

GROW THE SCHOOL, SAVE THE WORLD?

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(Editor's note: Scott Baker is a graduate of the following 7 courses at the Henry George School of Social Science in New York: Fundamental Economics: First Principles, Applied Economics: The Globalization Issue, Economic Science: Progress and Prosperity, 3-D Economics: History of Land, 3-D Economics: History of Labor, 3-D Economics: History of Capital, A Philosophy of Life: The Philosophy of Oscar Geiger. He is currently enrolled in: Human Rights, and Pathways to Progress.)

The Henry George School of New York, founded in 1932 and one of the oldest continuing schools teaching the philosophy of Henry George, currently churns out 1,800 students a year and does so without charging tuition. Therein lies a problem.

As Lindy Davies, Program Director of the Henry George Institute and editor/publisher of the Henry George Journal put in his excellent, albeit alarming, speech to the annual Georgist Conference this past summer, as a movement, "We are nowhere." Of course, we are *somewhere* in the sense that we produce papers, support conferences, and even in some cases, bend a politician's ear, though very rarely enough to pass legislation favoring a Land Value Tax, and even then only in the narrowest realm of *some* property tax adjustment. Henry George called for much more than that; his best-selling economics book of all time, "Progress and Poverty" called for nothing less than the *abolishment of poverty*, while actually taking steps to *enhance* progress and prosperity by untaxing productive activities. In that sense, we really are nowhere, and are actually worse off than in George's time, and not even as well off as during the best of times during the history of the school.

What is it that keeps the theory of Tax the Land, Untax Production, from being embraced? Well, of course, it is a rich class of speculators and their enablers who are small in numbers, but large in power, working night and day to prevent it. It is the Corruption of Economics, as delineated by Mason Gaffney and Fred Harrison in the book by the same name. It is simple failure to "see the cat" by the public as well as their leaders, and even the belief that it is our right, at least to try, to grow rich from the simple appreciation of the Land, without working. It is all of these things, significant hurdles all.

But there is something else too. For too long, Georgists and Geoists (who look to expand George's concept of Ground Rent into a more broadly based Resource Tax on *all* of nature's resources), have voluntarily played the underdog role.

Now, I know what some of you may be thinking: *voluntarily played the underdog role?! There was nothing voluntary about it! We fight like dogs to be, well, the top dog! Well, in some sense that is true, but what about our public face: the schools? Why do we persist in offering only free courses, as if the classes are not worth paying for? Yes, I understand it was Robert Clancy's mission to provide free education for the masses, and we have done that, but we have also restricted ourselves to whatever the endowment of the school can support, since voluntary student donations don't amount to more than a few percent, I have it on good authority. In fact, for the most part, students are, for all practical purposes, liabilities, who con-*

sume more resources than they deliver. *That* is certainly not what either George or Clancy had in mind! Many students cannot afford even that, but that does not mean that George's solutions are only of interest to them, as if they benefit only the poor and would not make society richer, and even cleaner and greener, overall. Frankly, if we believe that, we should give up the struggle right now; the poor alone will not produce a sustainable revolution, and never had. But I believe that the middle class, and even most of the upper classes, will benefit from George's ideas, once they adapt to them.

Lets' take another example in New York City, The New School, founded in 1919 and morphed more recently into New School University (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_School). The history of the New School includes strong Marxist leanings, and yet the proletariat never had trouble paying tuition, nor did the school's philosophy prevent the school from expanding and becoming a major city institution. We *know* Henry George had a better solution to our economic problems than Karl Marx ever did – and world history since the founding of both philosophies has borne this out – yet, here we are, in a 5 classroom building, nearly irrelevant to both the political and scholarly discussions of our time.

As Vladimir Lenin once said, "What is to be done?"

Shall we be content to remain on slow boil, fizzing out new students at a trickle, who don't have accreditations and training that professional organizations and decision-makers take seriously? Or shall we "go boldly where no Georgist has gone before" – to paraphrase another more modern philosophy? Let's see how the latter might work, using an actual example of a new location to house a new type of school, just steps from the current one.

I am speaking of moving the school to Touro College.

Property Shark, and my contact with the broker, reveals that this 7-story 1909 Landmarked building has roughly 22,000 square feet, 10 classrooms plus a lab, 2 reading rooms and a basement library. In short, it has roughly three times the capacity. Plus, it is being fixed up inside. Yet, it has been unable to attract a buyer since it was bought in 2006 for \$8.2 million.

Now, even if we assume the school's endowment is in the tens of millions, which it must be to run the school year after year, without a deficit, given overhead costs I won't, or can't, detail here, they will need additional income. Fortunately, there is a good option for an anchor tenant: The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. Their property downtown is currently leased and the lease will run out in a few years. If they could be persuaded to rejoin the school – they were part of the school until a separation many years ago, initiated by players who are no longer with either institution – their contribution might go towards a substantial portion of the new school's mortgage, perhaps even a third. Every other major college has an in-house publishing arm. Why not the Henry George School?

But, the school needs more (continued on page 6)