



the Illinois Georgist

Fall 2003 ♦ Volume 14, Number 3

Georgists Examine “Affordable Cities” at 2003 Conference

The Council of Georgist Organization’s 23rd annual conference brought together Georgists from across the North America and beyond. The event was held July 16th through 20th in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The CGO is an umbrella organization comprised of several dozen Georgist organizations, including The Henry George School of Social Science in Chicago. The conference is a wonderful way to deepen your involvement with the Georgist movement and explore the wide range of actions being taken that relate to the ideas propounded by Henry George. At the same time, you can meet dozens of interesting people from all walks of life, all political persuasions, and yet, all Georgists.

This year’s theme was “Affordable Cities: Bringing the Cost of Living Down to Earth.” A few of the questions raised were: Why have our urban and industrial areas become a hodgepodge of quick fixes? Why are huge shopping mall built right next to blighted downtown shopping districts? Why must ever-more-desperate cities offer ever-sweeter deals to giant corporations?

Of course, you probably know the answer to these dilemmas—every city sits on a revenue source sufficient to meet its budget and bring in new business and residents. But there are an awful lot of how, whys, and wherefores that must be addressed to educate the public and politicians before the amazing resource of land rent can be fully harnessed for the public good. Although most attendees are members of Georgist organizations, one day is devoted to encouraging local or regional guests to attend and find out more about the Georgist philosophy. On Friday, we heard interesting presentations on several cities, including details of the current political battle over the attempt to institute a split-rate property tax system in Philadelphia. We also learned how similar systems have proven so successful in Harrisburg and Allentown, Pennsylvania. A number of local

government officials were in attendance, including property tax assessors, city council members, and a mayor or two.

The conference also included a panel on Georgist Education methods, which included Vesa Nelson of the Henry George School in New York, along with Chuck Metalitz and Bob Drake of the Chicago School. While Bob offered his perspective and discussed his innovative (or zany) teaching methods, Vesa demonstrated how he uses the settlement of the American West to illustrate fundamental principles.

Paul Martin, director of Instituto Henry George in Managua, Nicaragua, described how eager for economic education the people in that recently war-torn country are.

In all, almost one hundred people came to the conference from North and Central America, as well as South Africa.

I invite you to consider attending next year— July 21-25 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a particularly spectacular locale. Hope to see you there.

– Bob Drake

“It wasn’t so much learning new things as having what I already knew connected in a logical way,”

said a student completing *Progress & Poverty* this summer. Others have praised our classes as an “informal” and “low-pressure” way to learn about the causes of solutions to persistent poverty, and other major social and economic problems.

If you’ve not taken *Progress & Poverty* before, that’s the course to start with. Or, for those particularly interested in the problems of developing countries, we offer *Poverty, Liberation, & Land Reform*, which covers part of the same ground.

Economic Science, an advanced course open to those who have completed *Progress & Poverty*, explores more systematically and in depth many fundamentals touched on in *P&P*.

Henry George School/Chicago Course Schedule, Fall Term 2003

#	Course	(Version)	Day & Time	Start	Finish	Sessions	Instructor
Classes in Chicago (at 417 S. Dearborn)							
1	Poverty, Liberation & Land Reform		Fri 2:30 PM	Sep 19	Nov 14	9	John Kuchta
2	Progress & Poverty		Sat 2:30 PM	Sep 20	Nov 22	10	Roy Corr
3	Progress & Poverty	RELAXED COMPLETE	Tue 6:30 PM	Sep 23	Nov 13	9	Bob Drake
4	Progress & Poverty	Concise	Wed 2:30 PM	Oct 08	Nov 12	6	George Menninger
6	Economic Science	ADVANCED*	Wed 6:30 PM	Sep 17	Nov 19	10	Chuck Metalitz
Class in Downtown Evanston (near Davis & Oak Streets)							
5	Progress & Poverty	Concise	Thur 7:30 PM	Oct 09	Nov 13	6	George Menninger

Course descriptions are in the School Catalog, available on request, or visit www.hgchicago.org.

Each class session normally lasts 90 minutes.

You can register for these courses using the form on page 3

*ADVANCED course requires prior completion of **Progress & Poverty**. All other courses are open to all interested adults.

