

Quicksilver

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A newsletter of the HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL

chronicling the culling of precious truth

Siftings

•#1 JORDON FLATO's name has appeared time to time in Quicksilver. He was first recognized as a production assistant in the HGS presentation of *Perseus* at the 1996 San Francisco Fringe Festival. Earlier he had enrolled in and completed the HGS Fundamentals of Economics class. Now we give him his due for having mightily and cheerfully lent his smarts and brawn to the HGS move from Hyde Street to New Montgomery.

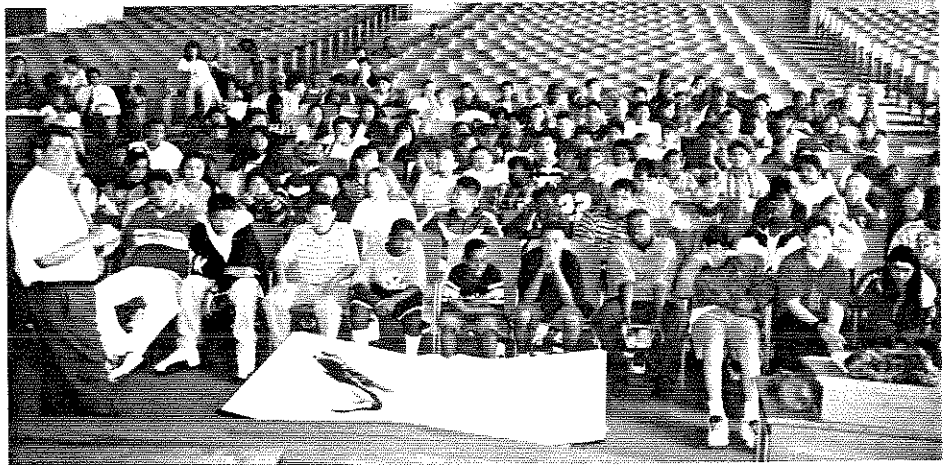
•#2 BOB CALLAN of Fort Bragg, California is a talented playwright who often takes up the relationship of the individual to the greater community as a subject for his plays. We have followed with particular interest the travails, still unsatisfied, which are leading on to a production of Callan's play *When Christ met Pilate*. The play dramatizes the tumult that results when the integrity of the individual is balanced against the smooth operation of the State. Callan spent a morning in March becoming acquainted with the thinking and insight of the HGS and wishes to continue that conversation with particular interest in how George's observations illuminate Jesus' remark, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God that which is God's."

•#3 WILLIE BROWN, Mayor of San Francisco, spoke impassioned in favor of equalizing the opportunities available to the less favored neighborhoods of the city when he addressed a Portrero Hill citizens' gathering March 15. Unfortunately he did not spell out the nature of the privileges which some in the community enjoy to the hurt of others. Instead he asserted that many should get more. But from where, we at the HGS ask? From whom and how will you take wealth and redistribute it? Well, we are arranging an interview with Mayor Brown in order to pose just these questions. You'll be there next month with Quicksilver.

•#4 LVT went out over the airwaves of KKUP, Cupertino public radio, April 9. Staffer Giesen clarified the dynamics of economics for 100 minutes, and responded to many listeners during the call-in program. See related story on the other side.



HGS 'birthright' programs popular wherever there are kids



△ △ △ △ △ △ △ HERE ARE SOME OF THE 200 MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS AT THOMAS ALVA EDISON ENVIRONMENTAL ACADEMY WHO ENJOYED "MEETING" JOHN JAMES AUDUBON APRIL 9. IN THE PROCESS THEY ALSO BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THEIR "BIRTHRIGHT," THE SAME BIRTHRIGHT TO NORTH AMERICA THAT INSPIRED AUDUBON TO PAINT AMERICA'S WILDLIFE.

The inspiring message of the Henry George School, namely that everyone has a natural birthright in the earth, a birthright which when transcribed into economic terms entitles each person to share equally in the rental value of the earth, reached over 600 public school students this past month.

HGS staff member David Giesen took his chautauqua-style portrayals of John James Audubon and Charles Darwin before school audiences in California and Texas, and while the students were marvelling at the adventures of these two men, the philosophical premise which induced these 19th century figures to roam the wild places of the world was being set out in clear terms.

"Imagine," Giesen urged the middle and grade school students, "imagine if Darwin or Audubon had believed that the wildernesses of the earth belonged exclusively to one man or another. Would either Charles or John James have been free to trek the forests, rivers and mountains of the earth recording the wonders of those places?"

"What if Darwin had believed that the entire earth belonged to just a certain group of people and that unless he got their permission he would have no right to look at fossils, plants, animals or study geology? Why, then, he might not have gone on his long adventure. Perhaps knowledge of this earth would still be hidden from you and me by those who refused to let us use our eyes and ears and minds to appreciate this earth. But the truth is that each of us has as true and equal a right to inhabit the earth as any beetle or bird has. That's what Darwin and Audubon believed, and that's why they boldly set foot on ships and distant lands. They saw themselves as citizens of the earth. Imagine the big things you can accomplish when you, too, believe the whole world is your birthright."

