

Vi says she'd like RST to follow up on this.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS

FOR THE

HENRY GEORGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

By Mason Gaffney, 12-15-72

A. Overall Structure

Object: To professionalize, while retaining the advantages of volunteer effort, inspiration, sense of participation and loyalty.

President and Director

Professional staff, full time. Research, writing and publicizing, teaching methods, professional conferences

Teaching
Screening
Research
Direction



Associate Director

Volunteer staff:
Teaching, research assistance, learning, testing new teaching ideas

↑ Inspiration, interrogation, challenge ←

This organization is much like a typical graduate school. (This points to a later possibility of degree-granting, although with the present surplus of Ph. D.'s there is no rush about that.)

Professional staff updates the product, supplements and documents it, upgrades those parts of it that have proven unclear, ineffective or wrong, and adds to it, consistently, with its spirit. Staff keeps contact with professional colleagues by association, conferences and publishing. It teaches volunteers and guides their research efforts.

Volunteer staff is an unusual asset. No research organization outside of graduate schools has such a battery of helpers ready to go out and spread its findings abroad. It is part of the great strength and influence of certain graduate schools that their students do go forth as disciples, where there is a coherent philosophy, especially one they may apply with a sense of participation and fulfillment. Chicago has been notably influential in this way. But in most schools there is a vacuum. Students do look for and respond to leadership with ideas and ideals. Student life is a stage of seeking for norms and identity and purpose. But they seldom find it. That leaves a role for the School.

The influence of Chicago and other graduate school disciples spreads widely because they go out to teach elsewhere. They colonize. There is a double benefit. They can assume leadership in new locales and grow without conflicting with their teachers for limited places. And by moving out the top of the system, they make way for new people. This constant turnover of paraprofessionals gives vigor and dynamism to good schools that use it constructively. It lets a school stamp its products distinctively without becoming insulated.

A great challenge for the School is to find means to duplicate this process of pass-through and colonizing with our volunteers. I do not have the answer today, but the objective being laid out, means will be found. We can learn from the analogy of the victory of British colonies, fostered by benign neglect, over the hothouse French colonies of the 18th century. Colonies should be self-supporting and independent - even rebellious.

Whether volunteers pass through or remain, they are a powerful lever that can multiply the results from any given level of school spending. Volunteers can also do harm, as the School

has experienced. This can be minimized by training and screening them, regarding them as participating students rather than giving each one free rein.

The balance between volunteer emphasis and professional emphasis depends on progress in upgrading the product. I visualize a Stage I of major emphasis on research and development and new writing by professionals. We need new data, new methods, and undoubtedly some new ideas as well.

In Stage II, when we have a more salable product, we increase the sales force: the volunteer teachers. Meantime, in Stage I, volunteers should participate in the excitement and creativity of research.

The balance between research and teaching also varies with location. The home school should focus on research more, in keeping with its standing of national and world leadership. It need be less concerned about attracting students from its immediate neighborhood, and it must sharply distinguish its national from its local role. The extensions will be more teaching-oriented, but will doubtless continue to come up with some good research, as they should.

B. Research Topics

Research should be devoted to beefing up the message of Progress and Poverty. The respect of other professionals will be won by doing our own thing, and doing it well. Respectability is like happiness: you do not find it by direct seeking, but by achieving something.

Volunteers may participate in research of this kind with no sense of alienation or detour. It leads directly to the goal of putting across the message.

Here is a sampling of many good topics to research.

1. The concentration of landholding and its role in the concentration of wealth and power. The Nader group has provided a good recent model with Land and Power in California, a latter-day Our Land and Land Policy.

In matters of this kind, the School has been quite sterile; and nothing shows it quite so well as having another group move in and try to do our job, right under our noses. This is the result of exclusive emphasis on teaching as opposed to research in product improvement.

A matter of increasing concern today is the growing and high concentrated control of energy, the major oil and gas companies buying coal and uranium, and controlling public lands, too. Major foundations are timid about researching this kind of thing. The Bureau of Mines started it a while back but John O'Leary, who fostered it, was pushed out. It is a vacuum into which the School should rush and earn great renown. It fits right into the warning of Book I about how concentration of power may make civilization decline.

2. The effect of tax policy on scale of enterprise. We are constantly bombarded with propaganda about the alleged superior efficiency of larger firms, the inevitable and economically desirable extinction of small business. We need to show how the tax advantages of being large, stack the cards. We need to show how taxing land will help break up large combines and cartels which are marked by excess underutilized capacity in land. Agriculture is a good example. Marvin Paglin and Alfred Berry have already done some good work. We can use the work and encourage them to do more and better.

We need to needle the massive federal research organizations who are derelict in pushing this kind of work. For example, fifty federally supported State Agricultural Experiment Stations are busy carrying water for large landowners and agribusinesses, touting their superior efficiency, and overlooking their tax and subsidy advantages. The Forest Service repeats in chorus that U. S. timberland is mostly owned by small farmers. It took outsiders finally to publicize the high concentration of industrial ownership.