Letters

The article by Everett Gross (“Explaining Rent”, *TIG* Summer ‘03) is right on. He & his bride have been steady attenders at the Georgist conferences. Also liked the article on “The Lost Science of Money” from Stephen Zarlenga of the American Monetary Institute.

The comments on pro sports stadiums are on something of an unknown. Seattle has new pro football stadium *and* new baseball stadium, financed with public support of some half a billion dollars. It has always dumbfounded me why the public should support millionaire players playing kids games, this for entertainment purposes. Washington Governor Gary Locke promoted a separate tax on car rentals to pay towards the baseball stadium. Why is it that car renters, mostly from out of Seattle, should pay to support something they get no benefit from? I classify it as legalized theft. The same goes for hotel/motel taxes in that the payers get little benefit.

Taking Government Finance in 1947 at the University of Washington, we learned that Canada had passed two Crown Rights such that minerals and forests not yet taken by owners were retained by the Canadian Government. It made me wonder why the U. S. Congress didn’t immediately do the same. Oh my, different ways of life.

– Mel Forde
Seattle

Thanks to our Contributors

Since our last issue, donations have been received from the following supporters:

Marie Bousfield	Mel Forde
Liam Hayes	Bob & Ruth Kennedy
Ron Schupp	Janet Sondin
Darnell Ware	

Additional contributions were earned through igive.com. (To learn how you can support the School over the Internet, at no cost, go to www.hgchicago.org/igive.htm).

Major funding is also provided by the Henry George School of Social Science in New York City.

The School’s instructors, staff, alumni, and students value your support.

Mina Olson died in June. She was active with the Henry George School from the 1950s thru the 1970s, when she and husband Carlton retired to homes in Wisconsin and Florida. Having originally taken classes in the 1950s, Mina served as Executive Secretary in the Henry George School’s 1970 reincorporation.

Gladys “Wendy” Wendel also died in June. She took the basic Henry George course in 1944 and remained a supporter of the School into the 21st century.

Public Officials Almost Making Sense

“We don't think the best way to get affordable housing is to put a tax on development.”

That’s what Chicago Housing Commissioner Jack Markowski said, according to the Chicago Tribune of August 1. And yet all privately-owned housing built in Chicago, unless it receives special subsidies, is in fact subject to a tremendous real estate tax, as well as many other direct and indirect taxes. If we want more and cheaper housing, why tax it?

“Sales and income taxes are the two taxes that truly harm businesses and consumers.”

This time it’s Illinois Budget Director John Filan, in a letter published in the April 7 Tribune. He’s right, of course. Why can’t the State see how to fund its operations without reliance on these sources?

(We’ve slightly un-muddled his text; what Filan precisely wrote was “This pension plan avoids raising sales or income tax rates— the two taxes that would truly harm businesses and consumers.”)

Henry George School of Social Science, Chicago, Illinois

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The School is a private, tax exempt school under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). Donations to the School can be tax deductible.



I enclose \$ 10 registration fee and would like to register for . . .

- Progress & Poverty** (specify section number _____)
- Poverty, Liberation & Land Reform** (section #1)
- Applied Economics** (section #6—you must have taken Progress & Poverty previously)

Please . . .

- send the School catalog including course descriptions. add me to your mailing list.
- include me in the alumni association (email address: _____ @ _____)
- change my address/name as indicated on the reverse.
- accept this contribution of \$ _____ to help in the School's work
- contact me about tax-advantaged giving.
- contact me about volunteering to help the School. remove me from the mailing list.

Be sure that your name and address appear correctly on the other side of this form.

Mail this form to: Henry George School, 417 S. Dearborn #510, Chicago IL 60605
 or fax it to 775/458-8677 with your name & address. If you register for a course you will receive confirmation by telephone or mail.

Henry George Day Picnic Sunday September 28

Our traditional Henry George Day picnic will be a bit late this year, Sunday Sept 28. The location will still be in South Evanston, and all friends of the School are welcome. There will be a \$10 charge to defray costs, but the charge is waived for recent graduates (anyone who has completed any course at the School within the past year.) Call Sue Walton at 847/475-0391 no later than Thursday, Sept 25 for details and to reserve your place.

