

## Diary of an Outreach Activist

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**Bangkok, Thailand** -- Member of a delegation working with the Millennium Peoples Assembly Network (MPAN) to establish a permanent Global Peoples Assembly to serve as “inclusive voice of the world’s people.” My particular focus is to affirm the importance of the ground rent of the earth’s land, water, and air as the proper and just funding source for global governance institutions.

The Dhammakaya Foundation, our host, is a Buddhist organization working for world peace through inner peace. In 30 years it has become the largest Buddhist group in Thailand. We met for discussions and gala dinners and outings with our hosts of the Dhammakaya MPAN committee many times during our weeklong visit. The topic I presented was “Financing Planet Management - Sovereignty, World Order, and the Earth Rights Imperative.”

We were given a special place of honour at the Lights of Peace Day ceremonies at the nearly completed Dhammakaya peace pilgrimage site, which is being built to serve one million meditators. Nearly 200,000 people gathered for meditation and spiritual teachings around the golden domed cettiya, or stupa, upon which sat 10,000 orange robed monks.

As the full moon rose high above and the monks chanted, the Abbot lit a torch that was taken by a runner down to our platform. With a long silver lighting stick, we lit a torch that then lit 100 smaller torches and then the lamp in a huge urn. Spreading from there, within moments, the lights of 100,000 other torches were lit in dozens of concentric circles around the stupa and among the people, giving a spectacular and magical display of the Lights of Peace as a choir of children sang songs of jubilation.

**The Hague, Netherlands** -- Participating in the The Hague Appeal for Peace conference with nearly 8000 activists from all over the world. This was the largest peace conference ever held on earth. Plenary speakers included UN Secretary General Koffi Annan and Archbishop Tutu. As Co-Chair of the Peoples Agenda

Committee, I had helped to compile sections on land tenure and taxation policy that advocate land value taxation. Rob Wheeler, Coordinator of MPAN, and I had several occasions to play our guitars and lead the MPAN participants in songs of peace and justice. Closing the final meeting, former UN Assistant Secretary General Robert Muller, now a beloved “Peoples Ambassador” joined us on his harmonica.

**New York City** -- The UN Department of Public Information’s 52nd Annual Non-Governmental Organizations Conference at the UN. I organized and chaired a noonday workshop entitled Financing Local-to-Global Public Goods: An Integrated Perspective. The workshop description follows:

World stability and human security require that we re-think the logic of globalization, including the best ways to finance public goods such as health, education, infrastructure, environmental sustainability and efforts for peace and conflict resolution.

Workshop presenters addressed these concerns, discussed successful public finance practices and work-in-progress on “green tax shift” policies which harness incentives for both efficient and equitable wealth production and distribution AND sustainable economic and social development.

Workshop presenters were Ted Gwartney, Executive Director, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation; Gina Erickson, State Program Director, Centre for a Sustainable Economy; Joshua Vincent, Executive Director, Centre for the Study of Economics, and Rashmi Mayur, Special Adviser, MPAN.

**Oaxaca, Mexico** -- Milenio Verde (the Green Millennium), a conference on the Global Effort for the Conservation of the Planet was hosted by the Mexican Green Party in this colorful multi-cultured city six hours drive south of Mexico City. Jeff Smith, President of the Geonomy Society, and I communicated the Georgist economics paradigm to nearly 300 Green Party activists from 30 countries. Simultaneous translation into French, Spanish, and English facilitated the exchange. Interspersed with the highly intellectual content of the week’s proceedings were joyous dance performances, beautiful handcraft displays, and chocolate drinking ceremonies presented by local people.

Speaking on the panel on Urban and Rural Development, I presented an overview of green tax shifting which included the work with land value taxation in cities in Pennsylvania. Jeff Smith, on a panel on Sustainability, outlined the basics of geonomics and the citizen’s dividend.

I moderated a panel on Electoral and Governmental Experience of the Green Force which included Green leaders from Africa (Senegal), France, and Mexico’s Green Party Presidential candidate Jorge Gonzalez Torres.

The last day of Milenio Verde found us atop Monte Alban, a central mountain ringed by the Oaxaca Valley that in turn is encircled by a ring of mountains. Two hundred of us formed a silent circle in the ceremonial center of this Mayan temple complex. As the full moon rose, silhouetting the magnificent pyramids, a shaman performed an earth healing ritual and brightly clothed indigenous people danced and drummed.



The Great Cetiya at The Dhammakaya Foundation World Headquarters near Bangkok, Thailand. Built to last 1000 years, there are grounds for one million people to meditate together for world peace. The author stands on the far left of the group in the middle. The photo was taken on the Light of Peace Day, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999.