

## THE IU'S HISTORY WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

As may be seen from the extracts taken from the September 1926 edition of *Land&Liberty* the IU has, from its founding, sought to promote the philosophy propounded by Henry George on the international stage, initially through the "The League of Nations".

This article gives the background and history of the designation of the IU as an official NGO affiliated with the United Nations.

In 1980 Georgist Alanna Hartzok was invited to present on LVT to people from 40 countries assembled in Japan for the World Citizens Assembly. Dr. Lucile Green and Dr. Harry Lerner, leaders of this movement, were proposing various United Nations reform policies. Following the Japan assembly Lerner invited Hartzok, on several occasions, to speak at events he organized both inside the UN and elsewhere. Lerner, impressed with the importance of LVT policy, urged the IU to affiliate with the UN as an officially recognized UN non-governmental organization (NGO). Lerner's nudging was the initial impetus for the IU to proceed with applications for UN NGO status with the UN.

NGOs are civic groups, such as chambers of commerce, service organizations and generally non-profit sector organizations. More than 5,000 such groups are now affiliated with the United Nations to support its work for peace, human rights, economic and social justice. Because IU member Pat Aller had at one time worked for the UN and lived in New York, the IU President Richard Noyes asked her and British Georgist Harry Ball-Wilson, who had also experience with the UN, to apply with the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) for formal associative status of the IU with the UN. Admission was granted in late 1992. DPI permits two representatives per organization so Aller, who was Assistant Director of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, and Hartzok, who was then Education Director of the Henry George School of Social Science in San Francisco, were appointed by the IU as its first NGO representatives.

The 1990s were the UN's world summit conference years:

- The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED also called The Earth Summit), was held in Rio in 1992 and at the time was the largest global gathering that had ever been convened. The Earth Summit produced a plan of action called Agenda 21. UN NGOs, who up until then were considered to be passive observers of UN proceedings, organized a powerful NGO Forum that gave significant input into Agenda 21 and thus for the first time were heralded as significant voices in their own right.

The other four major global UN conferences of the decade were:

- The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994). Some 20,000 delegates from various governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and the media gathered for a discussion of a variety of population issues. The conference delegates achieved consensus on the following four qualitative and quantitative goals: universal education, reduction of infant and child mortality, reduction of maternal mortality, and access to reproductive and sexual health services including family planning.

- The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) brought together 50,000 women from all over the world and proclaimed a platform titled Action for Equality, Development and Peace.

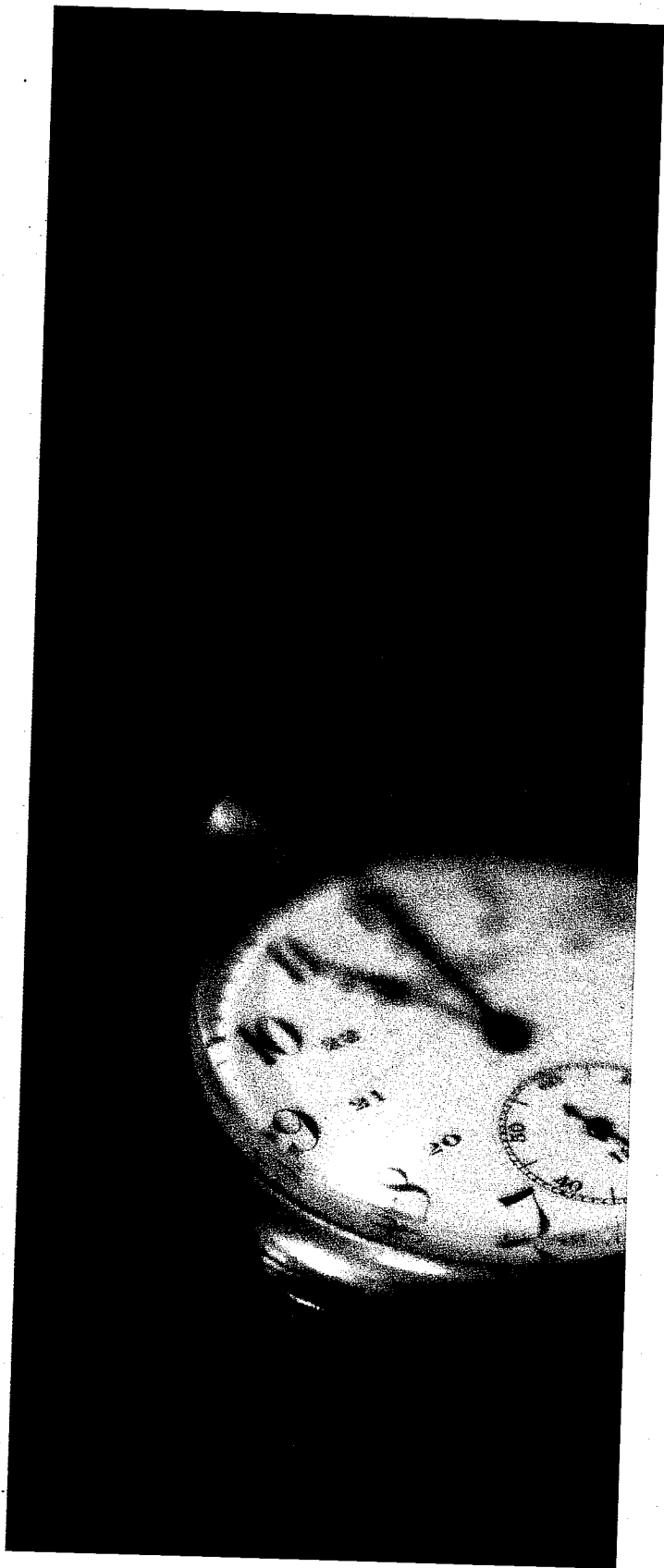
- The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995) was attended by Pat Aller who gave a paper presentation accompanied by Danish Georgist Per Moller Anderson, who with other Danish Georgists set up an information table. This so-called Social Summit was the largest gathering ever of world leaders at that time. It issued the Copenhagen Declaration which pledged to make the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the fostering of social integration overriding objectives of development.

