she will understand. For suggestions of what specifically to bring in, contact Dr. Cord (580 N. Sixth St., Indiana, Pa.) and outline what the tax millage is presently and what the total amount of revenue

collected is or use this formula to get your own figures:

### FORMULA FOR CONVERTING PRESENT TAX TO LVT

LTR = R-(B. Ass. X BTR)

L.Ass.

R=revenue

BTR = building tax rate ex.

61.95/1000 assessed value

B.Ass.=building assessments

L.Ass.=land assessment

5) Try to anticipate some of your opposition by contacting labor unions at the same time you contact politicians. Wage earners will make out better in the proposed system as city wage taxes often fall heaviest on them and the increased revenue from LVT (if increased revenue is the desire) would offset the need to increase wage taxes. Labor union officials can be powerful allies in helping to combat the objections of short-sighted central business district owners who will probably oppose the LVT. Home-owners would generally experience no change in their tax bill or enjoy a reduction.

6) Arm yourself with some current statistics. The Rev. Wylie Young has completed a study of the effects of "Incentive Taxation for Lancaster, Pa." which outlines what would happen to the tax bills of different kinds of properties within the city if LVT were introduced. You can obtain this study from him (904 Harvard Ave., Swarthmore, Pa. 19081) or ask him to assist you in carrying out your own study for your area. This pamphlet is highly recommended.

7) Lobby for enabling legislation on the State level to allow LVT in your area. Presently it is not clear whether LVT would be legal in Philadelphia. It is pointed out, however, that the resource people from Philadelphia at the conference agreed, when pushed, that efforts put to convincing the Mayor to institute LVT would be better spent than lobbying for enabling legislation. As David Zwanetz, an attorney and a city administrator, pointed out, if politicians feel the NEED for liberal legislation and push for it, the Courts will often not challenge it.

8) Last, but certainly not least among the suggestions for political action, is the idea of running for public office on an LVT platform. Certainly, this avenue is the most difficult but there are people and organizations that would help — the most notable HGFA!

If political action is the area you want to put your best efforts, these are solid ways to begin. The best resource for information remains "Incentive Taxation" as it is written FOR politicians and contains the kind of information administrators need to make sound decisions.

## ADULT CLASSES IN GEORGIST THEORY

One workshop at the Conference was "Innovations in Adult Education" led by Michael Curtis and Marjorie VanGulick of Arden, De. The discussion focused on which lessons in the Fundamentals Course were the most difficult to learn or to teach and which lesson did the person PRESENT most differently from the way he/she had been taught.

It was generally agreed that there was a need for teacher training as the heavy reliance upon the Syllabus (outdated in MANY of its figures and extremely repetitious in its questions) was not the best way to present the material. The abridged version should, it was agreed, be made available to students but the class should be taught using the unabridged version. Students should be warned that the course can be difficult but all quilt should be removed from students who do not do all the reading by encouraging them to use all the material offered (including answer sheets) in the way they are most comfortable.

The biggest criticism of the Course was that there was not enough discussion of the issues and too much emphasis put on pat/exact answers which precluded much experience arguing points and bringing George into current events. Therefore, the focus of teacher training should be on how to encourage discussion and debate and thus arm students with enough information and confidence to talk about Georgism outside the confines of a class.

Just such a teacher training course will begin January 13 led by Penny Colgan in Philadelphia and Arden on alternate weeks. The first class will focus on alternative learning styles and what the salient points are in Progress and Poverty and the remaining sessions will take up each lesson with participants leading a "model" class using innovative techniques when possible and the other participants giving a critique of the presentation at the end. In this way, it is hoped that a group of well-trained teachers will evolve with the ability to design their own classes meeting the needs and interests of their particular students.

(For more information about the Teacher Training seminar, contact Penny Colgan, Arden Activities of HGS, 1701 Green Lane, Arden, De.)

## USING THE MEDIA

For this workshop there were three skilled people as resources: George Collins, Director of the HGS in Philadelphia and frequent focus of newspaper articles; Jack

Himmelstein, former candidate for local office and author of many newspaper letters and articles about LVT and Renee Taylor, a radio station personality. Having a theme was the main idea: "Tax land, not workers." "Tax land, not buildings," "Promote private incentive," and use this theme to pick up on current issues. Send a letter (followed up by a phone call) describing what you would like to say, the name of the Georgist organization you represent and include any articles you have had published as an entre.

Get to know the proper people in the media: public affairs or news editors, contact the local program director and ask to show them the Georgist movie "For The Land is Mine" or simply write letters to the Editor of local and national papers. Such letters are widely read and if on current affairs can create some interest in your point of view. They should be concise and make ONE point.

## SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS

The other kind of educational effort directed at the broader community is the seminar. This workshop had two experienced resource people; Cathy Covell Orloff, former Director of HGS in San Francisco and now President of MUST — Marylanders United for the Single Tax and Donald Hurford, one of the conveners of the Conference. They both outlined their campaigns which have been waged on "shoe-string" budgets directed to the general public in Ms. Orloff's case, and to evening adult education programs in Mr. Hurford's case.

Letters followed up always by personal contact and plenty of advance notice sent to every news media datebook (radio, paper, and TV), plus contacts to departments of history and economics have been most successful. In Ms. Orloff's case, she held a seminar in Baltimore which was attended by a Professor of History at John's Hopkins and Annapolis Academy and who then invited her to address some of his classes!

The main idea is that there are programs easily put together using the local talent available which can be successful if enough effort is put into publicizing the event. In both cases the thrust of the program is to recruit people to take the Fundamental Economics Course and get truly involved in the Georgist movement. For information on the steps either of these two resource people took to organize their campaigns, contact Cathy Covell Orloff, 5158 Edmondson Ave., Baltimore, Md. 21229 or Donald Hufford, 122 Green Hill Rd., West Chester, Pa. 19380.

The greatest hope is support through a Georgist community that encourages individuals and rejuvenates activists. The hope for all is that each locality will have such an organization to take up the struggle and maintain this movement. People fighting alone soon "burn out" and begin talking about "the old days when we . . ." Isn't it exciting to think of a group of Georgists who will say, "Today we . . . ?"

## PERCY WILLIAMS—WILLIAM SCHUYER

### Personal Recollections (cont'd)

All of this was joyfully recorded by Percy Williams, which he had initiated in 1969. Another major achievement was the founding of the Graded Tax League of Pennsylvania when the third class city law was enacted, attracting those who might not be ready for the full philosophy of Henry George.

Now, briefly, for the personal memories which for the last dozen years are warm in my heart for both Percy and Bill Schoyer, the two with whom at first I took weekly luncheons when the get-togethers of the Georgists became less regular as one after another of the older leaders died or ceased to attend. They resumed gradually as meetings of the Graded Tax League.

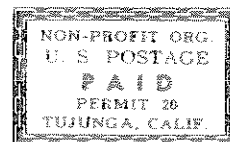
I realized how fully Attorney Schoyer had given of himself, serving from its beginning as Treasurer of the Henry George Foundation, and, after 40 years, as President. Long before the Foundation was formed, he was active in the movement that introduced the graded tax system by stages from 1913 to 1925; and when the Graded Tax League was formed in 1956 he became its president — honorary after he was no longer able to come downtown.

But it was during those final years when, as often as I could, I walked up a hill to his home, that I appreciated him most. He was limited most of the time to a chair. He read widely and talked, even during his hundredth year, and with as much detail about current and past events, jokes and verse that he remembered, as ever he had done. He was taken to a hospital, where he could no longer speak, but when I visited him, he smiled, in recognition. He died on February 8.

by John Weaver

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Address Correction Requested