Through the metaphor and example of historical figures' lives the critical consideration of citizenship-- and of social, political and economic relationships, generally-- is drawn before the intellectual faculties of older boys and girls, and adolescents. Judging from student questions and remarks these Henry George School programs may be the first instance in which in a large sphere of thought civics and spirituality have been brought together and considered as having a bearing on one another. If this is so, the HGS is assured of no end of opportunities to labor. Indeed, the school is even now exploring the creation of teacher in-services that would equip instructors to more nimbly integrate fundamental civics philosophy into existing curriculum, much the way the HGS Ecology of Economics in-service links natural history curriculum with economics.

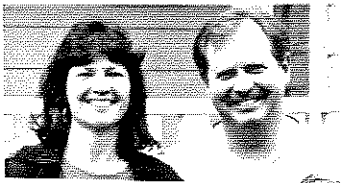
Motherlode—news rich with the golden truth

DIGEST AND COMMENTARY

The April 17 edition of the Dallas Morning News carried the news that the Texas State House had passed out of committee a bill to cut school property taxes and make up the difference by extending sales taxes, franchise taxes, and eliminating tax exemptions. This bill was precipitated by current legislation which takes property taxes from wealthy districts and sends them to poorer school districts. Initially Gov. George Bush, Jr. had sought a rise in the State sales tax to off-set the tax reduction and the elimination of the property tax transfer.

Certainly fairness is desirable and Texas' current tax system, which excuses automotive repair shops, computer programming services, and motion picture and videotape distributors (to name but a few) from the sales tax while grocers, building contractors and nurserymen are squeezed is unfair. And certainly tax penalties for improving one's home or business building are counter-productive to the objective of obliterating blight.

The idea seems to be that all should suffer equally. As a statement of negative equality it almost holds punctures everyone's bubble, but where is the positive in such reasoning? And we say it almost pricks everyone's wealth-bucket. Who escapes? The landholder. The landholder has not suffered at all in enjoying the increase value of location. Others who labored to create are penalized for having done so by taxes, but the landholder is not penalized by taxes for holding valuable land, he simply doesn't get as much privilege as before. So, just in proportion as the tax on land values goes down, up goes the amount of privilege!



Jenny Otter and Phil Totten are two fine public school teachers who employ HGS programming or thinking in their classrooms. Jenny teaches 8th grade social studies; Phil teaches high school economics.

Participants in the World Affairs Council Great Decisions discussion group heard the HGS perspective clearly iterated. The discussions concluded March 13.

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georgists working together to reveal the abundance of nature

- The Henry George School is in new offices at 55 New Montgomery, Suite #219, San Francisco, California 94105. Telephone 415/543-4294.
- We could also use an Apple or Apple compatible computer, modem, monitor and keyboard.
- Consider joining the Henry George School Board of Directors for a one year commitment-- six meetings; your talents and interests will make a positive addition
- Would you like our staff to speak to a specific organization? Please give us a call.

TAILINGS... back page stories

The HGS does it with frequency

In the last item under Siftings we cited one on-the-air radio experience of the HGS, but we're neither shy nor content to settle for just one ethereal adventure. Twice more Staffer Giesen has taken the air-waves by the mic and pushed all the right buttons.

On April 15 in Tulsa, Oklahoma Giesen appeared on Tulsa public radio's Studio Tulsa program hosted by Rich Fisher. Giesen was invited onto that program to stir up interest in his chautauqua performance of John James Audubon which played that night for 100 friends and members of the Tulsa Audubon Society. But Giesen's remarks always revolve around the nature of citizenship and this time it was no different. He quickly related Audubon's painting ambitions to the substance of citizenship, as the front side article makes plain. He also spoke at some length about George's thinking as it relates to the conservation hopes of the Audubon Society.

On April 16 Giesen was again on the air; this time on KRLD, commercial talk-radio in Dallas, Texas. The topic was the tax reform which Mother Lode touches upon. Giesen plainly spelled out the substance of LVT. Host Charley Jones acknowledged the justness and simplicity of a public revenue mechanism which detracts nothing from invention and enterprise. Jones' chief criticism with most taxes is that personnel time devoted to preparing time is not constructive, but, in fact, subtracts from efficiency.



Quicksilver news and chatter from the

Henry George School

The mission of the Henry George School is to educate the public regarding the relationship between economics and social justice.

News, ideas, comments should be addressed to
Quicksilver, 55 New Montgomery, Suite 219, San Francisco, California 94105 415/543-4294

David Giesen, editor.

*The Earth is the
Birthright of all People*

*A \$10 donation to the Henry George School funds
a 3rd of each month's Quicksilver expenses!*