- The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) was held in Istanbul in 1996. It issued (by consensus of all UN member states as is true for all the global UN official declarations) the Habitat Action Agenda that contained a section on Land that referenced the need for land based taxes and land value assessment. IU UN NGO representative Alanna Hartzok was an active participant and organized six NGO Forum events. Thanks to the emerging connectivity of the internet she was invited to give a talk about Georgist economics to members of the Green Party of Turkey assembled in Istanbul during the Habitat conference. Georgist Mary Rose Kaczorowski, representing Common Ground USA, also participated in Habitat II and was present in Istanbul, working primarily with the group of NGO women assembled by US Congresswoman Bella Abzug. Hartzok and Kaczorowski closely followed the proceedings developing the Action Agenda in order to make certain that references to land value tax were not jeopardized. We knew that Habitat's founding document (Vancouver Action Plan) contained strong sections on LVT.

Following these five major global conference and upon review of their action plans, UN officials began to realize that what was needed was a focus on how to finance the many wonderful goals that had been set forth. Thus emerged another major global conference titled The International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, 2002) that signaled a turning point in the approach to development cooperation by the international community.

It was the first United Nations-sponsored summit-level meeting to address key financial and related issues pertaining to global development. More than 50 Heads of State and Government and over 200 ministers of foreign affairs, trade, development and finance – the largest ever participation of finance officials at a United Nations-sponsored event – gathered in Monterrey. The Conference succeeded in placing financing for development firmly on the global agenda.

Georgist Jeff Smith participated in this conference and gave an NGO talk on land value taxation. Hartzok and IU then President Tatiana Roskoshnaya (Russia) had earlier participated in the preparatory conference in New York and made their best effort to insert reference to land value taxation in the official outcome document; unfortunately, despite the hard work, the reference did not find its way to the final document.



During the decade of the 1990s IU's two NGO representatives also attended many briefings in New York, networked for land value taxation with other NGOs, and learned ways to educate and advocate for LVT with UN delegates (ambassadors from 190 or so nations who decide major issues). Aller and Hartzok wrote and distributed papers to influence policy particularly advocating for land value tax and participated in some of the many NGO committees at the UN. Aller engaged with groups devoted to all of the major summits but worked mostly with the NGO Habitat committee.

In 1995 at the IU Conference in the historic town of Roskilde in Denmark, the IU's General Business Meeting had decided that the IU should apply for Consultative Status with the UN's Economic and Social Council, (ECOSOC). ECOSOC is one of the UN's five principal organs - along with The General Assembly, The Security Council, The Secretariat, and The International Court of Justice.

The application for consultative status proved to be rather complicated and in order to support the application IU President, Dr. Robert V. Andelson invited all known Georgist organizations in the world to join the IU as corporate members. This was in the year 2000.

Due to his persistent communications as many as 75 organizations responded positively. In 2003 the IU was admitted to Consultative Status with ECOSOC and the same year the then IU President, Dr. Tatiana Roskoshnaya, was appointed to a post as an economist at the UN Habitat's main offices in Nairobi, Kenya; a position which she held for several years.

Aller then resigned as IU UN NGO representative and Hartzok appointed several new IU representatives. George Collins, as an IU UN NGO representative, functioned for some years as the secretary of the UN NGO Committee on Human Settlements, which dealt with UN Habitat issues.

ECOSOC Consultative Status extended the IU's scope at the UN since. In addition to the two NGO representatives associated with the UN's DPI, it was and remains entitled to a further 22 representatives at UN offices in several countries. To date only a portion of these positions have been designated, mainly the seven assigned to New York.

UN Habitat (officially the United Nations Human Settlements programme) seems to hold the most promise for LVT policy implementation. Every two years this agency convenes The World Urban Forum (WUF) which is the world's premier conference on urban issues. It was established in 2001 to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and development.

Today the Forum has become one of the most open gatherings on the international arena for exchanging views and experiences on urban challenges. This notably inclusive nature of the Forum, combined with high-level participation, makes it a unique United Nations conference.