If you subscribed to the printed edition of *The Illinois Georgist* you'd see an image here. Unfortunately the HGS staff cannot figure out how to get that image into this file.

For a free subscription to the printed edition send your name & address to hgchicago@pobox.com.

What is liberty?

Henry George presented a clear vision of liberty, one that helps communities achieve peace and prosperity.

Want to find out about it?

Henry George School

312/362-9302 www.hgchicago.org

For fun & excitement, join the Henry George Alumni Association

Calling all alumnus, alumna, alumni, and alumnae of the Henry George School of Social Science in Chicago! If that sounds like Greek to you, you're in the wrong country. Remember your Latin declensions? Neither do we. But fortunately, you don't need to speak Latin to come to the very first meeting of the Henry George Alumni Association. We want it to be fun and exciting and, hopefully, even intellectually stimulating—all at the same time.

You're eligible to join if you've ever completed any course at the Henry George School, and, at least for the present, there is no membership fee. You need only let us know by email (to hgchicago@pobox.com), or by checking the appropriate box on the reply form above and mailing or faxing it to us. Please include your email address, if you have one.

The first meeting is tentatively scheduled for 6:00 PM Monday, November 17th. We'll start with reports on this year's Council of Georgist Organizations conference (See article on page 1 for a preview.) After that, we will brainstorm ideas for future meetings. Come armed with some ideas on how to keep recent (and veteran) graduates informed, inspired, and involved. Should we be more of a social organization or an activist one? When, where, and how often should we meet? Should we discuss Georgist ideas in greater depth or open it up to other contemporary issues? How about field trips?

One idea that seems popular is pizza. So the first meeting will feature pizza, courtesy of the HGS Board of Directors. Please let us know by Friday, November 14 if you plan to attend—and what kinds of pizza you prefer.

— Bob Drake

Henry George School

of Social Science

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Wisdom from Outer Space?

In reading a book by Carl Sagan, I encountered the case he makes for the importance of receiving a message from some other world out there in the universe. The reasoning is that the senders of such a message would have a technology more advanced than ours in order to send it. If so, they have passed through the stage which we Earthlings are in right now and have survived it. And if they could survive it, we can too. It is interesting to note that a non-dummy like Sagan can really feel as I do that there is a very good chance that we might not survive very long. He says that even if it takes ten or twenty years to decode the message, merely receiving it would give us great hope.

Sagan suggests that among the first contents of such a message may be detailed prescriptions for the avoidance of technological disaster, and perhaps straightforward solutions, still undiscovered on Earth, to problems of food shortages, population growth, energy supplies, dwindling resources, pollution and war.

Though Sagan read a great amount, he apparently limited his social sciences reading so that some very much discovered solutions eluded him. It often occurs to me to wonder at what point we can say that something is discovered or known. One of our leading examples is in the motions of our planets around the sun. Copernicus is given credit for the discovery only about five hundred years ago and it took some real heroism along with numerous burnings-at-the-stake to get these facts accepted. Actually, over two thousand years ago, Aristarchus knew those basic motions.

When is a thing really known? When only one person knows it? When five percent of the people know it? When it is so widely known that no one needs to make any mental effort to learn it?

Do we need a radio message from another solar system to shake us out of the nonsense that the solution to food

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shortages is for all of us to pay each other not to produce food? What if that civilization had never had a stage when it burdened itself with our reverse taxation system? If they had never thought to exact the heaviest penalties from their best producers and grant privileges to exploiters, could they even suspect that we need to be warned of the consequences? Couldn't it be that even their greediest people have always known that their own best interest lay in permitting rather than stifling productive improvements?

I once gave a talk about taxation to a local service club. The mood of that time, as it is now, was to commiserate over how hard it is to collect enough to pay legitimate public expenses. I said that if I could be given total tax jurisdiction over just a few (say twenty) of the 576 square miles in our county, I could bring in enough to support all of the schools and roads and parks and libraries and fire protection and law enforcement at a level higher than they are presently supported, AND leave the present occupants of those square miles with a better income than they are now getting. And it would not be done by virtue of depriving anyone else.

How could I get more from less? I wouldn't. I would just simply quit getting less from more.

– *Everett W. Gross*

Everett Gross is a physicist in Crete, Nebraska