Again, the Forest Service preaches that large forests are better managed than small, and that theirs, the largest of all, is best managed of all. Unlimited idolatry for scale leads logically to socialism, and the Forest Service bureaucracy has already reached that logical end. Turns out what they mean by "good management" is slow turnover of stock, holding earnings down below 3% of value. It takes outside, but informed critics to crack the facade and expose that kind of thinking. Nader's exposé has failed us here, because it is sophomoric. But there is a place for a good criticism, which we could mount.

The U. S. D. I., presiding over public lands, is telling us very little about how most coal and shale and water and grazing rights and timber sales go to a favored few. The School can publicize what is known, which is damning, and interpret it.

3. **Assessment of land.** Half of moving the local property tax to a land value basis is getting assessors to assess land right under the laws we already have. This is a project in which all can engage, and is an excellent focus for volunteer work. Every School should make and maintain a land value map of its environs. It is a great conversation piece, and everyone can contribute data to it. It can be used then to audit the local assessor's performance and push him toward using the land-first, building-residual method.

I have never seen such a high level of interest in public affairs as the Beloit, Wisconsin, group generated when they dug into how the local assessor was favoring land.

4. **Land use and unemployment.** The basic message of George is that we can put the unemployed to work by using land more intensively. This simple truth was the basis of George's great popular appeal. But the idea was not adequately developed or sold, so that by 1936 there was a vacuum which Keynes filled with his ideas about regulating spending. These ideas now are becoming transparently inadequate and the time is ripe to capitalize on their manifest inadequacy and show how land taxes would move us toward full employment without inflation. But this needs to be expressed in a modern tongue.

5. U. S. military spending and its abuse for land acquisition overseas. This is a totally neglected area, and one where I have met strong opposition by treading. There are great pressures on researchers to avoid this subject. We are able to observe that the quest to control raw materials and colonies lay behind European imperialism of the 18th and 19th centuries and German and Japanese aggression in the 1940's, but find it hard to see our own quest for raw materials as a potential threat to world peace. The message of George is, it seems to me, that we can minimize international conflict by using better the land we already have, employing ourselves productively at home, and relating to foreign nations through trade, rather than land acquisition.
6. Tax reform. This has been hot for three to four years now, and remains so. Everyone is now recognizing that the income tax hits property income at lower rates than labor income. It is for us to show that land income is the most favored kind of all; and how this unpreempted tax base can be tapped, at all levels of government.

We can work through, among others, "Taxation with Representation," a group of leading tax economists dedicated to tax law reform, and funnelling economists in to testify before Congressional committee hearings.

7. Topical issues. Issues are constantly boiling up and then being submerged. While they are on top, we should address them -- it is a way of staying in the great conversation. It is good exercise for us constantly to be reinterpreting our message. Some good ones today are:
- a. Limits of Growth. This is a natural for us because it begins by signaling the difference between land, the limited resource, and capital. George, indeed, used Malthus effectively to that end in Book II. Our message is that we can continue to grow in output and capital and services on a limited earth by using more effectively the natural resources at our disposal, and ceasing to equate "growth" with territorial expansion and waste of raw materials.
- b. Financing education. This is properly just a piece of a big picture, but trendy topics do not get thrown up properly and we must take them as they come. New ways to finance education is the way the issue is phrased today, and it is a natural for us.
- c. Open space. Upward assessments of land are taking a "bum rap" for destroying open space. As a de-

fensive measure we need to show that this is a misstatement of the problem. We need to go on the offensive and show how underuse of good land causes invasion of open land.

One could extend the list, but it is suggestive of what a research staff could do.

C. Publicizing results

- 1. Publishing. We are way behind the competition in this department. The socialists downtown, the Monthly Review Press, put out a monthly -- its material is very thin, to be sure -- and several titles a year, some of which are good.

Their people are so numerous as to have founded a Union for Radical Political Economics (yes, URPE) which makes waves in the profession.

Nader is constantly researching and publishing with great impact.

Establishment research institutes like Brookings and Resources for the Future have regular contracts with publishers and produce a steady flow of titles.

We must set our sights on producing books -- our own, and good MSS submitted by others.

We should also put out a periodical reporting on research progress, and I hope evolving into an influential journal, for which, however, we are not yet ready.

- 2. Press relations. Cultivate the press and release research findings of a sort and in a way calculated to excite the press. This is free advertising.
- 3. Muckraking. We have this to learn from Nader. Exposing the dereliction and complicity of officials is a proven route to publicity and exciting people into further action and inquiry. It can be done constructively, as our people did in Beloit.

It irritates people too, but its value is in establishing the credibility of the muckraker.