The Third World Urban Forum convened in Vancouver, Canada in 2006. Participating were Roshkoshnaya in her official capacity as a UN Habitat economist and Hartzok as IU UN NGO representative. Hartzok had been informed that Habitat was preparing a proposal to establish the so-called Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) as land issues had been identified as a key concern of Habitat. Roshkoshnaya had recommended that officials with the Land Tenure Section of Habitat ask Hartzok to give input to the consultants hired to develop the funding proposal for GLTN. Hartzok thereafter met with the consultants in Washington DC where she was told that funding for land value tax policy development would be included in the proposal.

In Vancouver the announcement was made that Sweden (via SIDA – Swedish International Development Agency) would contribute 10 million USD to fund GLTN and at the same conference Norway announced that it would contribute an additional 10 million USD. Both grants would be for a period of ten years for a total of 20 million USD.

Shortly thereafter GLTN officials invited Hartzok to sign a contract to develop a Land Rights and Land Value Capture program. The ToR (terms of reference) detailed eight specific areas that were to be developed: An online course (five sections), a short brochure (two pages), a long brochure (20 pages), an online calculator, a classic SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analyses for cities and countries that had experience with LVT, a global SWOT analysis of LVT and a document with pertinent quotes (hundreds were compiled.) Hartzok enlisted the assistance and input of twenty five Georgist experts from nine countries.

After nearly two years of dedicated work on this contract, with which Hartzok's immediate Habitat supervisor was well-pleased (and had begun working with her to develop a "next stage" contract for LVT implementation training programs) the 500-plus pages were submitted to a Habitat Land Section committee which rejected the entire body of work. No explanation was given other than a brief email that they had come to the view that there were different approaches to the policy and wanted to extend their information gathering. Hartzok was greatly disappointed. Fortunately the Habitat officials said that she could retain and utilize the work she had done.

The non-profit she co-founded, Earth Rights Institute, enlisted a competent volunteer who placed all of the material into a well-functioning online course. During the next few years, with no promotion and mostly by word of mouth or internet search for "land rights" nearly 1000 people from 95 countries enrolled in the course. Unfortunately after functioning for several years the webmaster accidentally crashed the course website which to date has not recovered to full operation and is currently dormant.

The Earth Rights Institute is now in the process of "picking up the threads" with a renewed and vigorous engagement with UN Habitat this year of 2016.

Current IU UN NGO permanent representatives include Dr. Quisia Gonzalez, Teckla Negga Melchior, Marcial Cordon, Henry Abbott, George Collins, IU President David Triggs, and Alanna Hartzok

as Administrative Director. Jacob Shwartz-Lucas and Mary Rose Kaszoroski have been temporary representatives this year. Mary Rose has written a detailed report about the UN Commission on the status of women conference that she attended where she also advocated for land value taxation.

Each IU UN NGO representative is free to participate in the IU's work at the UN in whatever way he or she decides can be most effective. For instance, Quisia has great concern about human rights and land rights of indigenous people particularly the Garifuna in Honduras, her ancestral heritage. Teckla, with family roots in Barbuda, is developing a focus and project relevant to land rights in this Caribbean island nation.

Everyone working as current IU UN NGO representatives realize the importance of the emerging New Urban Agenda that will be finalized at the Habitat III global conference in Quito, Ecuador in October. Organizers expect the attendance of more than 30,000 people from all around the world. Sections useful to us for LVT implementation are thus far in the agenda as it has developed to date.

There have been several preparatory conferences that have been leading up to Quito. David Triggs along with IU member Duncan Pickard presented a side event at the conference in Prague chaired by UN NGO Commons Cluster Coordinator Lisinka Ulatowska.

Triggs also attended the Barcelona conference on urban common spaces where he had a conversation about land value taxation with Joan Clos, the head of Habitat. Hartzok and Global Ecovillage Network UN NGO representative Robert Wheeler gave input on LVT from the floor in the Local Authorities session in New York. This session was filmed and then posted on the internet by the United Nations' official TV channel and gave formal online input along with IU members Ed Dodson and Rick Rybeck for the Mexico conference on urban finance which resulted in a notably strong section on land value taxation in the eventual outcome document.

IU NGO Representatives Quisia Gonzalez and Teckla Negga-Melchior also have been much engaged in Habitat plus other UN organization sessions and conferences in New York and elsewhere. Teckla participated, along with Ethiopian IU member Kidane Hiwot, in the Third International Conference on Financing for Development held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2015. Both plan to be present along with David in Quito in October.

Hopefully a formal IU application for a side event workshop on LVT Implementation will be accepted and IU organizers will then be formally on the NGO section of the program.

In conclusion, as the only UN NGO organization devoted solely to the teachings of Henry George and land value tax policy the IU has a special opportunity and responsibility to ensure that other NGO delegates and UN delegates and other officials are made aware of the vast contribution that the widespread implementation of land value taxation coupled with freedom from taxes on labour and non-polluting production would make to peace and prosperity throughout the world. ■