The muckraker is not a nihilist who says "the whole system is rotten, tear it down." He is basically conservative. He says the system is all right; we can make it work. People sense this and respond.

Furthermore, it gives an immediate outlet for people who learn by doing. Reform is concrete, attainable, and real. Yet, in Beloit, they also found they needed a goal, a philosophy, a rationale to legitimize their group and its activities. It was the combination of action-orientation with deeper philosophy that proved effective.

Of course we want to muckrake selectively. We seek to upgrade the administration only of the institutions we want to preserve. Land assessment is an obvious choice. Our allies have already shown the way.

4. **Conferences.** The conference is an important teaching technique for prideful professionals who are hard to get at. In a conference you teach people by having them tell you what they think about your subject. You win by defining the subject. It sells itself, once they bring themselves to think about it. Conferences result in books of many authors and viewpoints which get your subject aired and on the table. Professionals sense that a free forum has occurred and that makes it respectable. They don't sit up and shout "Amen!" but they gradually let you join the party.

D. Associating

We need to bring and link together people whose interests coincide and overlap with ours. We are the natural bridge between reformers of the left and right -- we need to exploit the key position that should give us. We understand, and, in part, sympathize with the free market groups; and the same for the young land and tax reformers. Who can serve better than we to show them their common goals?

We can initiate a League of Land Reformers -- there are

already Barnes and Greene in California, suing the S. P. R. R. over the same land grant frauds that stirred Henry George; the group that wrote Land and Power in California (Nader, Fellmeth, Roberts, et al.); Fred Harris; Ernest Fitzgerald; Professor Alfred Berry of Yale; and many others. We can give each other strength and ideas.

We can work with tax reform groups as noted before. Besides Taxation with Representation, there is John Rowe and his Tax Reform Research Group -- and these lead right to Senators (Muskie, Percy, Hart, Proxmire) and Congressmen (Aspin, Reuss).

We have hundreds of contacts to explore. These are so many good men who want to help; we must mobilize that enormous reservoir of talent and good will. We cannot organize it directly. It is too big, too spontaneous. We can help make it into a community by means of journalism -- a newsletter that tells what outstanding ones are accomplishing and thinking. A community is a reference group that appreciates what you're doing -- people do appreciate being appreciated.

One idea worth exploring is a journal in which the subscribers or some of them write for each other. It would be edited centrally, but the readers would do the major labors, and rotate. For a starter, it might be published irregularly, only as quality MSS piled up. Ultimately, to succeed, we must find an idea that reproduces itself, that propagates among effective people by their spontaneous adoption and enthusiasm. We will try to find the formula, but we don't know where it may come from. We can take steps to listen to each other so we'll hear the formula when it comes.

E. Finding the Right Image

Something like "School for Research on Land Use and the Common Interest" would be a forthright way of expressing our purpose. "Henry George School" might be retained for the volunteer staff. I would consider phasing it out, to avoid the "cult-of-followers" stigma which has dogged the School. But I have not yet formed a firm opinion on this question.

A new location should be considered, more optimal for research and contacts. I would favor a Washington location, for that is where public policy is uppermost, and people congregate whose interest is public policy. Think about it. That is a drastic change. I would favor a more efficient building. If the building is worth $1\frac{1}{2}$ million and other assets are three million dollars, that means that we are spending $1\frac{1}{4}/4\frac{1}{4}$ or almost 30% of income on the building and, of course, more for O & M. That is probably too high a ratio, one that warrants study.

We need to go with youth. Youth will always challenge and defy and seek to provoke age, and we must understand and accept this. It has always been and will always be in a dynamic, innovative society. We need to work with this youthful bent and be hospitable to young rebels, at least those whose rebellion takes constructive forms. Youth's fractiousness often displays a sense of moral outrage at the same wrongs that exercise us. They have idealism, energy and enterprise. Our move is to work with this, never to stifle it.

Only with reservations would I support the idea of "bringing back the oldtimers." They have graduated from the School and formed a self-supporting colony. That is

good. We should treat them as friends, allies and equals, but not regret that they are thriving independently. That releases our energy for new work. We can select some who would like to work with us on new terms. Ted Gwartney comes immediately to mind as one we need. Others may be more effective in their new context. It is an individual matter. As outlined in (A) above, a slow rotation of volunteer staff has definite merits, especially where the graduates colonize.

I urge the Trustees to study these proposals carefully and discuss them before giving further consideration to me as a candidate for Director. This is pure self-interest on my part. Moving to the School is pretty much a one-way street from where I sit now. I would be a heavy loser, if, after a few years, the Trustees decided I was the wrong man. These proposals imply a large diversion of funds to research for a few years -- are you willing? They may imply a new location and name. It is not something to be entered into lightly.

At the same time, I feel the ideas outlined have substance regardless of whether I am Director, and are worth considering in terms of any candidate.